

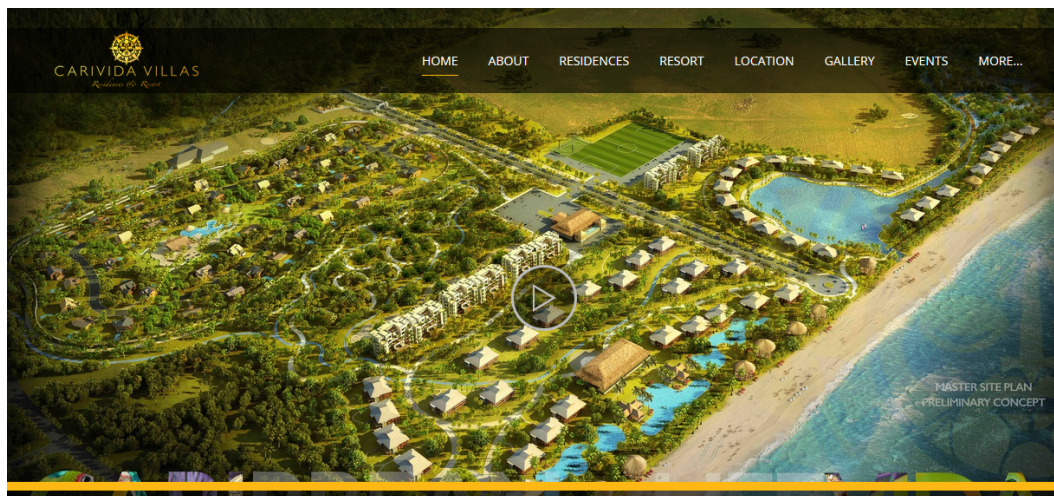
Canadian tourism investors “criminalizing” Garifuna people on their own lands: community defender illegally detained in Honduras

By Karen Spring, Honduras Solidarity Network

(<http://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/indigenous-garifuna-community-defender-illegally-detained-in-hondurascanadian-tourism-investors-criminalizing-garifuna-people-on-their-own-lands>)

OFRANEH (Organization of Black and Garifuna Peoples of Honduras) representative and Garifuna leader César Geovanni Bernardez was detained on May 18, 2017, in La Ceiba, along the north shore of Honduras. Geovanni is being falsely charged with usurpation or illegal possession of land by Canadian businessman Patrick Forseth of Carivida Villas (<http://www.carivida.com/>).

This abusive use of the corrupted Honduran legal system to “criminalize” indigenous Garifuna people is related to a land and territorial recovery project in the Garifuna community of Guadalupe, department of Colon.



It is crystal clear, in OFRANEH’s analysis and ours, that Carivida Villas is illegally possessing Garifuna lands (not the other way around) and that the only way that these capture orders were permitted is through corruption and abuse of authority.

Geovanni travels all over as a representative of OFRANEH but he is originally from Santa Fe in Trujillo Bay. For several years, OFRANEH and the Garifuna communities in Trujillo Bay have been battling illegal land sales made to American and Canadian developments including the Canadian ‘Porn King’ Randy Jorgensen. On November 10th of last year, Medeline David, a Garifuna leader in Guadalupe was [detained](#) and tortured by the police in Trujillo for the same Carivida Villas project and the same false charges as Geovanni.

OFRANEH is particularly concerned about Geovanni because he and other Garifuna youth in Santa Fe and Guadalupe were personally threatened a few days ago by the mayor of Santa Fe who has been involved in illegal sales as well. When they were threatened, the mayor made specific reference to Geovanni's "vulnerability" referring to the fact that he knew that Geovanni travels frequently to various Garifuna communities on the coast for his work with OFRANEH. The mayor has connections inside the Honduran military.

Since Geovanni was detained in La Ceiba, OFRANEH is worried that the Honduran police will take their time to release him by insisting that he be sent to Trujillo where the capture orders came from. That would mean that they might hold him until Monday.

Please call all the following phone numbers and demand:

1. Geovanni's immediate release.
2. That OFRANEH have access to speak to him in detention.
3. That all trumped up criminal charges be dropped against him.

Judge in Trujillo - Victor Melendez: 011-504-9992-7928 (He uses whatsapp)

Norma Cerratos - Honduran Sub-Secretary of Human Rights: normacerratos@hotmail.com

Carivida Villas - www.carivida.com

- go to About, then to Contact Us, and tell them to get off Garifuna land.

U.S. and Canadian officials

Send letters to the following government offices and your own elected politicians. Since the 2009 military coup ousted the government of President Zelaya, Honduras has become the repression and violence, corruption and impunity capital of the Americas. The coup and the ensuing military backed governments have been fully supported by the U.S. and Canadian governments, while promoting the expansion of U.S. and Canadian investments in mining, garment factory sweatshops, dams, African palm production, tourism and more, ... always turning a blind eye to the repression and violence, corruption and impunity.

Ambassador Michael Gort, Embassy of Canada in Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua, Tel: (504) 2232-4551; Michael.gort@international.gc.ca; tgipa@international.gc.ca

Isabelle Solon Helal, Governance Specialist, Natural Resources and Governance Division, isabelle.solonhelal@international.gc.ca

Jason Smith, U.S. government Human Rights and Labor representative, SmithJA6@state.gov
(with copy to GromovichG@state.gov)

Background information & questions

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