

Antonio Trejo, Honduran lawyer for land defenders in The Aguan, Murdered At Wedding

“I write, now, in a shock, and grief. Trejo had been planning a trip with MARCA leaders to Washington in October to submit petitions to the Inter American Commission for Human Rights, and I had been collaborating in these plans. I last saw him just ten days ago.” (Annie Bird, Rights Action)

BELOW

- Washington Post article
- Communique from COFADEH (Committee of Family Members of the Disappeared in Honduras)

Honduras Human Rights Lawyer For Agrarian Groups Murdered At Wedding

Washington Post, September 23, 2012

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/honduras-human-rights-lawyer-who-opposed-private-cities-murdered/2012/09/23/059ff77a-05a5-11e2-9eea-333857f6a7bd_print.html

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras — A leading human rights lawyer who represented several Honduran agrarian groups in disputes with large landowners was killed by gunmen on Sunday, a land rights organization said. Antonio Trejo Cabrera, 41, was shot five times while attending a wedding in the capital, Tegucigalpa, the Peasant Movement of the Valley of Bajo Aguan said in a statement.

Trejo was a lawyer from three peasant cooperatives in the Bajo Aguan, a fertile farming area plagued by violent conflicts between agrarian organizations and land owners. More than 60 people have been killed in such disputes over the past two years. The lawyer had recently helped farmers gain legal rights to several plantations.

Trejo had also helped prepare motions declaring unconstitutional a proposal to build three privately run cities with their own police, laws and tax systems.

Just hours before his murder, Trejo had participated in a televised debate in which he accused congressional leaders of using the private city projects to raise campaign funds.

The lawyer was to travel to Washington in October to participate in hearings on the Bajo Aguan situation at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, said Annie Bird, co-director of Rights Action.

Trejo “had denounced those responsible for his future death on many occasions,” said Vitalino Alvarez, a spokesman for Bajo Aguan’s peasants. “Since they couldn’t beat him in the courts, they killed him.”

No arrests have been made in Trejo’s killing.

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Legal Representative Of Marca (Authentic Campesino Movement Of Aguan) Murdered

COFADEH Statement

September 23, 2012, by Dina Meza

Lawyer Antonio Trejo, the legal representative of the Authentic Claimant Campesino Movement of Aguan (MARCA) died from several gunshot wounds on Saturday night, September 22. On August 22, he was prosecuted by the Public Prosecutor’s Office (Ministerio Público) after being arrested on August 21 while speaking to the press when the police were beating and detaining campesinos who were peacefully protesting.

Now a murder victim, he was outside a church celebrating a wedding in Toncontin (near the airport in Tegucigalpa), when he was attacked by men who shot him five times in different parts of his body, causing his death. His vehicle also has at least four bullet holes, according to a report from the Unified

Campesino Movement of Aguan (MUCA). The crime occurred just a month after he was accused by the Public Prosecutor's Office of several crimes, charges that it was then unable to justify at court. He was awaiting the judge's verdict, which was postponed until October.

The legal professional played a crucial role in defending the right to land of the San Isidro, Despertar, and La Trinidad campesino cooperatives, which are members of MARCA. His line of argument for the restoration of the property rights of the cooperatives led him to file several legal cases over several years until a Civil Judge issued a decision that returned the land to the campesinos on June 29 of this year, 18 years after the campesinos were stripped of the land by the large landowners Miguel Facussé y René Morales.

However, while the Supreme Court was in recess, the landowners' lawyers lodged an appeal, after the deadline, and the Court illegally ruled in their favor. According to the reports of campesino organizations in the Aguan, judges at the Francisco Morazan and La Ceiba Courts of Appeal were taking steps to reverse the ruling.

On August 20, the organizations went to lodge the formal complaint before the President of the Supreme Court of Justice, Jorge Rivera Avilés, but he did not receive them and promised to do so the next day. However, he did not receive them the next day either and instead met with the legal representatives of landowners and ordered those who had lodged the complaint to be violently removed. The police arrested 25 people, including Trejo, who denounced the situation to the media. They were charged with participating in illicit protests, damages to the Supreme Court, and illegally carrying weapons, in a biased trial full of many irregularities.

The initial hearing took place on September 19 and 20, during which the Public Prosecutor's Office could not prove that the accused were guilty of the charges. The judge left the decision pending until October 5. In the face of this arbitrary action, Trejo pointed out that the Public Prosecutor's Office was committing malfeasance, abuse of authority, false testimony, and a false lawsuit "and we will take legal action against it because of these crimes, because it's just too much, what it's doing."

Moreover, he stated that it is a repressive policy on the part of the government to criminalize social protest and he recalled that, at about 2pm, a Commissioner who is the liaison between the Supreme Court and the police had told him, “Look, they aren’t going to see you and the President of the Court already spoke with the police and says that they are going to gas you now.”

What follows is the communiqué issued about this case

by the Unified Campesino Movement of Aguan (MUCA):

At 9:10pm, Antonio Trejo Cabrera (age 41), the legal representative of the Authentic Claimant Campesino Movement of Aguan (MARCA) was shot near the National Toncontin Airport and immediately transferred to the Hospital Escuela (Teaching Hospital), where he died after an hour. Now a murder victim, he was outside a church celebrating a wedding in Toncontin, when he was attacked by men who shot him five times in different parts of his body, causing his death. His vehicle also has at least four bullet holes.

The Aguan campesino movement condemns this vile murder, which now is added to the list of those who have been shot and killed in their struggle to defend their people. On several occasions, Trejo denounced the threats he had received to the media and held the Bajo Aguan landowners responsible for any attempts to kill him or his family.

Trejo handled the legal affairs of the San Isidro, La Trinidad, and El Despertar cooperatives, which belong to MARCA, and on August 21, was arrested outside the Supreme Court of Justice and imprisoned together with 24 campesinos and 4 other citizens.

The Aguan campesinos are in solidarity with him and express our deepest condolences to his family, wife, and children.

There is no doubt that Trejo’s murder is a message from the powerful groups that live in the Aguan and those who make decisions in the country, to the campesinos.

We hold the judiciary, the legislature, the executive branch, landowners Miguel Facusse, René Morales, Reinaldo Canales, and the repressive apparatus of the state responsible for this brutal murder.

We warn national and international human rights organizations to be watching for what might occur in the following days, because a supposed investigating board, where the names of campesino leaders Vitalino Álvarez, Yoni Rivas, Juan Chinchilla and Rafael Bautista appear, has been set up in the police headquarters in Tocoa, Colon.

We are not Birds to live in the air,
we are not fish to live in the water,
we are campesinos who need to live on the land.

Unified Campesino Movement of Aguan (MUCA)

http://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2252:asesinan-al-apoderado-legal-de-movimiento-autentico-reivindicador-campesino-del-aguan&catid=71:def&Itemid=166

{Translated by Honduras Accompaniment Project:
<http://hondurasaccompanimentproject.wordpress.com>}

WRITE LETTERS ...

Please send copies of this information, and your own letters, to your Canadian and American politicians (MPs, Congress members and Senators) and your own media. Since the June 2009 military coup, that ousted the democratically elected government of President Zelaya, Honduras has become the 'Murder Capital of the world'. Military backed repression has again reached the levels of the worst years of the 1980s. And, since the 2009 coup, the U.S. and Canadian governments have 'legitimized the illegitimate' post-coup regime. North American companies and investors have increased their business activities in Honduras since the coup. In no small part, this regime remains in power due to its political, economic and military relations with the U.S. and Canada.

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Nov. 12-21, 2012 or Nov. 16-19, 2012.

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