

via fax: 011 504 235 7700 José Manuel Zelaya Rosales President of the Republic of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 235 4926 General Alvaro Romero Minister of Security of Honduras
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August 16, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are concerned for the safety of **Jessica García**, a leader of the Afro-descendant Garífuna community in the village of San Juan Tela, Atlantida Department.

Jessica García has been subjected to a campaign of harassment and threats to force her to hand over land that the Garífuna community has inhabited for generations to PROMOTUR, a real estate and tourism company. On June 22 an unidentified man offered her money if she signed a document stating that community land belonged to the PROMOTUR owner. When she refused he produced a gun, threatening to kill her and her children. Jessica García signed the document, but it is feared that she will continue to be targeted.

The links between the ongoing repression and violence in San Juan Tela and the powerful interests of the tourism industry are apparent. PROMOTUR and others plan to build tourism complexes on the ancestral Garífuna lands at Tela Bay. The World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank are fueling these tourism projects; the World Bank's Honduran Lands Administration Program (PATH) threatens to fragment ancestral, communal Garífuna land titles, in violation of international agreements.

Concerns have been heightened by the kidnap and murder of **Mirna Isabel Santos Thomas**, a 19 year-old Garífuna member of San Juan Tela. On August 6 a group of masked men carrying AK-47 rifles took her from her home. Her body was found by the side of a road outside the village. To date, nobody has been arrested.

We have written on at least two previous occasions urging authorities to protect members of the Garífuna community:

June 21, 2005: OFRANEH coordinator Gregoria Flores was shot; CNTC leader Edickson Lemus killed
Dec 11, 2005: the home of community leader Wilfredo Guerrero was burned, archives destroyed.

To stop the repression against the Garífuna people, **we strongly urge you to**

- take immediate steps to implement the protection measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to ensure the safety of the Garífuna community of San Juan Tela;
- conduct a thorough, prompt and impartial investigation on the threats against Jessica García and the kidnap and murder of Mirna Isabel Santos Thomas, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Licda. Jany del Cid, Special Prosecutor for Ethnic Affairs, Honduras ~ via fax
ORANEH, Fraternal Black Association of Honduras ~ via fax
Ambassador Norman García Paz, Embassy of Honduras in the US ~ via fax
Ambassador Charles Ford, US Embassy in Honduras ~ via fax
Marcos Mandojana, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Dept ~ via fax
Paolo Carozza, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax
Paul Wolfowitz, President of the World Bank ~ via fax
Luis Alberto Moreno, President of the Inter-American Development Bank ~ via fax
U.S. Senators DeWine and Voinovich ~ via email
U.S. Representatives Brown, Gillmor, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Regula, Ryan, Tubbs Jones ~ via email

UA 219/06 Honduras

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:

