

## Canadian tourism operators use corrupt legal system in Honduras to ‘criminalize’ Miriam Miranda and other Garifuna people

(Share: <http://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/canadian-tourism-operators-use-corrupt-legal-system-in-honduras-to-criminalize-miriam-miranda-and-other-garifuna-people>)



(Miriam Miranda, OFRANEH general coordinator)

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When defending the land is a crime:

Canadian tourism operators use corrupted legal-political system to ‘criminalize’ Miriam Miranda and Indigenous Garifuna people

By Giorgio Trucchi, 09/07/2017 (translated for Rights Action by Lori Berenson)

<https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/187920>

OFRANEH warns of an offensive of persecution. Miriam Miranda, general coordinator of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), denounced that she is victim of persecution by state agents and private businessmen, who use deceit to continue to appropriate the communal lands of the Garifuna people.

The criminalization of social struggle

Miranda explained in a statement that on Tuesday, September 5, two members of the Investigative Police (DPI) and an official from the National Commission of Communications (CONATEL) came to OFRANEH headquarters in the Sambo Creek Community, along Honduras' northern Caribbean shore.

According to a reconstruction of the facts, these authorities sought to give her a citation to inform her that she was being summoned by court authorities. When they failed to find her, police personnel threatened to search for and arrest her.

Recently, the Canadian businessman Patrick Daniel Forseth, general manager and legal representative of the tourism company CARVIDA, has denounced the Garifuna leader and other community-environmental defenders from the Guadalupe Community in the Municipality of Santa Fe, Trujillo for acts of defamation and slander.

For years, community members have been denouncing the illegal purchase of Garifuna communal lands, involving local authorities and Canadian businessmen from the tourism industry, including Forseth and Randy Jorgensen who is the CEO of Life Vision Developments.

Specifically, a significant group of young people from Guadalupe decided to take back the lands that the community had destined for an ecotourism project but that later were inexplicably sold to CARVIDA in 2012. The re-taking of lands brought judicial charges against the young people, and in the case of Medalime David, imprisonment [1].

#### Freedom of Expression in Danger

They want them silenced. Last July in Trujillo, CONATEL made accusations of rebellion against Radio Waruguma, one of OFRANEH's community radios, with threats to close the station down. The Garifuna organization assures that this and other many attacks against its radio stations represent a flagrant violation of indigenous people's right to freedom of expression. This right is reflected in the Inter American Convention on Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in Convention 169 of the ILO.

The efforts to denounce these incidents in Trujillo Bay have unleashed acts of persecution against OFRANEH, and its leaders and members, assured the Honduran organization [2]. "I have not committed any crime. We only defend the human rights of the Garifuna people, of other indigenous peoples and the Honduran people in general" asserted Miriam Miranda in the statement. "Randy Jorgensen, Patrick Forseth and CONATEL have embarked on the task of legally denouncing me; the State has the task of formulating criminal charges against me.

To achieve this, acts of persecution are being legitimized and supported by the present government "that attempts to stop the Garifuna people's struggle to defend their historic, territorial and cultural rights". "My only alternative is to hold responsible the government of Juan Orlando Hernandez for any attacks against me or other members of OFRANEH", concludes the statement.

[1] <http://www.albasud.org/noticia/921/honduras-inversiones-tur-sticas-que-cercenan-territorios-y-fagocitan-derechos-ancestrales>

[2] <http://www.albasud.org/noticia/es/965/expolio-de-los-territorios-gar-funas-en-honduras-impactos-del-extractivismo-y-la-expansi-n-tur-stica>

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Background

Lands To Die For: The Garifuna Struggle In Honduras

December 20, 2016, CCTV Americas

35 minute film about violent and corrupt challenges facing the Garifuna people, lead by the OFRANEH organization, in the context of the violence and repression, impunity and corruption that characterize the Honduran military, economic and political elites and their international partners.

<http://www.cctv-america.com/2016/12/20/lands-to-die-for-the-garifuna-struggle-in-honduras>

Miriam Miranda, OFRANEH leader, detained and threatened by Honduran police

On January 11, 2017, Miriam Miranda and three other members of OFRANEH (Fraternal Organization of Black and Garifuna Peoples) - Luis Gutiérrez, Oscar Gaboa, Luis Miranda - were illegally detained and threatened by police at a roadside stop in La Ceiba, along Honduras' north coast.

<http://us9.campaign-archive1.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=6d6627ffdb>

The Canadian porn king and the Caribbean paradise: Is a businessman taking advantage of lawlessness to scoop up land?

November 20, 2016, by Marina Jimenez

<https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2016/11/20/the-canadian-porn-king-and-the-caribbean-paradise.html>

The U.S. and Canada Have Blood on Their Hands in Honduras

October 22, 2016, by Grahame Russell

<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/opinion/The-US-and-Canada-Have-Blood-on-Their-Hands-in-Honduras-20161022-0010.html>

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