

# Honduras Solidarity Network

## **Garifuna Lives Matter!**

### ***Sign on Letter in Support of OFRANEH and the Garifuna Communities in Honduras***

*\* Following the leadership of OFRANEH and the Garifuna communities in Honduras, the Honduras Solidarity Network and different international organizations around the world demand the immediate return of Snider Centeno, Suami Mejía, Milton Martínez, Gerardo Rochez and Junior Juárez, disappeared 5 months ago, and an end to the violence against the Garifuna communities in Honduras. Stop all violence and repression!*

It's been 5 months since the forced disappearance of 5 men - 4 Afro-indigenous Garifuna and another man visiting from Belize - from the community of Triunfo de la Cruz, Honduras. Their families, their communities, and the Black Fraternal Organization (OFRANEH) continue to demand information of their whereabouts and demand that the Honduran state comply with requests from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) regarding information about the alleged state investigation and protection for the family members and Garifuna communities at risk.

In the early morning on July 18, 2020, a large number of armed men in Investigative Police Directorate (DPI) vests, kidnapped the men at gunpoint from their homes. The men were handcuffed then driven out of the community and never seen again.

For over three months, the Honduran regime has done next to nothing to find the missing men. To make matters even worse, the Honduran government has involved the DPI in the investigations, ignoring strong allegations that the DPI themselves were involved in the forced disappearances and have a history of serious human rights abuses. This has deepened fear in the Garifuna communities and the broader Honduran population, undermined any small attempts to carry out any sort of investigation into the disappearances, and made clear that the Honduran government is NOT taking this incident and its contextual factors, seriously.

The Honduran government is not interested in carrying out a thorough investigation or revealing the details of what happened on and after July 18, 2020. This is likely because the Honduran state has long been implicated not only in targeting land defenders, journalists, lawyers, and indigenous leaders, but also is controlled by interests of organized criminal structures that proliferate relentless corruption and wide-spread impunity. The US-backed 2009 coup d'état further entrenched this pattern, which for the Garifuna in Honduras, expanded systemic land dispossession, threats, murder, and institutional racism.

Since the July 18th forced disappearances in Triunfo de la Cruz, Juan Orlando Hernandez (JOH) has largely ignored the Inter-American Court of Human Rights resolutions regarding the forced disappearances and related contextual land issues. For example, the Honduran

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government ignored the September 28th deadline set by a September 2nd IACHR resolution requesting a “complete report” about the investigation of the forced disappearances, the results, and how the Garifuna communities’ rights are being protected. This state response comes in addition to the complete disregard and failure to comply with the IACHR final rulings issued on October 2, 2015 in favor of the Garifuna communities of Triunfo de la Cruz and Punto Piedra. This 2015 ruling required the government to implement a program of reparations and actions to correct the government violations of the territorial and indigenous rights of the Garifuna communities.

Instead of meeting their international obligations and implementing their pro-human rights rhetoric, the regime of JOH has instead stepped up the attacks on Garifuna communities and the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH). This latest escalation began in 2018 and intensified in 2019 with numerous assassinations of members of OFRANEH and Garifuna leaders across the coastal territories, and it continues today.

Responsibility for these attacks and the July 18th kidnapping lies squarely on the Honduran government and its security forces who are intertwined with organized crime and the agro-business and mega-tourism interests, all working towards the displacement of the Garifuna from their ancestral territory. It is the state’s responsibility to investigate and prosecute state and non-state actors involved in the forced disappearances as well as implement mechanisms to protect indigenous and communities’ rights, cultural and physical integrity, and ancestral land use and possession.

We, the undersigned organizations, join with international and Honduran voices supporting OFRANEH and the Garifuna communities in Honduras. We condemn the outrageous violence and harassment against the communities and their leaders. We hold the Honduran regime of Juan Orlando Hernandez and the state’s security apparatus directly responsible for the crimes against humanity and violations of Afro-indigenous Garifuna rights.

We further hold responsible the governments of the United States and Canada for their strong support for the dictatorship in Honduras and for the companies and investors involved in the tourism, energy, and agro-business projects that are threatening the Garifuna people and their survival.

We support and demand:

1. The alive return of Alberth Sneider Centeno, Milton Martinez, Suami Mejia, and Gerardo Trochez, kidnapped and disappeared from Triunfo de la Cruz on July 18, 2020.
2. The formation of the Multidisciplinary Investigative Team proposed by OFRANEH in order to carry out a serious and thorough investigation of the forced disappearances and all contextual factors in order to bring to justice those who planned and authorized the crime as well as those who directly carried it out.
3. Compliance with the 2015 resolution of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in the case of Garifuna Communities Triunfo de la Cruz and Punta Piedra vs. Honduras.

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4. Compliance with the October 2020 order of the IACHR Secretariat that the Honduran government investigate the July 18th kidnappings and provide a complete report.
5. The immediate end to all harassment and violence against OFRANEH, Garifuna leaders, and all Garifuna communities in Honduras.
6. That the campaign and violence to dispossess the Garifuna communities from their lands end immediately, and their rights to their ancestral territory be respected.
7. An end to impunity for crimes against humanity, for all violence against the Garifuna people and justice for all victims.

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## **Update**

Since this letter was written the situation in the Garifuna communities has only worsened due to the criminal neglect in the face of climate disaster by the Honduran regime and the continuing violent campaign to displace the Black Indigenous Garifuna people from their territory. The case of the forcibly disappeared men of Triunfo de la Cruz, remains in impunity with no serious investigation by the Honduran authorities and the violence against the communities has in fact continued. On November 23rd, Laura Carolina Valentín Dolmo, a member of OFRANEH, was found murdered in La Ceiba. OFRANEH and Human Rights organizations in Honduras and internationally denounce the fact that the authorities did not perform the required autopsy and have not investigated the murder.

OFRANEH is calling for the creation of an independent forensics team with a Human Rights orientation and expertise to investigate the disappearances and assassinations in the Garifuna territories. They emphasize the complete lack of confidence in the Honduran regime and in its institutions and the obvious involvement of government security entities in the violence itself.

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In resistance,

Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña - OFRANEH

Acción Ecológica / Actionaid Haiti / Adolfo Pérez Esquivel Premio Nobel de la Paz / Alianza por un mejor Darién de Panamá– AMEDAR / Alliance for Global Justice / ALTSEAN-Burma / American Friends Service Committee / Anderson-Rogers Foundation / Anticapitalistas / Asamblea Plaza de los Pueblos / Asociación Arcoiris de Honduras / Asociación Comunidad Hondureña en España (ACHE) / Asociación Costarricense de Derechos Humanos - ACODEHU / Asociación Cultural Brasileña Maloka / Asociación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de Honduras - ASONOG / Asociación Interamericana para la Defensa del Ambiente (AIDA) / Asociación para el Desarrollo de la Península de Zacate Grande - ADEPZA / Atlanta Latin American Solidarity Group / Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network / Baker Interfaith Friends / Baltimore Nonviolence Center / Beacon Presbyterian Fellowship / BLAC Foundation /

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Brainerd Area Coalition for Peace (BACP) / Brooklyn For Peace / Buffete Justicia para los Pueblos (BJP) / California Institute of Integral Studies / Casa Mariposa / Censat Agua Viva / Center on Race, Immigration, and Social Justice / Centro de Atención en Derechos Humanos a la Mujer y el Menor Indígena - CADHMMI / Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Matías de Córdova, A.C. / Centro de Educación Mundial / Centro de educación y prevención en salud sexualidad y sida (CEPRES) / Centro Presente / Centro Regional Indígena en Derechos Humanos “Ñuu-Savi” - CERIDH / Chicago Committee Against War & Racism / Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America - CRLN / Chicago religious leadership network/witness for peace / Chinese Feminist Collective / Coalición Contra la Impunidad en Honduras / Coalición de la Defensa de la Tierra Palestina / Coalición en Chicago en Solidaridad con Latinoamérica - CCESLA / COASAP / CODEPINK / Colectiva Autoconvocadas / Colectivo CADEHO / Colectivo Culturas Vivas / Colectivo Reexistencia Creativa de México. / Colectivo Voces Ecológicas - COVEC / Collettivo Italia Centro America - CICA / Colombianas y Colombianos por la Paz / Comisión Multisectorial del Uruguay / Comitato Global Local Bolzano / Comité de Defensa de los Derechos de la Mujer - CODEM / Comité de Justicia en Ayotzinapa / Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos / Comité por los derechos humanos en América Latina - CDHAL / Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador - CISPES / Comité en Solidaridad con el Pueblo de El Salvador - CISPES / Common Frontiers / Comuna Caribe / Confederación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras de Ecuador - FENOCIN / Confederación Sindical Única De Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia - CSUTCB / Coordinadora de Instituciones Privadas Pro las Niñas, Niños, Adolescentes, Jóvenes y sus Derechos - COIPRODEN / Coordinadora de organizaciones Populares del Aguán - COPA / Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas y Negras de Honduras - CONAMINH / Corporación Ensayos para la Promoción de la Cultura Política / Corriente Revolucionaria Bolívar y Zamora – CRBZ de Venezuela / Corvallis Latin America Solidarity Committee / Cultural Survival / Democratic Socialists of America (DSA International Committee) / Denver Justice and Peace Committee / Diálogo 2000-Jubileo Sur Argentina / Diaspora Dance / Diversidades y No Discriminación, A.C. / Doroteia Pathways Foundation / Dra. Piedad Esneda Córdoba Ruiz, ex-Senadora Colombiana y Defensora de Derechos Humanos / Elijo Dignidad / Environmental Network for Central America / Environmental Network for Central America / Evolvlove / Fairmont, MN Peace Group / Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional - FASE Espírito Santo / Federación de Patronatos de Islas de la Bahía / Festivales Solidarios / FNE International / Franciscan Action Network / Free Radicals / Frente de Organizaciones Sociales de Chiapas - OPEZ–FOSICH / Frente de Pueblos en Defensa de la Tierra en San Salvador Atenco - FPDT-Atenco / Friendship Office / Fund for Global Human Rights / Fundación Privada Ficat / GAIA / Garifuna Community Services INC. / Gay Liberation Network / Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA) / Global

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Exchange / Grassroots Global Justice / Grassroots International ( GreenRoots / RaícesVerdes) / Haiti Justice Alliance / Héctor Orlando Zambrano - Diputado de la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela / Honduras Delegación Deutschland / Honduras Forum Schweiz / Honduras Partnership Resource Team, United Church of Christ, Maine Conference / Honduras Solidarity Network in North America / Honduro-Canada Solidarity Community / Imite Rezistans / Instituto de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Paz de Colombia - INDEPAZ / Instituto Mexicano de Desarrollo Comunitario - IMDEC / Instituto Paz / InterReligious Task Force on Central America / INTI PACHAMAMA Nicaragua / Irvine United Congregational Church, Advocates for Peace & Justice / Jobs With Justice / Jubileo Sur/ Américas / Jubileu Sul Brasil / Junta de Agua Potable, Las Mesas Concepción de María / Just Climate / Kawsachun News / KOOP Radio (Austin, TX) / Kultura Communication y Desarrollo / La Diáspora Hondureña / La Secreta Caprichosa / La Voz de los de Abajo / Latin America Caucus of Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice / Latin America Solidarity Coalition of Western Massachusetts / Latin America Solidarity Committee - Milwaukee / Latin America Task Force of the Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice / Lelapp, lesbianas antirracistas, Chile / Linked Fates / Luchemos / Madre Tierra - Organización de Mujeres Latinas Inmigrantes en USA / Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres Macronorte Perú / Maryknoll Sisters / Methow Just Peace / Miguel Urban Crespo - Miembro del Parlamento Europeo - Grupo Confederado de la Izquierda Unitaria Europea/Izquierda Verde Nórdica / Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions / Montreal Elders for Climate Justice / MONUCLAA / Movimiento Alfa y Omega de Perú / Movimiento de Favelas de Río Janeiro de Brasil / Movimiento de Mujeres de Kurdistán / Movimiento Internacional de la Economía de los Trabajadores de Venezuela / Movimiento Madre Tierra / Movimiento Mundial por los Bosques - WRM / Movimiento Wiphala / MUA / mundo librex / Native Green / Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala - NISGUA / New World Agroecology Group (NWAEG) / Nicaragua Center for Community Action / Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de los Pueblos / Observatorio de Paz, Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario / Observatorio Latinoamericano de Conflictos Ambientales - OLCA / Oficina Ecuménica por la Paz y la Justicia / Oilfields Workers' Trade Union / Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña - OFRANEH Europa / Organización Proletaria Emiliano Zapata / Otros Mundos Chiapas / Palestinian Farmers Union - Sindicato Agrario Palestino / PAPDA - Haiti / Pax Christi / Pax Christi of El Paso, Texas / Peace Brigades International-USA / Pikara Magazine / Plataforma Canadá Guatemaltecs Exiliadxs / Plataforma por Honduras en Madrid / Portland Central America Solidarity Committee - PCASC / PRBB Foundation / Programa Universitario de Estudios la Diversidad Cultural y la Interculturalidad PUIC-UNAM / PUIC-UNAM oficina Oaxaca / Race Matters / RASIN kan pèp la / Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales / Red de Colectivos La Araña Feminista de Venezuela / Red de Hondureñas Migradas / Red de Integración Orgánica

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/ Red de Mujeres Jóvenes Feministas / Red Jubileo Sur-Américas / Red Latinoamericana contra los Monocultivos de Árboles - RECOMA / Red Latinoamericana de Zurich / Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Honduras / Revolution Financial Management / Rights Action / Salisbury Honduras Solidarity Task Force / School of the Americas Watch - SOA Watch / School Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee, WI / Sede Comunidad LGBTI - OFRANEH, Trujillo / Seeds of Learning / Simcoe County Honduras Rights Monitor / Sister of St Francis, Dubuque, Iowa 52001-1311 / Soldepaz Pachakuti / St. Gabriel Peace and Justice / St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America - IFCLA / Stop the Wall - Campaña Popular Palestina contra el Muro de Apartheid / Task Force on the Americas / TecChange / The Cross Border Network / The Self-Portrait Project / Tikva Grassroots Empowerment Fund / Topanga Peace Alliance; MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles / U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities / UNIFOR / Unión Popular Revolucionaria Emiliano Zapata - UPREZ / Unitarian Universalist Service Committee - UUSC / United Latinos / United Steelworkers / University of Resistance in Haiti / Urban Farm and Garden Alliance / Virgo Moon / Wagucha / Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective / Women Against Military Madness / YES!

**They were taken alive, we want them back alive!**