

Rights Action
info@rightsaction.org
March 8, 2014

Honduras Repression: Machete Attack On COPINH's Maria Santos Dominguez, Her Husband And Son



(Maria Santos Dominguez. Photo @ <https://www.facebook.com/copinh.intibuca>)

Since 1998, Rights Action has supported and worked with COPINH. We thank-you for your on-going support, as we maintain our long-term committment to amazing community based organizations in Honduras.

Date: 6 Mar 2014

From: Brigitte Gynther <Brigitte3@riseup.net>

On March 5, people tried to kill Maria Santos, seriously attacking her, her 12-year old son Paulo, and her husband Roque, with machetes. Maria is a vocal leader in the struggle in Rio Blanco and member of the Indigenous Council. Maria has received numerous death threats because of her vocal opposition to the Agua Zarca Dam.

Around midday, she was on her way home from making food at the school when 7 people who were hiding in wait came out, surrounded her and attacked her with machetes, rocks, and sticks. Her husband had been calling her as she walked home because of the constant threats she received, and when he heard she was surrounded, he and her son ran out.

Her husband pled with them not to kill her and when her son ran to try to help his mom, the people attacked her 12-year old son as well, cutting off his right ear and part of his face. His cranium is fractured. They also attacked her husband who was also seriously injured. All three are in the hospital.

Maria is a strong member of COPINH Rio Blanco resistance, despite receiving death threats including threats from the people who attacked her yesterday.

Urgent Action For Rio Blanco

Please send letters to your own elected politicians in the USA and Canada, expecting them to respond to you. Feel free to use, edit this sample letter prepared by a German-based Honduras Delegation.

Contact:

- Member Of Parliament:
<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>
- Congress: <http://www.house.gov/> to get info for your member of Congress, and call: 202-224-3121
- Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/> to get contact for your Senator, and call: 202-224-3121

Dear XXX,

I am writing to express my deep concern at the fresh escalation in violence in the Río Blanco community, Intibucá Department. On March 5, the human rights defender María Santos Domínguez was attacked by seven people with machetes, stones and sticks in the Río Blanco region as she was on her way home. Her husband, Santos Roque Domínguez, and her 12-year-old son, Paulo Domínguez, were also attacked and seriously injured. The three members of COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) are in a serious condition.

María Domínguez is the Organization Coordinator of the Río Blanco Indigenous Council. She and her family are actively involved in the peaceful resistance to the Agua Zarca hydroelectric scheme. According to COPINH, those responsible for the violent attack are supporters of the dam, and have threatened the family several times in the past, on one occasion destroying their crops.

For over a year, the indigenous population of the Río Blanco district have been peacefully opposing the Agua Zarca Dam Project, arguing that it violates their right to prior consultation under ILO Convention 169. Honduras ratified the Convention in 1995 and voted in favor of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007.

The Agua Zarca Dam Project, opposed by most of the inhabitants affected, has been the cause of frequent human rights violations and attacks on opponents of the project by state security forces and employees of DESA (Desarrollos Energéticos S.A.), the company responsible for the project.

In July 2013, an army soldier murdered Tomas García, a community leader, during a peaceful protest. All the attacks and threats to the scheme's opponents have so far gone unpunished.

In the light of this latest attack on opponents of the hydroelectric scheme in Río Blanco, I urge you to contact Honduran regime officials and demand:

- the adoption of effective measures to guarantee the security and physical and psychological integrity of the Domínguez family and the members of the Lenca communities who have expressed their opposition to the Agua Zarca hydroelectric scheme on the Gualcarque River.
- an independent investigation into the violent crimes committed on March 5, 2014 in Río Blanco, Intibucá department, with the results of the investigation made public and those responsible brought to justice.
- that the case of Tomás García, murdered by a soldier in 2013, and other attacks on Lenca members of COPINH in Río Blanco do not go unpunished.
- that the Honduran State guarantee that indigenous peoples affected by projects such as Agua Zarca are subject to prior, free and informed consultation. According to the information received, this has not been the case with Río Blanco where, for example, the environmental impact assessment study was not published and the results of various cabildos abiertos (open community forums), such as the one on October 10, 2011, were not taken into account. Instead, community members opposing the hydroelectric scheme have reported being the targets of acts of intimidation, threats, surveillance and physical attacks.

More Info In Honduras:

PROAH (International Honduras Accompaniment Project): <http://proah.wordpress.com/>

What To Do?

In Honduras, Repression, Violence, Impunity And Corruption Are Policy

Americans / Canadians: Keep on, keep on, keep on ... sending copies of this information, and

your own letters, to your politicians (MPs, Congress members and Senators) and media. Since the June 2009 military coup, that ousted the last democratically elected government, Honduras has become the 'Murder Capital of the world'. Repression has reached the levels of the worst years of the 1980s.

Since 2009, the U.S. and Canadian governments have legitimized a succession of illegitimate and repressive regimes. North American companies and investors, and "development" banks (World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank) have increased business activities in African palm production, sweatshops, "model cities", tourism and mining. The Honduran regime remains in power due in large part to its political, economic and military relations with the U.S. and Canada and the "development" banks. Across Honduras, community based organizations in the pro-democracy movement need considerably more human rights accompaniment, funding, media attention on the harms and violations and education and activism in Canada and the U.S.

Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

To support the community development and human rights and environmental protection work of community based groups in Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- United States: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

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