

August 2, 2004

FREEDOM NOW for MARCELINO & LEONARDO MIRANDA!

HONDURAS: Political prisoner update

BELOW

- Statement from Prison, written by political prisoners Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda
- Statement by COPINH (Honduras) about this case
- Article by Sandra Cuffe (Rights Action) about this case and the need for global attention and support

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Please re-distribute and publish this information. If you want on/off this  
elist: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

Unfortunately, but undoubtedly, this will become an on-going campaign to secure the freedom of the Miranda brothers. PLEASE re-distribute and publish, etc, this information so that we can, over time, build the people energy and forces necessary to liberate them.

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LETTER FROM THE GRACIAS JAIL - written by the MIRANDA BROTHERS

From the Prison in Gracias, Lempira, Honduras, Central America, the indigenous Lenca brothers and political prisoners Marcelino Miranda and Leonardo Miranda of the community of Montaõa Verde continue their struggle for justice, land and indigenous rights:

WE WILL DIE BEFORE WE CEASE TO SPEAK OUT

With the Spirit and Force of our ancestors, we categorically condemn the attitude of the Justice system and the Honduran government, whose repressive nature is evidenced by our sentence to 29 years for murder and other alleged crimes. They hide the vicious ambitions of landowners and politicians to usurp the beautiful land of Montaõa Verde.

In the face of this abominable ruling against us, we hold the

government and  
the judicial authorities responsible for any further human rights  
violations  
against us, our families or the community in general. We also  
reiterate  
that we are prisoners of conscience, for our defense of the territory  
and  
natural resources of our communities. However, we have faith in God  
and  
although we are behind bars we will not cease our struggle for social  
justice. We will die before we cease to speak out.

The assassins of the Honduran peoples go by the names of Judicial  
System,  
Public Authorities, the Police, and above all the two-faced  
Governments of  
this country. In the eyes of the world they appear as actors and  
promoters  
of democracy, respectful of human rights, but they persecute and kill  
indigenous peoples and now also condemn community leaders with almost  
life  
sentences in prison. But you who today are in power do not realize  
your own  
sentence, for one day you will be tried by the highest authority.

Thus, coinciding with the actions of our organization, the Civic  
Council of  
Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), we announce  
our  
participation in the activities and protests, demanding that our  
rights be  
respected. As of 5am on June 30, until 5pm on July 2, 2004, we  
declare  
ourselves on hunger strike. In spite of the fact that we suffer from  
mild  
heart problems, we will carry out this action, holding the government  
of  
Honduras responsible for any death or harm that may occur.

Honduras, our country, our homeland, we will forever continue our  
struggle  
for you and for our future generations.

Marcelino Miranda and Leonardo Miranda, presentes hasta la victoria  
siempre!

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STATEMENT OF COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous  
Organizations

of Honduras)

FREEDOM NOW FOR MARCELINO AND LEONARDO MIRANDA!!!

To the government of the Republic, to the Honduran public and to the international community, COPINH denounces the following:

ï The politicization and manipulation of the judicial system by individuals with political, economic and military power continues in our country, as is evidenced by the recent ratification of the 25-year prison sentence against Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda, sentenced in a parcial and unjust trial beset with manipulation and racism.

It is clear that the real cause of the violations of their most fundamental human rights is the struggle that these indigenous leaders have led for their community's territory and because they are members of COPINH.

ï When our compañeros – who have been imprisoned for over 17 months already – were violently detained (January 2003), they were subject to a variety of torture methods by 28 police and COBRA paramilitary agents in an act of repression against the entire community of Montaña Verde. The torturers are free with complete impunity and several were even brought to court to testify against our compañeros. Even after suffering brutal tortures, even though "intelligence" agents from the Ministry of Security intimidated Leonardo inside the Gracias prison, holding a gun to his head, even with the sentences and the interests of the judicial system in trampling justice and maintaining their cruel and partial treatment of the Miranda brothers, they remain firm in their convictions and principles, together with their community.

ï The Appeals Court of Santa Rosa de Copán, instead of reorienting the verdict against our compañeros towards respect of the law and justice, has accepted and confirmed the arbitrary decision of the judge from Gracias, Lempira, who confirmed the criminal accusations without supporting evidence,

with contradicting experts' reports, with erroneous testimonial evidence from their own witnesses, etc..

ï The Appeals Court decision supports and continues the violations of due process, by validating as evidence the declarations of witnesses whose testimonies were obtained without summons, without informing the defense and outside of the evidentiary period, violating regulations established by law, etc.

ï The rights and guarantees concerning the proposal and execution of evidence established in the Constitution of the Republic have not been observed.

ï This pattern of violations demonstrates that when it comes to the administration of "justice" in accusations against indigenous peoples, respect of the law and of true justice are absent when there are powerful interests and groups at play.

ï For all of the above, our organization has decided to continue our energetic process of struggle, denouncement and resistance aimed at the Supreme Court of Justice, other State authorities, international institutions and by any means necessary permitted by our Constitutional and ancestral rights. We struggle together with our compañeros Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda in jail, who have declared themselves on Hunger Strike from June 30th at 5am to July 2 at 5pm.

ï We condemn the government led by the puppet dictator Ricardo Maduro as well as the actions of the Santa Rosa de Copán Appeals Court and demand immediate freedom for our compañeros, who are clearly political prisoners in Honduras.

With the ancestral force of Iselaca, Lempira and Etempica we raise our voices for life, justice, freedom, dignity and peace!

**FREEDOM NOW FOR MARCELINO AND LEONARDO MIRANDA!!!**  
Intibuc·, Intibuc·, June 30, 2004.

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Article by Sandra Cuffe (Rights Action), Honduras, July 2004

#### HONDURAS: POLITICAL PRISONERS UPDATE and A LOT MORE IMPUNITY

After another visit to political prisoners Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda, community leaders from Monta0a Verde being kept in the Gracias jail, we returned to the office of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). Organizers and members, including many from the two communities of Monta0a Verde, were on their way back from Tegucigalpa, where they had participated in a protest in front of the Supreme Court of Honduras to demand the freedom of the Miranda brothers and to denounce the manipulation of the justice system against them.

After a good night's sleep, everyone had a chance to discuss the action and the situation. I was talking with Felipe Bejerano, another Monta0a Verde community leader (who had spent over 2 years in jail on trumped charges, due to the illegal persecution of the Community Indigenous Council), when I saw a mirage coming up the street towards the office. It was Neptaly L0pez, one of the 5 political prisoners from the M·rtires de Guaymas activist organization, imprisoned for 'illicit association' this past March after transnational fruit company 'security' guards assassinated another member of the organization, Virgilio Pinot, in the African palm plantations in the department of Atl·ntida in northern Honduras. Although chances for justice against the assassins are looking slim (!), there is progress in the case of the 5 political prisoners who were given provisional freedom a few days ago while their case continues.

Neptaly L0pez' bullet wounds from the attack have healed and he no longer limps when he walks. Also, he has been freed just in time for the birth of his first child. A piece of news as good as this was desperately needed.

## MONTANA VERDE POLITICAL PRISONERS

Unfortunately, there has been no similar positive news in the case of Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda. A week ago, the Santa Rosa de Copan appeals court upheld the 25-year sentence ordered by the judge in Gracias, for murder, one of a number of fabricated charges against the Miranda brothers and other Community Indigenous Council members, who have been leading their communities' struggle for recognition of their rights to communal land titles, territory, and community control of natural resources.

Despite their violent and illegal arrest (January 2003), torture, imprisonment and subsequent total violation of due process amidst corruption and manipulation in the courts (previous Rights Action articles and urgent actions available), Marcelino and Leonardo maintain their values and extraordinary courage. During COPINH's demonstration on the steps of the Supreme Court, the brothers maintained a 60-hour hunger strike in prison.

The actions of COPINH in coordination with those of the Miranda brothers, however, was only one small part of a larger campaign demanding freedom for Marcelino and Leonardo, and land and justice for Montaña Verde. Below are translations of a public letter written by the political prisoners and of a recent communiqué by COPINH.

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### SUPPORT NEEDED

**EDUCATIONAL DELEGATION:** To participate in an educational delegation to Honduras, to learn more about the case of the Miranda brothers and other issues, contact Rights Action: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), 416-654-2074, [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org).

**TAX-CHARITABLE DONATIONS** for emergency relief and support for Miranda brothers: Make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to UNITED STATES: 1830 Connecticut Av, NW, Washington DC, 20009. CANADA: 509 St. Clair Ave W, box73527, Toronto ON, M6C-1C0. Donate on-line in the USA:

www.rightsaction.org / CFC # 9914.

PLEASE REPRODUCE AND RE-DISTRIBUTE THIS INFORMATION.

PLEASE send your own notes of protest to the addresses below; much more international support and involvement is needed to secure the freedom of the Miranda brothers.

- COPINH, copinhonduras@yahoo.es
- Ricardo Maduro, President of the Republic - fax (504) 221-4552
- Dr. Ramón Custodio, National Human Rights Commissioner - fax (504) 232-6894, custodiolopez@conadeh.hn
- HONDURAS EMBASSY IN CANADA, T: 613-233-8900, F: 613-232-0193, E: embhonca@magma.ca
- HONDURAN MISSION TO UNITED NATIONS: 866 UN Plaza Suite 417 New York, NY, 10017, T: 212-752-3370, e: m.suazo@worldnet.att.net
- CANADIAN AMBASSADOR FOR HONDURAS, Louise Leger, 3d Floor, Bulevar San Juan Bosco, Colonia Payaqui, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, t: (011 504) 232 4551, f: (011 504) 239 7767, tglpa@dfait-maeci.gc.ca
- USA AMBASSADOR TO HONDURAS, Larry Palmer, 011 [504] 236-9320 / 238-5114, Fax. (504) 236-9037
- Mario M. Canahuati, HONDURAN AMBASSADOR TO THE USA - fax (202) 966-9751, embassy@hondurasembassy.org

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