

Rights Action - March 28, 2011
Honduras Military-backed Regime Watch

URGENT ACTION

WOUNDING & DETENTION OF GARIFUNA LEADER, MIRIAM MIRANDA OF OFRANEH (BLACK FRATERNAL ORGANIZATION OF HONDURAS)

At approximately 6:30 am, March 28th, Garifuna, indigenous and pro-democracy movement leader Miriam Miranda was shot in the stomach with a tear-gas canister and illegally detained by police during a peaceful road occupation in a Garifuna community, Triunfo de la Cruz in Tela Bay, Northern Honduras.

Miriam is currently being detained in the police post in Tela where, within 24 hours of her (illegal) detention, the District Attorney will decide whether to press charges against Miriam for sedition and obstruction of a public roadway.

Since the violent eviction of the road occupation by police, it has been reported that Miriam is experiencing breathing problems, suffering from tear gas burns on her abdomen and has various bruises on different spots on her body.

REPRESSION OF TEACHERS

The peaceful road occupation in Triunfo de la Cruz is one of the many road occupations and actions being coordinated and carried out in solidarity with the public school teacher's movement and the pro-democracy people's movement in defense of public education.

In the last week and a half, public school teachers and the pro-democracy people's movement have faced brutal repression by the post-coup, military-backed regime of Pepe Lobo & state security forces that are trying to privatize public education and weaken the teachers movement, one of the pillars of the pro-democracy people's movement that came together after the June 28th, 2009 military coup in Honduras.

THE KILLING OF ILSE VELASQUEZ

During this mass wave of repression, on March 18th, teacher Ilse Ivania Valesquez Rodriguez was killed during a violent eviction of a protest in Tegucigalpa where she was hit in the head by a tear gas canister fainted and later run over by a car.

During these protests in various places throughout the country, many people have been injured, illegally detained & criminalized. At least four journalists covering the protests and repression have been harassed on separate occasions resulting in two journalists from Canal 36 being hospitalized on March 25 after being fired at by police with tear gas at close range.

Currently there are 22 teachers being held since their detention on March 25th in the National Penitentiary in Tegucigalpa where tomorrow they will go before a judge that will decide whether to press various charges against them including sedition, illicit association and

disobeying authority, damages to private property. (Rights Action will be sending an alert out shortly regarding the hearing tomorrow and the detention of the teachers).

Miriam Miranda's detention and the detention of the 22 teachers is once again an attempt by the post-coup regime to criminalize and weaken the pro-democracy and teacher's movement.

REPRESSION & TOURISM

Since the June 28, 2009 coup d'etat, the repression against OFRANEH (of which Miriam Miranda is the General Coordinator) has worsened, as there has been a strong push since the military coup to continue the mega tourist projects that the communities of Tela Bay have strongly resisted.

For more than two decades, OFRANEH and the Garifuna communities along the north coast, including Tela Bay have been under violent & systematic threats of expulsion as a result of the interests of the national & international tourist industry, international financial institutions (including the World Bank and the IDB), Honduran elite & businessmen, Canadian tourists interests, the military and police that are all associated with the construction of the mega tourist projects.

WHAT TO DO – CALLS NEEDED

Calls are needed to secure Miriam Miranda's immediate and unconditional release. Demand that all charges are dropped immediately.

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Yanny Del Cid, Public Defender of Indigenous groups, 011-504-9565-3361

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Fiscal (attorney) in charge of Miriam's case in Tela: Coritza Vega, 011-504-2448-1349 and 011-504-2248-1752

Oscar Álvarez, Security Secretary, Fax: 011-504-2232-0226

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SENATE: Go to <http://www.senate.gov/> to get contact for your Senator, and call: 202-224-3121

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