

21 days since Garifuna land defenders disappeared by Honduran regime

An open-for-global-business “democratic allie” of President Trump & Prime Minister Trudeau
<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/21-days-since-garifuna-land-defenders-disappeared-by-honduran-regime>

- **Below:** Statement by OFRANEH (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras)

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Smear campaign against Garifuna land defenders forcibly disappeared in Triunfo de la Cruz

Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, OFRANEH
La Ceiba, Honduras, August 1, 2020



The social media smear campaign against the four Garifuna youth who were forcibly disappeared in Triunfo de la Cruz is not surprising in a country which has become a Narco-State.

Photos being circulated are a farce, photo montages that seek to damage the reputation of land defenders and other community members who were abducted from their homes by agents who are apparently tied to the Honduran Directorate on Police Investigations (DPI in Spanish).

It is not the first time that OFRANEH members are accused of ties with drug trafficking. Alfredo Lopez spent seven years in jail, accused of drug possession, until the Inter-American Human Rights Court ruled in his favor in 2005, forcing the state to free him.

It is publicly known, both nationally and internationally, that security forces and political elites have been infiltrated by organized crime, to such a degree that several well-known figures, including the brother of the current president Juan Orlando Hernández, are facing charges in the United States for their ties with drug trafficking.

While political and business cartels are protected by the state, community leaders are persecuted, jailed and even disappeared simply because of their defense of land and biodiversity.

The president of the Triunfo de la Cruz community, Sneider Centeno Thomas, has been a forceful defender of the wetlands of Punta Izopo, which are at the mercy of African palm growers dedicated to destroying the wetlands of the Platano and Gama rivers.

In the middle of last year, Sneider and a group of youth from Triunfo de la Cruz intervened to stop the burning of hundreds of acres of mangroves which were being destroyed to plant African palm, making them targets of the groups associated with the palm - drug traffickers - who control a large part of the northern Honduran coast.

After that, and many other actions, Sneider received several threats, which he denounced in a complaint to the Protection Mechanism in November 2019.

Sneider also held strong positions in meetings with state authorities regarding compliance with the Inter-American Human Rights Court ruling, that includes the requirement to properly identify and set out Garifuna communally owned lands, including the so named Lot A1, where mansions and hotels have been built by several of the Honduran elites who have controlled Honduras during the last century.

The proper titling of Lot A1 requires the state to give the “owners” a payment for improvements for more than 100 million dollars, a requirement that creates risk for any Garifuna community or individual that demands compliance with the ruling of the Inter-American Human Rights Court.

The seriousness and responsibility of OFRANEH in their struggle for the defense of the historic land rights of the Garifuna people, has been clearly demonstrated in our work nationally and by the fact that we have had to seek justice in international bodies, given that in Honduras, ‘justice’ is only in benefit of the powerful elites.

For these reasons, we emphatically reject this biased smear campaign that seeks to delegitimize OFRANEH’s work defending the human rights of the Garifuna people, with the clear objective of avoiding compliance with the demands of the Garifuna people to:

Immediately return the youth members of the Triunfo de la Cruz community, alive and in good health.

Immediately comply with the ruling of the Inter-American Human Rights Court regarding Triunfo de la Cruz and Punta Piedra.

Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, OFRANEH
La Ceiba, Honduras, August 1, 2020

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More information

- OFRANEH (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña): @ofraneh, garifuna@ofraneh.org, www.ofraneh.org, <http://www.ofraneh.wordpress.com>
- Honduras Solidarity Network: Karen Spring, spring.kj@gmail.com, @hondurassol, www.hondurassolidarity.org
- Rights Action: Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org

Background

- Four Garifuna youth kidnapped & disappeared by US/Canadian-backed Honduran regime, <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/four-garifuna-youth-kidnapped-disappeared>
- The Threat of Progress: Visiting Garifuna Country in Honduras - by Tory Russell (first pub'd February 2006), <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/the-threat-of-progress-visiting-garifuna-country-in-honduras>
- Alive they took them, Alive we want them - statement by Honduras Coalition Against Impunity, 28 julio, 2020, <https://www.defensoresenlinea.com/vivos-se-los-llevaron-vivos-los-queremos/>
- Garifuna leaders in Honduras still missing after 16 days – by Peoples Dispatch, August 4, 2020, <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2020/08/04/garifuna-leaders-in-honduras-still-missing-after-16-days/>

Emergency funds – OFRANEH

Even as Rights Action continues to send funds for Covid19 response work of long-term partner groups in Honduras and Guatemala (including OFRANEH), we request funds now for OFRANEH as they respond to the forced disappearance of four land defenders from Triunfo de la Cruz.

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