

November 29, 2005

HONDURAS: MUDSLIDES & FLOODS KILLING DOZENS AND DISPLACING THOUSANDS

Even as we continue with Hurricane Stan relief work in Guatemala, we received an appeal (below, in Spanish) from our partner organization OFRANEH

(Fraternal Black and Garifuna Organization), a grassroots community-development organization of and for Garifuna people, that is providing emergency aid to isolated communities devastated by Tropical Storm Gamma.

OFRANEH is purchasing and transporting food and medical supplies by small boat along the north coast (as bridges and roads are washed out) to the region of Iriona, Gracias a Dios, and to other abandoned communities. (On request, RA can provide more information about OFRANEH)

To make a tax-charitable donation for "Tropical Storm Gamma" relief work that OFRANEH is directly involved with, see below.

Please re-distribute this information. If you want on-off this elist: info@rightsaction.org

===

BELOW:

- [in Spanish] An Urgent Communique - OFRANEH
- News articles
- How To Donate, in the USA and Canada

OFRANEH -- COMUNICADO PUBLICO

LA TORMENTA GAMMA Y EL S.O.S. DE LAS COMUNIDADES GARIFUNAS

La costa norte de Honduras acaba de pasar una de las temporadas de tormentas tropicales y huracanes m·s fuertes de las l·ltimas d·cadas, sembrando la zozobra y el p·nico entre nuestro pueblo garifuna, el que vive en carne propia las consecuencias del calentamiento global y la depredaci·n sistem·tica que se ha venido dando en el pa·s.

Las comunidades del municipio de Iriona y Walumugu se encuentran totalmente

incomunicadas y desabastecidas, siendo la ayuda recibida hasta el momento insuficiente. Los vuelos efectuados por los helicópteros de la Fuerza Aérea llevaron algunas raciones sin que solucionaran la hambruna en que se encuentran más de diez mil personas que habitan desde Punta Piedras hasta Plaplaya.

La destrucción causada ha cambiado la geografía del lugar, abriendo nuevas barras, anegando zonas que antes se consideraban seguras y desapareciendo carreteras. Los Río Sico y Paulaya demostraron una voracidad desconocida, producto de la aguda deforestación causada por los frentes de colonización que se instalaron en la zona hace más de una década.

A pesar de los estragos causados por el huracán Mitch, nunca se ha llevado a cabo un programa de análisis y gestión de riesgos, típico que el estado de Honduras de forma inconsecuente no ha asumido, como si las desgracias periódicas contribuyeran a fortalecer al país.

En la actualidad el proceso de ayuda ha quedado suspendido, dado que los helicópteros de las fuerzas armadas se encuentran destinados a la labor de logística relacionada con las futuras elecciones. Mientras tanto los damnificados se valen por sí mismos para remediar sus infortunios.

A pesar del discurso reiterativo del Sr. Elias Lizardo sobre la efectividad de la respuesta a la emergencia, las comunidades garífunas reportan otra situación muy distinta a la descrita por los personeros de la actual administración.

La OFRANEH apela no sólo a la generosidad de los organismos internacionales, sino también a la efectividad de la respuesta de COPECO y las otras instituciones involucradas en la emergencia. Urge el apoyo logístico para el transporte de alimentos y medicinas para la zona de Iriona, Gracias a Dios, y otras comunidades abandonadas.

===

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (Reuters)

Tropical Storm Gamma killed at least 32 people in Honduras and many more are feared dead in mudslides in two remote villages, an emergency official said on Monday. Dozens of homes may have been buried by mud after heavy rains at the villages in the eastern province of Olancho, said Randolph Funez, an official at the national civil protection agency.

Officials had earlier put the death toll in Honduras from Gamma, which pushed through Central America last weekend, at 11 people, but it rose on Monday as reports came in from areas that were cut off. "The most recent death toll we have is 32, unfortunately. Twelve of them are from the settlements of Rio Verde and Dos Portillos where it is feared that there are many more deaths due to the destruction of homes from mudslides," Funez said.

Gamma, the 24th major storm in a record-breaking hurricane season, weakened to a tropical depression on Sunday. Among its victims were three people who died in a plane crash on the way to a luxury jungle lodge in Belize owned by film director Francis Ford Coppola. In October, Hurricane Stan killed up to 2,000 people in Central America as flash floods and mudslides washed away entire villages. (c) Reuters 2005. All Rights Reserved. 05-11-22

===

GAMMA STORM TOLL IN HONDURAS RISES TO 34

TEGUCIGALPA (AFP) - The death toll in Honduras from Tropical Storm Gamma that lashed the region over the weekend has increased to 34, officials said. "As of today, we have 34 fatalities with more than 37,000 people evacuated from their homes," said Hugo Arevalo, deputy head of the civil emergency committee (COPEC).

Rescue operations were still underway to reach people stranded by

floods in
the north of the country after the storm slowed to a tropical
depression and
dissipated over the Caribbean. Northeastern Honduras took the full
brunt of
Gamma's driving rains, with some villages in Olancho sustaining damage
from
mudslides -- three people were killed in Jocomico, a village 350
kilometers
(220 miles) from here, local authorities said.

An entire family of six was buried by a mudslide in Locomapa, in Yoro
Department, 240 kilometers (150 miles) north of here, a COPEC
spokesman
said.

UN agencies were helping to distribute food. Gamma was the 24th named
storm
in the Atlantic area this hurricane season -- June 1 - November 30,
setting
an all time record that exhausted the normal alphabetical nomenclature
and
had to resort to the Greek alphabet.

===

TAX-CHARITABLE DONATIONS (IN THE U.S.A. & CANADA)

Credit card donations: www.rightsaction.org (Make donation on behalf
of
"Gamma Storm")

Make check to "Rights Action" (write "Gamma Storm" on memo-line) and
mail
to:

- UNITED STATES: Rights Action, Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- CANADA: Rights Action, 509 St. Clair Av. W., box73527, Toronto ON,
M6C-1C0

Bank to bank transfers: contact info@rightsaction.org

===