

Rights Action
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Brutal, Public Murder of Anti-mining, Community and Environmental Defender in Honduras

“Rigoberto’s throat was slit and his tongue cut out. These characteristics of terror are a message that seeks to silence the voices of those who bravely defend their livelihoods against the overpowering destruction caused by mining companies that are presently tearing up many lands in our country.”

- **!WARNING!** – Explicit photo below

This assassination, dumping the brutalized body in a public place, is an act of terrorism reminiscent of the U.S.-backed military repression of the 1980s. The intent is to eliminate community defenders and terrorize the general public into silence and submission.

- **What to do / How to support:** See below

STOP THE ASSASSINATION OF COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS WHO REJECT MINING IN HONDURAS!

The Honduran Center for the Promotion of Community Development (CEHPRODEC) and the 49 organizations that comprise the National Coalition of Environmental Networks most forcefully condemn the horrific assassination of the environmental defender, Rigoberto López Hernández, which occurred on May 3, 2014 in the community of Santa Cruz, Municipality of El Nispero in Santa Bárbara.



Once the National Congress passed the fateful Mining Law, we cautioned the government, holding it responsible for the aggressions and violations against lives and human rights that would derive from the implementation of the extractive policy.

Today, these warnings became contemptible reality.

Rigoberto López was known for his firm decision to struggle to close the iron oxide mine, found in the “Quita Ganas” mountain, due to the natural springs in this mountain that provide water to several communities in El Nispero, including the Santa Cruz community.

In the visits made by CEHPRODEC we also confirmed that in addition to affecting the communities’ water sources, this mine also destroyed extensive farming areas used by families alongside the highway that the mining companies constructed, since landslides are permanently burying vegetable gardens and farming land of the families that live in the lower altitude side of the highway.

Similarly, the sediments caused by the mine are causing serious damage to the reservoir of the El Nispero dam, the only energy generating plant that was one hundred percent state owned, and which was since given in concession to private groups with ties to the governing party.

This new martyr in defense of life, Rigoberto López, repeatedly expressed that mining is an environmental threat that produces the loss of the quality of life, illness and leaves an environmental debt to future generations. He also motivated the population of the El Nispero municipality to oppose

the continuation of mining since it only left them poverty and unfulfilled false promises such as employment, infrastructure and development.

In a community assembly with Mayor Antonio Leiva and representatives of the mines, Rigoberto expressed his objection to negotiating false promises and demanded the mining company leave the municipality. The community's independent action of protest on the highway in March was broken up by the National Police and Military, with the Municipal Mayor's promise to bring them to Tegucigalpa to resolve the conflict.

According to the version that the El Níspero mayor expressed to the Santa Cruz population and the media: "the mine's presence in the community is legal because it has the permission of SERNA, INHGEOMIN, while the population clings onto myths that mining supposedly harms the country."

According to community leaders, Rigoberto's throat was slit and his tongue cut out. These characteristics of terror are a message that seeks to silence the voices of those who bravely defend their livelihoods against the overpowering destruction caused by mining companies that are presently tearing up many lands in our country.

In response to this crime, we demand:

A thorough investigation by police authorities, the office of the prosecution and human rights organizations, which should lead to the capture, trial and sentencing of the intellectual and material authors of the murder of Rigoberto López.

Similarly, we demand the immediate granting of protective measures to the other leaders of the El Níspero community who have publicly opposed this mining project.

To the authorities from INHGEOMIN and SERNA we demand they respect the voice of the citizenry that rejects mining projects in their territories.

We call to the general population and the international community to condemn this despicable assassination and demand that the Honduran government respects the human rights of environmental and territorial defenders. We demand that the Honduran government fulfills its obligation to afford justice and tell the truth regarding the seriousness of conflicts and human rights violations caused by mining companies. Just one year has passed since the National Congress passed a terrible mining law that brought persecution, criminalization and the death of community leaders, indigenous populations and human rights defenders who reject mining activity in our country. Similarly, in accordance with international law, we demand that comprehensive reparation be granted to the family of Rigoberto López, a martyr of the struggle for life.

Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., May 9, 2014

"STOP THE ASSASSINATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS! STOP OPEN-PIT MINING!"

THE HONDURAN CENTER FOR THE PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.
NATIONAL COALITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORKS.

Honduras – Murder Capital of the World

Americans / Canadians: Keep on sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to your politicians (MPs, Congress members and Senators). 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, maquiladora sweatshops, privatized "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.

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

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

To provide emergency support funds to victims of repression, and to support civil society groups in Honduras working for a return to democracy, respect for human rights and justice, 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

Credit-Card Donations (Canada & U.S.): <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

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