

Honduran Soldiers Kill Two Garifuna Men, In Name Of “War On Drugs”

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“The so-called war on drugs is a farce. It will continue taking its quota of innocent blood while drugs will continue their normal flow along other routes.” (OFRANEH)

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Two Garifuna Men Murdered In Iriona And The Farce Of The “War On Drugs”

By OFRANEH - Fraternal Garifuna and Black People's Organization of Honduras, translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gill

<https://ofraneh.wordpress.com/2015/12/28/asesinato-de-garifunas-en-iriona-y-la-farsa-de-la-guerra-contra-las-drogas/>

On Sunday December 27, in the middle of the night, members of the Naval Force attacked a group of Garifunas who were on a sandbank in Iriona (Department of Colón), trying to remove a car that was stuck in the sand. Without any warning, the Naval force men went ahead and shot at the three vehicles located on the sandbank.

The attack left Joel Palacios Lino (24) dead and wounded Elvis Armando García (19), who was so badly hurt that the military men decided to take him to the hospital in Tocoa. The men handed Garcia over to hospital personnel without explanation. García was later admitted to Atlántida Hospital in La Ceiba. He died there today.

The sudden attack by approximately 20 soldiers could have had even more disastrous results, given that in the vehicles they shot at, there were families who were traveling between the communities of Tocamacho and San José de la Punta.

Given the lack of roads in the area, local people have to use rafts to cross the sandbanks in the rivers and it is common for people to travel by night in four wheel drive vehicles.

In the past few months, Garífunas in the municipality of Iriona have been voicing their objections to the intrusion of the military in the region. The military presence is a long overdue reaction to the organized crime that has taken over the north coast of Honduras in the last few decades. Garífuna youth in the community of Plaplaya have complained that they have been interrogated and tortured by military agents and there have been a number of protests against the presence of the military in the region.

For decades, the north coast of Honduras has been controlled by drug traffickers and they, in turn, have been able to count on the complete support of military and civil authorities, to the point where their influence reached as far as municipal councils and courts.

After the June 2009 military coup d'etat, the number of small plane and boat landings in the departments of Gracias a Dios and Colón increased but no security forces ever turned up in the area. This clearly demonstrates the complicity between the "authorities" and "organized crime."

After 2012, the United States intervened with its Foreign-Deployed Advisory Support Team, made up of personnel from the U.S.-DEA and the Honduran National Police. They began carrying out low-flying night time surveillance flights in a psychological warfare campaign that culminated with the May 11, 2012 attack in Ahuas, where personnel in State Department helicopters opened fire on local people. This military operation resulted in the death of four Miskito individuals and the wounding of seven others.

After 40 years of the "war on drugs" instigated by the US, the results are contradictory. Drug trafficking is still prospering while the prisons are full of people of so called minority groups, the black population of the U.S. being the most heavily punished. In the meantime, in Latin America, the war on drugs has resulted in a blood bath.

The institutional collapse that Honduras is undergoing is one of the results of this so-called war on drugs instigated by the US government. The war has been utilized as a pretext to reinforce military intervention on the continent. In the meantime, fiscal paradises are flourishing and there has been no interruption in availability of the precursor chemicals essential for drug production.

The Garífuna of Iriona have had to maintain community life in close proximity to this drug trafficking. The presence of drug traffickers has created a regime of terror. They have used trickery to acquire areas of land for derisory prices.

OFRANEH has sent denouncements to the authorities regarding the appropriation of our lands by organized crime but we have received no response whatsoever.

The killing of Joel Palacios and Elvis García is an indicator of the completely defenceless situation of the Garífuna of Iriona. Yesterday, the Garífunas were attacked by Naval personnel and recently, servicemen were involved in another attack.

A statement supposedly sent out by the Armed Forces claims that there was cross fire. This is an out and out lie on their part. They are just trying to avoid taking responsibility for the crimes they committed.

The so-called war on drugs is a farce. It will continue taking its quota of innocent blood while drugs will continue their normal flow along other routes.

Drug traffickers and their leaders are the least affected by the situation, and in the meantime, the indigenous people have to pay tribute to the drug traffickers and the military. The Garífuna of the communities of Iriona are outraged by this treatment. Yesterday they occupied the road between Limón and Bonito Oriental, in protest against the murders on the Iriona sandbank and the militarization that their communities have had to endure.

OFRANEH demands a full investigation of these events. The military cannot continue to act with impunity. It is time for the US to rethink the war on drugs, which is nothing but a farce and a failure. We believe that social rather than military solutions must be used to resolve this situation.

OFRANEH - Fraternal Garifuna and Black People's Organization of Honduras

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- "Why So Many People Fleeing Honduras & Guatemala [& Mexico], Decade After Decade", <http://www.rightsaction.org/action-content/rights-action-fund-raising-newsletter-why-so-many-people-flee-honduras-guatemala>

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- <http://www.rightsaction.org/action-content/emergency-response-funding>

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