

Assassination Attempt In Honduras Linked to Canadian Tourism Businesses: Indigenous Garifuna leader Vidal Leiva shot three times



(Vidal Leiva, at OFRANEH meeting in October 2015 with visiting UN human rights Rapporteur. On November 27, 2015, Vidal Leiva was shot three times in Trujillo ... and has survived. Photo: OFRANEH)

- **Below:** Urgent Action from OFRANEH (translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gill)
- **Matching Donor:** Emergency response funds needed for OFRANEH. {All donations received in December 2015 will be matched by a long-time supporter of Rights Action ~ See below}
- **What to do:** See below

Garifuna Land Rights Defender Attacked in Trujillo

by OFRNEAH (Honduran Black People's Fraternal Organization)

November 30, 2015, <https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2015/11/30/alerta-atentan-contra-la-vida-de-defensor-del-territorio-garifuna-en-trujillo/>

On Friday, November 27, in the city of Trujillo, our friend Vidal Leiva, President of the Land Defense Committee in the Garifuna communities of Cristales and Río Negro, Trujillo, was attacked by gunmen. Leiva was shot three times - receiving a bullet in one of his lungs and another in his liver. Despite the seriousness of his wounds, the community leader is in stable condition.

Nonetheless, fear reigns in the community. Members of the Land Defense Committee have received threats and have been harassed by persons from outside the community.

Eye-witnesses say the attack was carried out by two mestizo individuals. The site of the attack is one block away from what appears to be an office of the Honduran military's Quinceavo Batallón infantry detachment in Trujillo.

Trial Against Randy Jorgensen, the "Porn King"

On November 13, the trial of Canadian Randy Jorgensen began. He is accused of illegal land seizures. In December 2011, at the request of OFRNEAH, the Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Groups applied for an injunction against the "Porn King" (as Mr. Jorgensen is known for his financial success in the pornography industry in Canada), and following that, a warrant for his arrest on the grounds of contempt of court was issued.

Since 2007, the Garifuna communities of the Trujillo Bay area have been subject to strong pressures on their historic land holdings, at the hands of the Porn King and related Canadian and American tourism investors and businesses. These threats reached their height with the demolition of the Garifuna community of Río Negro in 2010, which was carried out by orders of the Municipality of Trujillo, using the "forced expropriation" law in an attempt to further Jorgensen's plan to construct a cruise ship port and tourist complex, called the Banana Coast.

Local Garifuna people state that since the first hearing of the trial began on November 13, community leaders involved in the defense of land rights have been subject to systematic harassment.

Randy's Henchman

The Land Defense Committee also states that Joel Ruiz, known as "Cayo" or "Randy's henchman," photographed and followed Vidal Leiva and other members of the committee.

Randy and the Post-Military Coup 'defacto' President

Randy Jorgensen has the support of the infamous Lobo clan, especially Ramón Lobo, brother of then 'defacto' President Porfirio Lobo. In 2011, Jorgensen was publically recognized by President Porfirio Lobo, put in power by the military after the 2009 military coup which was supported by the US and Canada.



(Internet photo – Randy Jorgensen with then 'defacto' President Lobo, in the Honduran National Palace.)

As well, Jorgensen has had the unconditional support of the Municipal governments of Trujillo and Santa Fe, where he was able to appropriate lands from the Garifuna communities of Guadalupe, San Antonio and Santa Fe.

Corrupted Administration of Justice

The initial legal case against Jorgensen, for illegal appropriation of lands in Cristales and Río Negro, was partially stayed by the court. Witnesses point out that the DGIC (Criminal Investigation Agency) did not take up the complaint initially filed by the Vidal family.

The justice system in Honduras, including the city of Trujillo, has long been accused of being ineffectual or in collusion with powerful sectors who contravene the law.

OFRANEH demands an exhaustive investigation into the attack on Vidal Leiva. We also demand that the Public Ministry investigate the seizures and illegal purchases made by Randy Jorgensen.

OFRANEH calls for national and international solidarity to be vigilant about the intensifying repressive situation in Trujillo related, significantly, to global tourism and business interests. There will likely be further conflict because the Garifuna communities of Trujillo Bay refuse to continue losing their lands. OFRANEH is ready to defend the lands and territories of the Garifuna people, a right enshrined in ILO Covenant 169 and in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

!! With the force of Barauda and Satuye, we will continue our struggle !!

Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, OFRANEH

Watch 8 minute report:

Canadian Porn King on Trial for Tourism Projects in Honduras

- Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWqoB5GTfm8>



On November 13th, 2015, Canadian tourism developer Randy Jorgensen, aka "The Porn King", appeared in court on charges of illegally appropriating ancestral Garifuna lands. The court ruled partially in Jorgensen's favour, choosing not to go to a full trial for the time being, but local communities smell corruption and vow to appeal this ruling in Honduran courts and keep on fighting all the way to international tribunals, meaning that Jorgensen's and others' investments remain in legal limbo and could still be in jeopardy.

More Information in Honduras:

- OFRANEH (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña),
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- Karen Spring, Honduras Solidarity Network, Spring.kj@gmail.com

More Information in Canada/ U.S.:

- Grahame Russell, Rights Action, info@rightsaction.org

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- (All donations received in December 2015 will be matched by a long-time supporter of Rights Action)

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Honduras Fact-finding Trips

- January 8-16, 2016 - "Communities Resisting Land Grabs and the Drug War in Northern Honduras"; hosted by: Cross Border Network (Kansas City) and Task Force on the Americas (California); To apply: Judy Ancel jancel@igc.org, Maria Robinson mariarobinson1@earthlink.net.
- March 19-26, 2016 - "Why Are So Many Hondurans & Guatemalans Fleeing Their Countries, Forced To Migrate To The United States?"; hosted by Rights Action; more info: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org

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