

Rights Action
January 22, 2015
info@rightsaction.org

**Sign-On Letter concerning:
Assassination Of Juan Francisco Martinez, Lenca Indigenous
Community & Environmental Defender Resisting Construction Of
Illegal Hydroelectric Dam In Honduras**



Please send copies of this to your elected politicians in the U.S. and Canada, encouraging them to sign this letter.

- To Sign On: Send your organization's name and home city to: Karen Spring, spring.kj@gmail.com
- Deadline: Sunday, January 25th

January 22, 2015

Abog. Óscar Fernando Chinchilla
Fiscal General de la República
Tel. (504) 22215665
Correo electrónico: fiscalgeneral@hushmail.com

Dear Abog. Oscar Chinchilla,

On January 5 of this year, Juan Francisco Martínez, a member of the Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz (MILPAH), was found murdered in his community of Tapuyman in Santa Elena, La Paz, Honduras.

According to the Honduran Center for the Promotion of Community Development (CEHPRODEC), his body was found with burn marks and his hands were bound with laces from military boots. Based on this evidence, Juan Francisco is believed to have been assassinated. Since August, Juan Francisco's family has also received repeated threats of violence.

The below-signed organizations and individuals share the worry of Honduran organizations that Juan Francisco's murder was a direct result of his efforts in defense of collective Indigenous land. In particular, the organization to which he belonged, the Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz (MILPAH), has been very active in challenging a high-profile hydroelectric energy project that has made the organization and its supporters targets of similar assassinations, and left many the victims of death threats, kidnapping, and vandalism.

The Los Encinos S.A. dam is part of an energy project funded by Gladys Aurora López, a National Party Deputy and Vice President of the Honduran Congress.

Permission to build the project was granted without the free, prior and informed consent of the affected community. This is a blatant violation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Honduras has endorsed, as well as the International Labour Organization Convention 169 and other international jurisprudence.

This is not an isolated incident. Juan Francisco's murder and MILPAH's struggle is emblematic of conflicts around Honduras between Indigenous and campesino communities faced with the imposition of hydroelectric, mining and other extractive projects.

This situation has worsened to the point of crisis since the 2009 ouster of President Manuel Zelaya by sectors of the National Party Congress and Honduran military with aid from the United States and tacit support from Canada. International observers have waved a red flag at continued support of the ruling party of Honduras since the contested national elections in November 2013.

The continued scrutiny is in response to the ongoing human rights crisis in which extrajudicial executions, unlawful detention and criminalization of peaceful protest, and revoking of government-issued land deeds for Indigenous and campesino communities

have become commonplace. This campaign of terror and the context of impunity in which it is taking place is unacceptable.

The murder of Juan Francisco Martínez, together with the threats against his family and MILPAH, are further evidence of the antagonistic relationship between state forces and the Honduran people. We condemn this attack as an act of intimidation and terror on behalf of corporations who illegitimately obtained permits or concessions with complete disregard for the peaceful resistance of community groups.

In solidarity with Juan Francisco's family, MILPAH and other Honduran organizations, we urge the Honduran Public Ministry of Honduras to carry out a full and impartial investigation of the crime ensuring that those responsible are brought to justice. We also ask that the Office for Forensic Medicine of the Public Ministry immediately report the results of its autopsy of Juan Francisco's body to MILPAH and CEHPRODEC, which provides legal assistance to the organization, and to then make this information available to the public. We also demand that protection is guaranteed to those at risk of further attacks, including the family of Juan Francisco and other members of MILPAH. This protection should take place according to the requests of the affected communities, and not on the terms of local officials or armed forces in the area.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this issue.

Other Worlds, U.S.

Latin American Solidarity Committee, Milwaukee, U.S.

School of the Americas Watch - San Francisco, California

School of the Americas Watch - Oakland, California

Rights Action, US and Canada

... more signers ...

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Cc:

US Embassy in Tegucigalpa

State Department

US Congressional offices

Canadian Embassy in Costa Rica (responsible for Honduras)

Canadian Members of Parliament

Dra. Julissa Villanueva,

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Gral. Julian Pacheco Tinoco

Ministro de Seguridad, Honduras

El Ocotal, Comayagua M.D.C.

antiguo Local de Academia de Policía (ANAPO)

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