

URGENT ACTION

ARMY FIRES ON PROTESTERS IN HONDURAS

On 15 July the army opened fire during a protest in Honduras, killing an Indigenous leader and seriously injuring his son. There are grave concerns for the safety of protesters, as the demonstrations are continuing.

Since April, the Lenca Indigenous communities of Río Blanco, Santa Barbara, western Honduras, have been demonstrating against a hydro-electric power project on the land they have been living on for centuries, alleging lack of adequate and prior consultation. The communities belong to the Civic Council of the Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Civico de Organizaciones Populares e Indigenas de Honduras – COPINH).

On 15 July, at approximately noon, a group of around 100 demonstrators started marching towards the gates of the hydro-electric project as they have been doing on a daily basis for the last three months. According to reports, demonstrators were peaceful and marched under the supervision of the police and the army.

As they were approaching the site, the army opened fire against the demonstrators. **Tomás García**, an Indigenous leader and deputy mayor in his local community, who had been active in the campaign against the project, received three shots to his arm, chest and head. He died immediately. **Allan García Domínguez**, his 17 year old son, was also shot. He received medical attention and his condition is stable. One soldier was arrested in connection with the killing of Tomás García and the wounding of Allan García Domínguez.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to immediately provide appropriate protection measures to the leaders of COPINH and activists in the Río Blanco area that are demonstrating against the hydro-electric project.
- Calling on them to order an independent, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Tomás García and the wounding of Allan García Domínguez, including the chain of command and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reminding the authorities of their obligations to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples before undertaking measures affecting their land and natural resources.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 SEPTEMBER 2013 TO:

Minister of Interior

Sr. Arturo Corrales
Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de
Seguridad, Plantel Casamata, subida al
Picacho,
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: +504 2220 1756
Salutation: Dear Minister

Intervening Committee at Public

Prosecutor's office
Ministerio Público
Lomas del Guijarro
Avenida República Dominicana,
Edificio Lomas Plaza II
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: +504 2221 5662 (say "tono de fax,
por favor")
Twitter: @MP_Honduras
**Salutation: Dear Members of the
Intervening Committee**

And copies to:

Minister of Justice and Human Rights
Ana Pineda
Secretaría de Justicia y Derechos
Humanos
Col. Lomas del Mayab, Ave. República
de Costa Rica, Entre BAC-BAMER y
BANHCAFE, Antigua local de CARE-
Honduras
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: +504 2235 8379
Email: contacto@sjdh.gob.hn
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 13 June 2013, Amnesty International wrote to the Honduran Office of the General Prosecutor regarding a criminal case brought against two COPINH leaders, Bertha Caceres and Tomás Gómez Membreño, for carrying an unlicensed gun in a vehicle. Amnesty International expressed concern for the misuse of the justice system to prevent, restrict or punish legitimate activities for the defence of human rights. In particular, this incident occurred in the context of the ongoing demonstrations against the hydro-electric dam at Agua Zarca, Río Blanco, as two COPINH leaders were travelling towards the site and were stopped at an army checkpoint. The trial is ongoing.

On the same day of the killing of Tomás García and the wounding of Allan García Domínguez, only hours later in Río Blanco, gunshots were heard and in circumstances yet to be confirmed the dead body of a young man, allegedly under 18 years of age, was found. A full investigation is yet to take place.

In March 2013 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a declaration on protecting Human Rights Defenders (A/HRC/22/L.13) urging States to create a safe and conducive environment for human rights defenders, and to avoid the misuse of the justice system to limit the legitimate activities of human rights defenders.

The right to free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous People is enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and International Labour Organization (169) Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, ratified by Honduras in 1995. Honduras has a duty to consult to obtain the free, prior and informed consent from Indigenous Peoples before undertaking measure affecting their lands and natural resources.

Communities – such as Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant and *campesino* (peasant farmer) communities – consider land, territory and natural resources as fundamental to their identity, culture and way of life. International human rights law protects Indigenous Peoples rights to traditional lands but there is an ongoing problem across the Americas in recognizing, respecting and protecting these fundamental human rights. For more information, see *Transforming Pain Into Hope: Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*: AMR 01/006/2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR01/006/2012/en>.

In Honduras, Amnesty International has documented an increase in the number of death threats and attacks against community leaders, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers, as affirmed in the above mentioned regional report.

Name: Indigenous communities of Río Blanco, Tomás García (m), Allan García Domínguez (m)
Gender m/f: Both

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