

## **Aguan Campesino Movement Leader & Son Killed, Wife Injured**

By Annie Bird, June 4, 2013

### **103<sup>rd</sup> & 104<sup>th</sup> Campesinos Killed In The 'Murder Capital Of The World', As Presidential Elections Loom In November 2013**

*"Marvin [father] and Darwin Trochez [son] make the 103<sup>rd</sup> and 104<sup>th</sup> campesino movement members to be killed since January 2010, the overwhelming majority in targeted killings with a consistent method of operation that suggest the operation of a death squad."*



(The body of Marvin Trochez by the house where he was living, assassinated May 30, 2013. <http://www.latribuna.hn/2013/05/30/le-quitian-la-vida-a-padre-e-hijo/>)

Newspapers report that on Thursday, May 30, 2013, Marvin Trochez and his son Darwin Trochez were killed while his widow is hospitalized. According to the newspaper reports, the family had been drinking coffee at 7:15am when gunmen aboard a motorcycle opened fire.

Newspapers did not report that Trochez was the leader of the Recuperacion Rigores Campesino Business, part of what they called the Movimiento Recuperacion Nacional [MCRN]. He and his family had moved from the Aguan to the city of La Ceiba in February 2013, where they were in hiding as they were pursued by assassins.

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The same day that Marvin and Darwin Trochez were killed in La Ceiba, several hours away in Tocoa plain clothed police opened fire on the car in which MUCA-MD leader Joni Rivas was traveling with his children and mother in an apparent assassination attempt.

### **DEATH SQUADS PURSUE TROCHEZ, MURDER ELDEST SON AND THREE MCRN MEMBERS, POLICE OFFICER ARRESTED**

On August 9, 2012, Mavin Trochez's oldest son, also named Marvin Trochez, along with a fellow campesino movement member identified only as Carlos, was killed in an ambush in the Paso Aguan farm. The family believed the father had been the intended victim.

After his son's death, Marvin Trochez reported that two assassins known for their criminal history had ambushed his son. The assassins had infiltrated a neighboring campesino movement, but when their criminal history was discovered they had been expelled from the movement, and had then began pursuing Trochez and the rest of his group.

It soon became clear that the two assassins were part of a larger operation which Trochez claimed included police and military from the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion in La Ceiba, a group operating out of the town of Rigores.

After killing Marvin's son, the pursuit of Trochez and the rest of his group continued. On November 3, 2012 three members of MCRN

were killed, brothers Reinaldo and Jose Rivera Paz, along with Orlando Campos, who were shot as the three stood waiting for a bus at the Desvio del Coco, near the community of Rigores.

According to Trochez, Campos survived long enough to identify to a representative of the government human rights commission, CONADEH, that one of the attackers was a police agent assigned to city of La Ceiba, but that resided in Rigores and has been reported to form part of the death squad which had killed Marvin Trochez [son]. Reportedly ballistics tests were carried out on weapons assigned to police agent Marvin Noe Garcia Santos, which confirmed that these were the weapons used in the triple homicide. Agent Garcia was arrested November 4, 2012, though none of his accomplices have been arrested; it is unclear whether Garcia remains in custody.

### **CRIMINALIZATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST MARVIN TROCHEZ**

In November 2012, Trochez reported he had been arrested for carrying a handgun for his own protection, given that he was being pursued by a death squad. The handgun had violated the disarmament law in effective in the Department of Colon. He was charged with that crime and was obligated to report bi-weekly to the police to demonstrate his continued presence in the area.

In mid-December, Trochez explained he had received word that there was a plan to assassinate him the next time he reported to the police. He opted to go into hiding and in February 2013 he and his family apparently moved to La Ceiba where they had some family connections that could help them to relocate.

Trochez had been the focus of an intense criminalization campaign by the government of Honduras. On March 10, 2013, Colonel Alfaro made statements to the press that the conflict in the Aguan is no longer agrarian, rather there are armed groups working with campesinos and that their activities are facilitated by human rights organizations that spread disinformation.

These statements were soon followed by statements by Alfaro published on April 1, 2013, claiming that there were six armed bands operating in the Aguan. Among the individuals named as heading these armed bands was Marvin Trochez.

Additionally, newspaper reports published the morning following the August 9, 2012 double murder of Marvin Trochez [son] and Carlos, quoted General Rene Osorio, General Commander of the Armed Forces of Honduras, explaining that campesino leaders Marvin Trochez and Gerardo Argueta had been killed in a conflict between the two campesino leaders, claiming the two were involved in drug trafficking and had been in a dispute related to stolen drugs.

This report clearly intended to indicate that Marvin Trochez [son] had been killed. Marvin Trochez [father] later explained that Argueta, a friend of the family, had played no role in his son's death and would have no motive to initiate such an attack. Argueta was a leader of a campesino business in the Marañones Farm expelled by the army from the farm on April 16, 2012.

### **VIOLENCE BY LARGE LANDHOLDERS AGAINST CAMPESINOS**

Indeed many believe that the reason Argueta and others were expelled by the army from MUCA-MI was the perception that they had supported the new movement in Paso Aguan, a process which also involved a border dispute between Argueta's campesino business and a neighbor to the Marañones Farm, locally renowned drug trafficker Erick Rivera.

Rivera's land interests have been protected by Dinant palm oil company owner Miguel Facussé, and who was also reported to enjoy the protection of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the Tocoa police. Facusse also claims ownership of the Paso Aguan farm.

In the year 2000 Marvin Trochez was a founding leader of the Campesino Movement of Rigores. He initially led efforts by the Nueva Esperanza neighborhood of the community of Rigores to

recover agrarian reform lands which were illegally possessed by a large landholder in the area, Eric Rivera.

In this land dispute, the National Agrarian Institute is reported to have expropriated the lands sometime prior to June 2011. However without clarifying this to the campesinos negotiating its purchase, on June 24, 2011, a violent eviction occurred in which the community's cement block homes they had built over 10 years, school and churches were bulldozed.

This violent and illegal act was carried out by military and police with participation of security guards from the neighboring Paso de Aguan farm, employed by Miguel Facusse. Immediately following the attack, government officials created a revised appraisal with a greatly inflated value more than four times the previous appraisal value which had been conducted for the expropriation. Campesinos understood the violent attack on the community to constitute pressure on them to accept the inflated purchase price.

This was just one in a series of aggressions against the community of Nueva Esperanza Rigores by security forces from the neighboring Paso Aguan farm, whose possession by large landholder the Dinant Corporation, was understood to violate agrarian reform legislation. Acts of aggression included the forced disappearance of MCR member Francisco Pascual Lopez on May 15, 2011.

In reaction, campesinos from the region, including Marvin Trochez, organized to recover the Paso Aguan Farm for agrarian reform, first occupying the farm on June 26, 2011. Marvin Trochez became the leading figure in the movement. On August 14, 2011, the movement occupied the farm, but was confronted by both the Dinant private security guards and a contingent of military reportedly from the 15<sup>th</sup> Army Battalion and possibly the 4<sup>th</sup> Naval battalion. Gunfire ensued, which left four security guards dead, while one 16 year old campesino was shot in the back while attempting to jump fence to flee. Though the military reported the campesinos had opened fire,

campesinos reported the military had opened fire and were responsible for the deaths.

Newspaper articles describing Marvin and Darwin Trochez's murder reported that two men had been arrested for the murder, one report claims they had been arrested aboard a motorcycle, another claimed they had been arrested aboard a taxi. The El Tiempo newspaper reported that one of those arrested claimed to be related to the victims. A recent trend of criminalization, including the falsification of evidence, against the campesino movement in the Aguan has developed, and given the reports that those arrested were family members of the victims there is concern as to whether credible evidence exists to link those arrested to the murder.

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## **BACKGROUND**

"Human Rights Violations Attributed to Military Forces in the Bajo Aguán Valley in Honduras," by Annie Bird ([annie@rightsaction.org](mailto:annie@rightsaction.org)), Rights Action, February 20, 2013

Read:

[http://rightsaction.org/sites/default/files//Rpt\\_130220\\_Aguan\\_Final.pdf](http://rightsaction.org/sites/default/files//Rpt_130220_Aguan_Final.pdf)

## **AMERICAN / CANADIAN CONNECTION**

Since the June 2009 military coup, that ousted the democratically elected government Honduras, the country 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 repressive regime remains in power due to its political, economic and military relations with the U.S. and Canada.

**2013 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS:** This bad situation is getting even worse as the November 2013 presidential elections approach. A

new party – LIBRE – has been formed and has a good chance of winning the elections, with the support of the Honduran people who are so tired and fed-up with their country being dominated by the military backed traditional parties that are controlled by the wealthy oligarchic sectors. Repression is increasing even more this year, as the elites fear the electoral victory of LIBRE.

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