

via fax 011 504 232 1666 Sr. Porfirio Lobo Sosa President of Honduras	via fax 011 504 221 5667 Sr. Luis Alberto Rubi Attorney General of Honduras
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April 25, 2010

Dear Sirs:

Although we are encouraged by the agreement of April 14 between the Unified Peasant Movement of the Aguán (MUCA) and the Government of Honduras concerning land rights in the Lower Aguán (Tocoa municipality, Colon Department), we know it is not a definitive solution to the conflict; we are very concerned about the continuing tense situation. While negotiations were underway at the Presidential House, 40 campesinos (peasants) and the Regional Director of the National Agrarian Institute (INA), Coronado Avila Mendoza, were detained by police at a military checkpoint in the zone. And to our knowledge, the government did not agree to a withdrawal of the troops and police agents which President Porfirio Lobo Sosa sent into the area on April 13 in an unprecedented mobilization surrounding the campesino (peasant) communities.

The conflict stems from an illegal purchase of 20,000 hectares of land in 2001 by three wealthy business owners: Miguel Facussé Barjum, Reinaldo Canales and René Morales. There is a report that a few hours after the signing of the agreement, Miguel Facussé filed a legal action against the president's decision to grant the campesino families 3,000 hectares of land for planting African oil palm trees and 3,000 hectares of uncultivated land. Within a year the government will turn over another 1,000 hectares for African palms and 4,000 hectares of uncultivated land. In exchange, the campesinos will leave the private estates they have been occupying.

We are also concerned that as yet there has been no justice done for the murders this month of two young farm workers involved in the land struggle. On April 1 twenty-two year old **Miguel Alonso Oliva** was fatally shot in the back during the occupation of one of the campesino farms. On April 7 **José Leonel Álvarez Guerra** was gunned down in front of his small rural home by two masked men on a motorbike.

The Honduran regime is fully recognized by the United States and maintains full economic and military relations with them. We believe that unless substantial pressure is brought to bear on the Honduran regime by the international community, state and paramilitary repression will continue.

In light of the above facts and to ensure the safety of the members of the land rights movement, we strongly urge that you

- immediately dismantle paramilitary squadrons, and halt actions of repressive military/state forces in the Lower Aguán region that are biased in favor of the landowners;
- release any community members who were detained during negotiations of the agreement;
- pay attention to events in the Aguán region and take measures appropriate to the particular conditions there in order to avoid greater conflict;
- thoroughly investigate the murders of Miguel Alonso Oliva and José Leonel Álvarez Guerra, publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice; and
- recognize the legitimacy of the nonviolent resistance movement of the majority of Hondurans.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Coordinator

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Hugo Llorens, Ambassador of the US to Honduras ~ via fax: 011-504-236-9037
Rebecca Valerin, Desk Officer for Honduras, US State Department ~ via fax: 1-202-647-2597
Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 1-202-458-3650
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Boccheri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Sutton, Wilson, Space ~ via email

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

