
amnesty international

HONDURAS

Justice fails indigenous people Update

September 1999

AI INDEX: AMR 37/14/99

Since going to press Amnesty International has received information that acting president of the Honduran National Congress, Rodrigo Castillo Aguilar, has publicly promised that the constitutional reform to article 107 will not be ratified, following public protests against the proposal. In a document sent out to non-governmental organizations, on 12 October 1999, Mr Castillo Aguilar stated:

‘I, the undersigned, Rodolfo Castillo Aguilar, in my role as President of the [Honduran] National Congress, under the express orders of prof. Rafael Piñeda Ponce, president elect of the National Congress, on this occasion of the meeting with representatives of the *Frente Nacional para la Defensa de la Soberanía Patria*, National Front for the Defence of the Sovereign Nation, take this opportunity to confirm the undertaking made before the afore mentioned representatives and the Honduran people that the proposed reforms to article 107 of the Constitution of the Republic will not be incorporated to the Legislative Agenda and thus shall not be submitted for discussion before this chamber.’

Article 107 provides that state-owned land within a 40 km radius from the border with neighbouring countries or from the coast, could only be owned or acquired by Honduras-born people or societies formed by them, and the State. The proposed amendment, would have removed the prohibition against non-Hondurans purchasing land - provided the land is used for tourism projects.

Amnesty International welcomes this statement, but reiterates its concerns, outlined in ‘Honduras - Justice fails indigenous people (AMR 37/10/99)’, concerning mistreatment

of the indigenous people and the failure of the authorities to properly investigate these human rights abuses.

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