

HONDURAS: REPRESSION AGAINST GARIFUNA PEOPLE

Below, you will find an urgent action from OFRANEH, a partner group of Rights Action in Honduras. In the near future, we will report more fully on their situation.

Along with OFRANEH, Rights Action fears that repression against Garifuna communities will increase, under pressure from the international tourism industry increase to get control of their lands on Honduras' north shore.

If you want on-off this elist: info@rightsaction.org. Please re-distribute this information.

For more information about the Garifuna people and OFRANEH: info@rightsaction.org.

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March 28, 2005

PERSECUTION OF GARIFUNAS

The OFRANEH (Honduran Black People's Fraternal Organization) denounces the raid of the home of Miriam Miranda. This is a clear case of persecution of the defenders of the ancestral lands of indigenous and black peoples.

The break-in took place on Friday March 25 (Good Friday), between two and three in the afternoon. Eight officers of the DGIC (Criminal Investigative Division), some of whom were wearing hoods, broke into Miranda's home, with orders to search for stolen articles and weapons.

Miriam Miranda has a long history of involvement in the struggle for the defense of the rights of indigenous and black peoples, especially the rights of the Garifuna people and the defense of their land and culture. We therefore presume that this raid was a form of pressure to intimidate Miranda and tie the hands of OFRANEH, so that it becomes nothing more than one more NGO carrying out projects, like other NGOs involved with

World Bank
projects.

OFRANEH believes we are living in a very important historical period. The ratification of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States will speed up the process of economic globalization and lead to increased poverty, given the enormous gap that exists between our country and the North American Empire. As well, the traditional agricultural economies of our country will be undermined and there will be a huge increase in the number of campesinos who have no choice but join the migration to the North.

The raid of Miranda's home does not augur well, given that Miranda was not involved in any of the alleged activities named by the authorities. On the contrary, she has been recognized both nationally and internationally for her hard work and dedication to the defense of the rights of indigenous and black peoples.

Law enforcement in Honduras is suffering a regression. In fact, it has turned into a witch-hunt, much like it was in the eighties. With open warfare against the so-called maras (gangs) -- the children of neoliberalism --, we are very close to returning to the persecution of the popular movement that we saw in the past.

The Empire's attempt at economic globalization is a total failure and the situation will only get worse with the implementation of projects such as the Free Trade Agreement with the United States, the Plan Puebla Panam, the Mesoamerican Biological Corredor and the PATH (Land Administration Project of Honduras), all of which directly effect the future of the lands of our peoples.

Financial institutions such as the World Bank and the InterAmerican Development Bank are attempting to implement these projects. At the same time, where ever possible, they try to sow seeds of division in

popular
movements and buy their leaders.

The break-in at Miranda's home happens at a time when there is an attempt to divide our organization, financed by the office of the Nuestras Raíces Programme, which comes under the FHIS (Fondo Hondureño de Inversión Social) which in turn, is financed by the World Bank. In 2002, the programme was given the task of dividing the CONPAH (Confederation of the Native People of Honduras) and financing the now defunct CINH, also administered by the Nuestras Raíces Programme.

At the same time, the state of Honduras, along with the PATH, have begun to put pressure on the Garifuna communities, through a project whose aim is to break up ancestral lands. Teresa Reyes, of Triunfo de la Cruz, was sentenced to preventative custody for the crime of defending a piece of land that has belonged to her family for years.

We hereby alert the public to the direct and indirect pressure to which the members of our organization are being subjected. We also denounce the deliberate attempt to divide us by a state organ financed by the World Bank. This division could destroy our peoples' resistance movement and lead to the break-up and loss of our ancestral communities.

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Gregoria Flores
OFRANEH

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