

via fax: 011 504 2235 8379 <b>Sra. Ana Alejandra Pineda Hernández</b> Minister for Justice and Human Rights of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2220 1756 <b>Sr. Arturo Corrales</b> Minister of Interior and Security of Honduras
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September 1, 2013

Dear Madam and Sir:

We are deeply saddened and outraged at the deaths of human rights defenders **María Enriqueta Matute**, **Armando Fúnez Medina** and **Ricardo Soto Fúnez**, members of the Tolupán indigenous tribes of Locomapa in Yoro Department. They were killed during a peaceful protest, trying to protect their community from environmental destruction.

On August 25, María Enriqueta Matute of the San Francisco Campo community, Armando Fúnez Medina of the Las Brisas tribe, and Ricardo Soto Fúnez of the Cabeza de Vaca 1 tribe, were participating with 150 other Tolupán indigenous people in a peaceful sit-in protest in San Francisco Campo, blocking the main road to Locomapa. Two locally known men approached them, exchanged a few words and opened fire, immediately killing Armando Fúnez Medina and Ricardo Soto Fúnez. María Enriqueta Matute ran to her nearby home, where the gunmen tracked her down and fatally shot her.

The roadblock by the Tolupán indigenous people, which had been in place since August 14, was part of the residents' four-year protest against an antimony (silver-white metal) mining operation and a large hydroelectric dam currently under construction. Local landowners have seized the indigenous people's traditional community lands. None of the large-scale development project managers or government officials engaged in prior consultation with the local population, as required by international law (ILO Convention 169, ratified in March 1995 by the government of Honduras). In July 2012, the community sent an open letter to the Minister for Justice and the Secretary for Indigenous Affairs about a timber magnate in the area whose forestry operations had resulted in death threats and arbitrary arrests of members of the community who voiced their opposition to the mining and forestry operations.

Because of our concern for the deteriorating security climate for human rights defenders of indigenous peoples, as evidenced by the incident described above, we **strong urge** you to

- carry out a thorough, impartial and immediate investigation into the killing of María Enriqueta Matute, Armando Fúnez Medina and Ricardo Soto Fúnez, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take the necessary measures to ensure the safety of other community leaders involved in the Locomapa protest and their families, in accordance with their wishes;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alcerro, Honduran Amabassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751  
Lisa Kubiske, US Ambassador to Honduras ~ via fax 011 504 2236 9037  
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Benjamin Gedan, Honduras Desk, US State Dept ~ via fax 202.647.2597  
Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email  
Tracy Robinson, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202 458.3992  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 8/29/13\_Honduras

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