

More Repression Against 'La Panama' Community In Aguan Region, Honduras: Urgent Action And Support Needed

By Karen Spring, May 23, 2013

(The exhumation of Gregorio Chavez's body on July 6th, 2012 in the community of La Panama, Aguan Valley, Honduras. Photo: Karen Spring)

Starting last night (May 22), the Honduran military headed by Operation Xatruch Commander, Coronel German Alfaro and private security guards contracted by Dinant Corporation (controlled by Honduran oligarch Miguel Facusse) have been inside the Paso Aguan finca firing automatic weapons in what appears to be attempts to intimidate and scare the community of 'La Panama' that lives inside and adjacent to the finca.

The 'La Panama' community has been occupying the Paso Aguan plantation for over 9 months since community member Gregorio Chavez's tortured body was found in a shallow grave inside the plantation on July 6th, 2012.

The community occupied the finca to demand justice for the disappearance, assassination and torture of Chavez, one of over 99 campesinos that have been targeted and killed in the Aguan Valley since the military coup in June 2009.

It is also widely believed by human rights and campesino organizations that the plantation is the clandestine burial site of other campesinos and individuals that have disappeared in the region. This was confirmed in April 2013 when the community found the body of Jose Antonio Lopez, who was reported missing on April 29th, 2012 after he left the community, Rigores, to go fishing. More graves inside the finca are speculated by the 'La Panama' and campesinos organizations in the region.

Earlier this week on May 21st at 5:00 am, the military headed by Xatruch commander, Coronel Alfaro occupied by private security guards entered the community to evict the community and have remained inside the finca since then.

The community fears for their safety and security. They continue to demand justice for the death of Gregorio Chavez and fear repression and violence against them.

THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

The United States government trains, funds and sends special forces, such as the U.S. Army Rangers, to assist and train the Honduran military in the 15th Battalion, located in the Aguan Valley. The 15th Battalion is the location where many of the military operations against the campesino movements in the Aguan are supplied and coordinated.

The same private security guards attempting to intimidate 'La Panama' and involved in dozens of reported human rights abuses in the Aguan Valley, are contracted by Dinant Corporation that receives millions of dollars in loans from the World Bank's International Finance Corporation and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Canada signed a Free Trade Agreement with Honduras in August 2011 and the Canadian Parliament is expected to approve the FTA in the Fall 2013.

It is, therefore, very pertinent that American and Canadian representatives hear about these human rights violations as they are considering expanding their economic interests in the country while outright ignoring extensive reports of grave human rights abuses. North American governments have played a critical and supportive role in state policies of repression, violence and impunity particularly since the June 2009 military coup.

Please call your Congressional representative / Member of Parliament, the US Embassy (Tegucigalpa) and the Canadian Embassy (Costa Rica) and respective Honduran authorities (in Spanish) to demand:

1. An end to the intimidation and repression against the community of 'La Panama' and the immediate removal of private security guards and the Honduran military from the Paso Aguan finca.
2. Disclosure of the medical forensic results of Gregorio Chavez exhumation by the Public Prosecutor's Office to the Chavez family and an immediate investigation of his death.
3. Thorough, independent investigation of all human rights abuses committed against the campesino movements in the Aguan Valley including over 99-targeted assassinations.
4. Immediate suspension of all military and police aid and assistance to Honduran forces.

CANADA

Canadian Embassy in Costa Rica (responsible for Canadian embassy offices in Honduras)

PO Box: 351-1007, Centro Colon

San Jose, Costa Rica

Tel: 011-506-2242-4400

Fax: (for Political affairs) 011-506-2242-4411, (for commercial affairs) 011-504-2242-4415

Honduras Office of the Canadian Embassy

Centro Financiero Banexpo, 3 Piso, Boulevard San Juan Bosco,
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Payaquí, Tegucigalpa, (504) 232-4551; tgipa@international.gc.ca

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HONDURAS

Xatruch military Commander, Coronel German Alfaro

Tel: 011-504-3396-4477

Minister of Justice and Human Rights, Ana Piñeda

Tel: 011-504-9982-6801

Honduran President, Porfirio Lobo

Tel: 011-504-9978-2138 or 011-504-9990-0878

Vice Minister of Security, Marcela Castañeda

Tel: 011-504-9450-7028

UNITED STATES

WHITE HOUSE: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>, 202-456-1111, Comment Line:

202-456-1414

CONGRESS: Go to <http://www.house.gov/> to get info for your member of

Congress, and call: 202-224-3121

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

STATE DEPARTMENT - Office of Western Hemisphere Affairs: 202 647-0834, WHAAsstSecty@State.Gov

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U.S. AMBASSADOR to the OAS
H.E. Carmen Lomellin
(202) 647-9430

MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS (in Canada and the U.S.)

To support grassroots organizations and struggle in Honduras, such as MUCA in the Aguan region, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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

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

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS can be made (in Canada and U.S.):

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