

December 14, 2004

**HONDURAS:** Message from Marcelino Miranda, Honduran political prisoner

January 8, 2005 will mark 2 years in jail for political prisoners Marcelino and Leonardo Miranda, who remain imprisoned in Gracias as they wait for the outcome of court proceedings for various charges against the two community leaders from Montaña Verde.

Recently, the [Honduran](#) Supreme Court invalidated the sentence of 25 years for murder issued by the Santa Rosa de Copan appeals court. The latter must return to the case files and make a new pronouncement, although the case files have reportedly still not arrived back in Santa Rosa. Yet another delay in a series of trials full of delays, irregularities and other abuses. Amnesty International recently issued a press release in which the organization considers the Miranda brothers political prisoners.

The more direct human rights violations continue as well. On September 16, 2004, prison guard Tomas Bautista threatened Marcelino Miranda as he was being taken to the hospital for some much-needed medical attention. This incident jeopardized his health, as Marcelino worried about his security if he were to be taken out of the prison for treatment again.

Marcelino and Leonardo continue to await the results of the court decisions. Although they have little faith in the 'justice' system in Honduras where there are powerful economic and political interests involved, they have tremendous faith that they will one day return to Montaña Verde to live with their families. These two years have been a testament to their tremendous courage, as is evident in the open letter written recently by Marcelino Miranda (below).

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## SOME REFLECTIONS ON OUR SUFFERING FROM JANUARY 8, 2003 TO THE PRESENT

Friends, Compañeros(as), I'm going to tell you about our experience and above all about the nature of the penal system.

Well, the first thing is kind of funny, but it's true. At about 10pm on January 8, 2003 I finally fell asleep for a little while. I hadn't slept at all because one of my young daughters was very sick. In the short time that I did sleep I dreamt that I went to a clothing store. I bought a white shirt, put it on and started walking, but when I looked down to check if it fit well, I saw that there were stains. I returned to the store and asked them to exchange it for an unstained shirt and that's what happened.

When I woke up I heard dogs barking and I found it strange that they were barking with sadness. I tried to go out to see what was going on, but I felt fear. It was God, with his spirit, who warned me about the danger.

Shortly thereafter, my little house was already invaded by a contingent of heavily armed men. Really, their intention was to kill me. They broke the window and violently broke open the door. They believed that I was armed and dangerous, according to the information presented by our accusers. When they saw me and realized that there were no other men in the house, for while they thought that the man they were looking for was not there. I think they communicated by radio with the other group that had surrounded my brother Eleuterio's house, telling them not to vacillate, ie that they not hesitate in using their weapons. They believed that they had not captured the most dangerous leader they were searching for, possibly only a brother or relative of the infamous Marcelino, whom they had been persecuting for a long time. One time this Marcelino even escaped from a hotel in Gracias that was surrounded by police, who had also blocked the entrances and exits to the town. You see, the police didn't know me then and couldn't recognize me.

So the second group (of police), without wasting any time, began firing their weapons indiscriminately, without any aim or caution, exchanging shots. Armed civilians accompanying the police also got involved in the mess. By chance, a Cobra (special strike force) and a police agent, who were in charge of executing or provoking Marcelino's death and who had led the assault on his house, were wounded. They had been running to the house where they thought Marcelino might be and when they caught up with the second group it was their luck to be hit by bullets fired by their own compañeros.

But this was good for us, because when the rest of the group saw two of their agents wounded, they let up the attack since they didn't know where the shots came from or what had happened. God intervened against them for the harm they were going to inflict on us. Well, they kept shooting, but into the air and against the roof of the house. In the meantime, I was led down the path to the municipality of Iguala, Lempira, enduring many beatings, insults and all kinds of torture along the way. But even though I felt the pain from the beatings and feared that they would kill me, I never lost faith that night that God would save me. Or if I were to die, then I hoped that God - who knew my thoughts and conscience, and that I did not deserve the harm or false accusations - would have pity on me.

I never renounced or regretted the struggle. Quite the contrary - I asked God that if I were to die for the struggle, that he take me as an offering from the community and that the struggle not be lost but instead further strengthened. But God was with us. Even though they beat us, they did not take our lives, which was the real objective of the landowners and authorities. From the very moment the group entered the community, the manner in which they carried out the operation leads us to this conclusion. But God did not permit this to occur. The experience was historic, but also a bit sad.

Many friends did not see the results of the beatings and torture until a few days later, but even so, they were deeply hurt, down to the soul. Every single part of our bodies hurt from the thrashings we received, but we were consoled by the fact that we were alive and many friends and compañeros came to visit us.

But the nightmare of our persecution in the jail remained strong, because of the director and some of the guards. The insults, threats and even beatings did not stop when the court issued the order for our imprisonment. For example, on April

5, 2003, during a regular prison search, two Cobra agents beat us and threatened to kill us. Tomas Bautista, a prison guard, had pointed us out as the copinhes. But at least we were able to denounce this quickly.

Even the experience of suffering for raising our voices to demand respect for our rights as indigenous peoples has shown us that God is just and that we are blessed. Friends from different countries have come to visit us in this jail, in solidarity with us and with our organization, COPINH. We believe that all of this is an act of God, so we want to express our profound gratitude to all of those in solidarity with a just cause. We ask God for abundant blessings for you. We will not stop thanking God for all the favours we have received from friends.

We know that in other countries there are also friends who are political prisoners because they have opposed imperialism and that they have suffered much for the defense of the rights of communities and peoples. For them, our message of solidarity. All of us who have suffered for the love and defense of our rights will be liberated by God. We are courageous leaders and one day we will triumph. The oppressors are cowards and soon will fall. They're rich, but they're few. We are poor but we are many, and one day all of us little kittens, united, will bring down the tiger.

Friends, warm greetings,  
from Marcelino Miranda.  
Gracias Prison, November 21, 2004.

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For more information or to [provide tax-charitable donations \[in the USA and Canada\] for the humanitarian needs of the Miranda brothers and their families](#), contact Rights Action: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), 416-654-2074, [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org).