

Sr. Presidente Juan Orlando Hernández
President of Honduras
via fax: 011+504 2290 5088

March 24, 2014

Dear President Hernández :

We are outraged at the recent brutal attacks on **María Santos Domínguez**, her husband, **Santos Roque Domínguez** and **their son**. María Santos is Co-coordinator of the Indigenous Council of Río Blanco and the North of Intibucá. Both she and her husband are also members of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH).

The family has been the target of serious threats and attacks because of their work in opposition to the Agua Zarca hydroelectric plant. On March 5, when María Santos Domínguez was returning home by her regular route from preparing school lunches, her husband phoned her several times because of concern for her safety. On the fourth call she informed him that seven individuals had surrounded her. When he and his son arrived at the scene, María Santos Dominguez had deep machete wounds and had been beaten with sticks and stones. Santos Roque Domínguez pleaded with the men not to kill his wife. When their son attempted to aid his mother, one of the group slashed the child with a machete, chopping off his right ear and part of his face. Santos Roque Domínguez was also gravely injured. The attack has left the three family members in serious condition. The same group who attacked the family on March 5 destroyed their crops on a previous occasion.

COPINH and indigenous community members have been mobilizing for more than a year against the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam project on the Gualcarque River because it would restrict their access to the river and threatens their way of life. They were not adequately consulted before the project began, as required by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and International Labor Organization Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, ratified by Honduras in 1995.

These incidents are the latest attacks on COPINH human rights defenders. Justo Soto, indigenous leader and member of COPINH, was killed on January 21 (cf our letter of Jan 26). Tomás García, human rights defender and brother of María Santos Dominguez, was killed on July 15, 2013 (cf our letter of July 26 2013). His case still has not been properly investigated. Other COPINH members, including COPINH leader Bertha Cáceres, have been unjustly accused of criminal charges.

Therefore we **strongly urge** that you

- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security of María Santos Domínguez and her family;
- carry out a thorough, impartial and immediate investigation into the attempted killing of María Santos Domínguez and the attacks on her family, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice; and
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of violence, restrictions or reprisals of any kind.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alcerro, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
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Christopher Johnson, Diplomacy Officer for Central America, US State Dept. ~ via email
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US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Frontline 3/7/2014_Honduras

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