

via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Oscar Fernando Chinchilla , Attorney General of Honduras	via fax: 011 504 2220 1756 or 2232-0226 Sr. Arturo Corrales Alvarez , Ministry of Security
via email: central@conadeh.hn Sr. Roberto Herrera Cáceres , National Commissioner-Human Rights	via fax: 011 504 2434 4061 Sr. José Antonio Maradiaga , Public Ministry Coordinator
via fax: 011 504 2232 0226 Sra. Karla Eugenia Cueva , Sub-Secretary for Justice and Human Rights	

August 15, 2014

Dear Sirs and Madam:

We are extremely concerned about the eviction on July 3 of approximately **350 families of the Gregorio Chavez Movement** from the Paso Aguán farm in the small town of Panamá, Trujillo municipality, Colón Department. Campesino **Pedro Avila** was shot dead. **José Sánchez Méndez** and **David Ponce** were seriously wounded; **Mariano Baquedano** and **Roger Rodríguez** were also injured with a blunt weapon. Seven people were arrested, including a minor, a woman, and an elderly person.

At about 11:00 a.m. on July 3, approximately 300 police and military members of Joint Task Force Xaltruch III, under the command of Col. René Jovel Martínez, violently invaded the Paso Aguán farm and indiscriminately fired tear gas and live bullets. National Police agents and private security guards of the Dinant corporation accompanied the soldiers in the attack. The army arrested Jorge Meléndez, Moisés Meléndez, Gloria Enamorado, Jermías Cruz, José Chavez, Hernán Ricardo, Omar Ocampos and Ricardo Rodas. However, they were not turned over to police custody until 4 p.m., exceeding the time allowed by law.

The families of the town of Panamá have been repeatedly evicted since July 2012. The Gregorio Chávez Collective was named for a 69-year-old MUCA (Unified Campesino Movement of the Aguán) member whose body was found buried on the Paso Aguán farm in July 2012 (cf our letter of July 12, 2012). Other instances of disappearances, violations, and intimidation from members of Joint Task Force Xaltruch III have occurred in the area. For example, four soldiers and twenty security guards illegally entered the parcel of José Chavez (one of the men arrested on July 3) and stole a large part of his crops.

At least 147 people, including more than 104 campesinos, have died violently in the region since a number of campesino collectives started occupying estates in late 2009 to promote their claim that the landowners had illegally acquired territory intended for family farmers in an agrarian reform program in the 1990s. The Paso Aguán estate, owned by food product company Dinant owner Miguel Facussé Barjum, has repeatedly been a target of occupations by MUCA, one of the largest campesino groups.

Because of our concern for the safety and human rights of the Paso Aguán farmers and their families, we **strongly urge** that you

- perform proper identifying those responsible for the events of July 3;
- take the necessary steps to protect the integrity and life of the campesinos in the Bajo Aguán.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai, Co-Coordinator

copies: Jorge Ramon Hernandez Alcerro, Honduran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax 202 966 9751
Julie de Torres, Chargé d' Affaires, US Embassy Honduras ~ via email in care of Johnson-MillerA@state.gov
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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 and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Renacci, Ryan ~ via email

Honduras SolidarityNetwork_July 6

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