

## **Rights Action Report**

### **Human Rights Violations By U.S.-Backed Honduran Special Forces Unit In Aguan Region**

By Annie Bird and Karen Spring, Rights Action

**FULL REPORT:** <https://rightsaction.org/articles/human-rights-violations-attributed-to-military-forces-in-the-bajo-aguan-valley-in-honduras>

**CONTACT:** Annie Bird, Rights Action

Over the past three years, soldiers from Honduras' 15th Battalion, based in the Bajo Aguan region of Honduras, have been directly implicated in a series of human rights violations targeting land rights movements, according to a report released today by the Washington, DC / Toronto based human rights organization Rights Action.

The report documents 34 of those violations which on-the-ground reports link directly to the 15th Battalion. These violations include extrajudicial executions, force disappearance, torture, excessive use of force, abuse of authority and threats. There are indications that many other human rights violations have been committed by the soldiers of the 15th Battalion, and have yet to be documented.

The U.S. military has been training soldiers from the 15th Battalion and providing the unit with various forms of material assistance since 2008. "At the same time the 15th Battalion was implicated in kidnappings, killings, threats, torture and abuse of authority, it received assistance and training from the Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) of the United States

Armed Forces," explains the report's author Annie Bird, Co-Director of Rights Action.

The report also provides details regarding 88 killings of campesinos, small farmers, and their supporters, as well as 5 bystanders apparently mistaken for campesinos, which have taken place since January 2010. Most of the killings appear to be targeted assassinations, suggesting the presence of an active death squad in the region. Two of these assassinations occurred this past Saturday, February 16, 2013.

On February 16, 2013, land rights activist Santos Jacobo Cartagena was gunned down while waiting for a bus, and Jose Trejo was shot while driving. Jose Trejo's brother, Antonio Trejo, was a lawyer for the land rights movement who was killed last September, less than three months after winning in courts the return to campesinos of three farms in dispute. Jose Trejo had been very active in demanding an investigation into the assassination of his brother.

The vast majority of the killings and other violations that have been perpetrated in Bajo Aguán since 2010 have not been investigated, generating a level of impunity that suggests complicity between state and local authorities and those responsible for the killings and other abuses.

**FULL REPORT:**

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**WHAT TO DO:**

Please send copies of this information, and your own letters, to your Canadian and American politicians (MPs, Congress members and Senators) and to your own media. Since the June 2009 military coup, that ousted the democratically elected government of President Zelaya, Honduras has become the 'Murder Capital of the world'. State repression has again reached the levels of the worst years of the 1980s.

Since the coup, the U.S. and Canadian governments have 'legitimized the illegitimate' post-coup regime. North American companies and investors have increased their business activities in Honduras since the coup. In no small part, this regime remains in power due to its political, economic and military relations with the U.S. and Canada.

### **DONATE (TAX-DEDUCTIBLE in Canada and the U.S.)**

The roots of Rights Action's work go back to 1983 in Guatemala. Since then, and particularly since 1995, Rights Action has been funding grassroots organizations working for community development and the environment, for disaster relief, for truth, memory, justice and human rights, and for democracy and peaceful resolution of conflicts in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in southern Mexico and El Salvador. The Canadian Rights Action Foundation (CRAF), founded in 1999, is independent from Rights Action (USA). Since 1995, Grahame Russell and Annie Bird have been co-directors of Rights Action; Grahame is director of CRAF.

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