

13 days since forced disappeared of 5 black Garifuna land defenders by Honduran military-backed regime, a US & Canadian-backed 'democratic allie'

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/13-days-since-forced-disappeared-of-5-black-garifuna-land-defenders>

- Statement by Honduras Coalition Against Impunity
- Emergency support needed for OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras), the lead Garifuna organization

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Alive they took them, Alive we want them ***Vivos Se Los Llevaron, Vivos Los Queremos***

Statement by Honduras Coalition Against Impunity, 28 julio, 2020

<https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/vivos-se-los-llevaron-vivos-los-queremos/>

(English version forwarded by Jenny Atlee, jennya@friendshipamericas.org)



It has been 10 days since Alberth Snider Centeno Tomás, President of the Patronato de Triunfo de la Cruz and member of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), along with Garifuna leaders, Suami Aparicio Mejía García, Gerardo Mizaél Rochez Cáliz, Milton Joel Martínez Álvarez and a friend of the community, Junior Rafael Juárez Mejía, were separated from their family members and the community by unknown armed actors dressed as agents of the Investigative Police (DPI).

The state of Honduras has provided no response regarding their whereabouts.

Garifuna territories are the scene of a historic conflict of forced displacement of communities from their ancestral territories by the greed of tourism sector companies, INTUR, Camatur, ITH and the INDURA group, in collusion with the State of Honduras.

Honduras has failed to uphold its obligations according to rulings by the Inter American Court of Human Rights. As a result, the Garifuna population is condemned to violence and displacement which has intensified in the last years.

Recently, (prior to the disappearance of the five young men) the lifeless body of community leader Antonio Bermúdez was found in the community of Punta Piedra on June 21st. On May 20, 2020, Edwin Fernández - a member of OFRANEH - was murdered in front of his family for not handing over the key to the community security gate.

There are enough indicators to identify a pattern of systematic violence against the Garifuna population, a policy of extermination and displacement to guarantee that their landscapes, beaches, territories and cultural richness be at the full disposal of tourism investors. There are attacks and crimes committed against community leaders, people who are key to efforts to resist extractive industries and the defense of ancestral territories.

This wave of crimes and disappearances is not new in Honduras; neither is the impunity that protects the criminals that drive this policy.

According to the Committee of the Detained–Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), in the context of the COVID-19 emergency, at least 7 people are registered as disappeared, including the Garifuna leaders.

These cases reveal a pattern similar to three critical historical times in Honduras: During the decade of the 80s when 184 people were disappeared; in the aftermath of the 2009 Coup d'état when at least 13 people were detained-disappeared; and, the post electoral crisis (2017-2018) when another person continues to be disappeared after being detained by security agents.

Since 2009, in the aftermath and context of the Coup d'état, an alert was raised regarding the resurgence of forced disappearance as a tool for social and political control. The facts to date, make it clear that this is not a matter of common abductions or kidnappings, rather they are part of a pattern of execution, profiling of victims and a pattern of managing the investigations to assure impunity for these crimes that have a name: forced disappearances.

In response to all of this, as the Coalition against Impunity, we join the demand for the five Garifuna men be returned alive. Regarding the investigation, we demand that it not be carried out by the Investigative Police (DPI), given that testimonies regarding the facts coincide in

pointing to the apparent involvement of this institution and there is an ample precedent of criminal actions which in it has been involved.

We support the position of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras (OACNUDH), calling for the specialized unit of the Technical Agency for Criminal Investigation, the Special Prosecutor for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Groups and Cultural Heritage be an active part of the investigation.

Above all, we demand comprehensive answers that assure the protection of the Garifuna population. We insist that the Inter American Court for Human Rights rulings be upheld as the only real way to mitigate the sources of the risks that they constantly confront.

We want peace for our Garifuna brothers and sisters. We want life, not death. We want them to live in harmony with their environment and Cosmovision, without the criminal hand of greed.

¡Porque sus vidas son nuestras vidas y porque las vidas garifunas también importan!
Because their lives are our lives. Because Garifuna lives matter.

Coalition Against Impunity, July 28, 2020,

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More information

- OFRANEH (Organizacion Fraternal Negra Hondureña): @ofraneh, garifuna@ofraneh.org, www.ofraneh.org, <http://www.ofraneh.wordpress.com>
- Honduras Solidarity Network: Karen Spring, spring.kj@gmail.com, @hondurassol, www.hondurassolidarity.org
- Rights Action: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org

Background

- Four Garifuna youth kidnapped & disappeared by US/Canadian-backed Honduran regime, <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/four-garifuna-youth-kidnapped-disappeared>
- The Threat of Progress: Visiting Garifuna Country in Honduras, By Tory Russell (First published February 2006), <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/the-threat-of-progress-visiting-garifuna-country-in-honduras>

Emergency funds – OFRANEH

Even as Rights Action continues to send funds for Covid19 response work of long-term partner groups in Honduras and Guatemala (including OFRANEH), we request funds now for OFRANEH as they respond to the forced disappearance of four land defenders from Triunfo de la Cruz.

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