

Violence And Death In The Aguán Valley

Food First and Information and Action Network, 16 NOVIEMBRE
2010

http://www.resistenciahonduras.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1556:violence-and-death-in-the-aguan-valley&catid=99:official&Itemid=348

“At the time of this statement (approximately 17:30CST, November 15), the following deaths are confirmed:

*Teodoro Acosta, campesino from the “Nueva Vida” community;
Ignacio Reyes from “Familia Unida Dos”;
Raúl Castillo from “14 de mayo”; and
Ciriaco Muñoz from “Nueva Esperanza”.”*

BELOW:

- Report from FIAN about the killing of at least 4 campesinos by private security guards in hire of Miguel Facusse, one of the wealthiest Hondurans and supporter of the June 2009 military coup
- Urgent action from “Friendship Office of the Americas”

In response to the persistent violence in the Aguán Valley and the manipulative intent on the part of many communication media, we must remember important events that clarify the conflict over land tenure in what was known as the Regional Center for Military Training (CREM).

BACKGROUND

In 1977, Temístocles Ramírez, a United States citizen of Puerto Rican origin, purchased 5,700 hectares along the coast, paying 165 thousand Lempiras in a flagrant violation of the Constitution which prohibits foreigners from owning land on coastlines and borders.

Within the framework of the national security doctrine, in 1983, the United States required the government of Honduras to install the CREM and this required the expropriation of property from Temístocles Ramírez.

In 1987, Temístocles appealed the government of the United States, demanding indemnification for "his" land. On June 29th of that year, the U.S. House of Representatives agreed to reduce a \$51 million loan to Honduras by \$17 million with which the government of Honduras paid Temístocles this multi million dollar sum. These lands were paid with external debt and titled to the State of Honduras.

In 1991, during the government of Callejas, a new Municipalities Law was passed, allowing municipalities to sell all untitled lands, national and collective. The municipality of Trujillo sold the CREM lands to local cattle ranchers for only 23-30 Lempiras per hectare. In other words, what the government had purchased for 17 million dollars, the municipality sold for less than 50 thousand. The sale was illegal because the CREM lands were not collective, nor national, but land titled to the State.

In 1993, the Attorney General formally transferred these lands to INA to be distributed to landless peasants. However, the violent conflict did not end there. Even though the land purchases were illegal, the landowners demanded the State of Honduras to pay improvements and the government ceded, paying 105 million Lempiras.

MANY CAMPESINOS KILLED

From August 2008 to September 2009, there have been between 17 and 19 deaths as a result of the conflict between the peasants of the Guadalupe Carney Community (GC) and the landowners. Unfortunately, the conflict does not end there. Several years ago, Miguel Facussé planted 700 acres of African Palm on lands belonging to this community. According to the peasants of

Guadalupe Carney, Miguel Facussé took these lands illegally together with other large landholders in the area: Rene Morales and the national member of Congress, Oscar Nájera.

The peasants know that these lands belong to them, and so nine months ago they occupied them, but Miguel Facussé reacted by using approximately 300 private security guards to evict them. As a result, negotiations were initiated between the MCA peasants and Miguel Facussé, who approached the negotiations from the perspective that the land did not belong to the peasants. The discussion, therefore, focused on the payment of improvements, in an attempt by Facussé to take advantage of the resources of the Honduran State. The negotiations moved very slowly and the INA (National Agrarian Institute) did not participate to the extent that it is required to by law, allowing the violence to emerge.

NOVEMBER 15, 2010 MASSACRE

Under these circumstances, at 04:00 today, peasants from Guadalupe Carney occupied the 700 manzanas of land that Miguel Facussé illegally occupies in the "El Tumbador" sector. Following the occupation, approximately 300 of Miguel Facussé's private guards attempted to evict them. According to the same source, an exchange of gunshots lasted four hours.

At the time of this statement (approximately 17:30 CST), the following deaths are confirmed:

Teodoro Acosta, campesino from the "Nueva Vida" community;
Ignacio Reyes from "Familia Unida Dos";
Raúl Castillo from "14 de mayo" and
Ciriaco Muñoz from "Nueva Esperanza".

There are four wounded; Calidonio Ramírez, Pedro Eleazar Deras, Marvin Jerónimo Méndez Leiva and Abraham Martínez, and two disappeared; José Luis Saucedo and Noé Pérez. The homes and cooperative buildings in the communities of "10 de abril" and "14

de julio" were damaged by shots fired by Miguel Facussé's security guards.

COLLUSION WITH HONDURAN POLICE

Suspiciously, the police did not arrive at the scene until 12:30 and seemed to have been expecting more dramatic results. Their intention and the result of their actions was the eviction of the peasants and leaving the lands in question in the possession of Facussé's guards.

It has again been made clear that the state institutions are at the service of the large landholders of the region and private security guards are acting for the repressive state organs and proceeding to capture, torture, and assassinate those who oppose the powerful, with full authority and complicity of the police.

We urge human rights organizations, governments, and transnational organizations to pressure Porfirio Lobo's regime to halt the violence that has caused so much damage to the residents of the Aguán Valley.

Macuelizo, November 15th, 2010
Gilberto Ríos, Secretario Ejecutivo
FIAN Internacional, Sección Honduras

= = =

CONTACT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS & YOUR OWN ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

SUGGESTION FOR PHONE CALL, LETTER OR EMAIL:

(Slightly edited version – from the Friendship Office of the Americas, PO Box 925, Greenbelt, MD 20768, 301.614.0545)

We are calling to express our deep concern about the violent attack by 200 armed men against the peasant movement in the Aguan Valley yesterday, leaving at least 4 dead and others

gravely injured. The campesino movement in this region has been the target of multiple human rights violations in recent months, including at least 17 murders, due to a land dispute with local large landholders who support the coup.

Today, as the community of Guadalupe Carney bury the dead, as reported November 15th in Honduran daily El Tiempo, the US and Canada-backed Lobo regime, announced that in response to yesterday's killings, it is sending military and police contingents to the area to conduct joint operations.

This response is highly alarming. Human rights abuses committed by Honduran police and military have been widely and repeatedly documented and denounced by national and international human rights organizations.

We call on the US and Canadian governments to insist that the Honduran regime halt police and military operations in the region which will only serve to escalate violence and lead to more killing.

We also join 30 members of the US Congress who recently wrote to Secretary of State Clinton to call on the US government to suspend military and police aid to repressive forces in Honduras which enjoy total impunity. (Copy of this letter available on request)

As US and Canadian citizens, we do not want our tax dollars to support repressive forces, human rights abuses and impunity in Honduras.

Sources:

--Translated statement from FIAN Honduras (below); original Spanish <http://spanish.news.fmota.com/fian-honduras-violencia-y-muerte-en-el-valle-del-aguan.html>

--Nov. 15th article from [defensoresenlinea.com](http://www.defensoresenlinea.com) confirming 5th death:

http://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1061:quinto-campesino-aparece-

asesinado-entre-la-maleza-en-el-tumbador&catid=42:seg-y-jus&Itemid=159

--Nov. 16th article in El Tiempo re. response of Lobo regime:
<http://www.tiempo.hn/web2/secciones/el-pais/25819-ffaa-y-policia-a-resguardar-el-orden-y-bienes-en-bajo-aguan-.html>

= = =

CONTACT INFO:

US

- dial 202-647-4000, Ask for Greg Maggio at the Human Rights Desk at the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, or dial 202-647-8298. Alternately, ask to speak to Laura Pena, Assistant to Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs at 202-647-7556

CANADA

- Prime Minister Stephen Harper, harpes@parl.gc.ca
- Minister of Foreign Affairs Lawrence Cannon, 509-S Centre Block, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6, cannol@parl.gc.ca
- Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas) Peter Kent, 125 Sussex Dr, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0G2
(613) 992-0253, kent.p@parl.gc.ca

ALSO – write to your own elected Senators, Congress members, Members of Parliament

= = =

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

for indigenous and campesino communities working for community controlled development and a return to democracy and the rule of law in Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS:

<http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

DONATIONS OF STOCK: info@rightsaction.org

* * *

SPEAKERS:

Contact us to plan educational presentations in your community, school, place of worship, home (info@rightsaction.org)

EDUCATIONAL DELEGATIONS TO CENTRAL AMERICA:

Form your own group and/ or join one of our educational delegation-seminars to learn first hand about community development, human rights and environmental struggles (info@rightsaction.org)

CREATE YOUR OWN email and mail lists and re-distribute our information

RECOMMENDED DAILY NEWS: www.democracynow.org / www.upsidedownworld.org / www.dominionpaper.ca

RECOMMENDED BOOKS: Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"; Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States"; James Loewen's "Lies My Teacher Told Me"; Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine"; Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who"

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org, Annie Bird, annie@rightsaction.org, Karen Spring (in Honduras), spring.kj@gmail.com