

Two Garifuna land and human rights defenders illegally jailed by Honduran regime

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/two-garifuna-women-illegally-jailed>

Two Garifuna women - land and indigenous rights defenders - were illegally jailed by military-backed, drug-trafficking Honduran regime, a “democratic allie” of the US and Canada since the 2009 military coup ousted Honduras’ last democratically elected government

URGENT ACTION

Illegal Detention of Garifuna Land Defenders In Honduras

Honduras Solidarity Network, March 4, 2021

<https://www.facebook.com/HondurasSolidarityNetwork/>

On March 3, Garifuna land defenders Jenifer Sarina Mejia Solorzano and Mariela Mejia Solorzano were detained by the Honduran police on trumped up charges related to land conflicts in Trujillo Bay, Colon. Today, the two Garifuna women were taken to their legal hearing on Trujillo. The judge has decided to hold them in detention until their initial hearing on Sunday, March 7.

This is not good news. The trumped up charges are serious and in order to ensure they aren’t sent to pre-trial detention, similar to what the government has done with the Guapinol defenders, we must respond very strongly and condemn these new attacks against the Garifuna communities and OFRANEH.

Mariela Mejía Solórzano is accused of usurpation, damages and threats against a private real estate company, likely related to the tourist industry. Jenifer Mejia Solorzano is accused of the same three crimes as Mariela plus an additional usurpation charge & robbery with violence or intimidation.

The land defenders along with OFRANEH and the Garifuna communities of Cristales, Castilla, and Río Negro all located in Trujillo, are defending the ancestral land titles of the Rio Negro-Cristales community that dates back to the early 1900s. Even before that, for decades the Garifuna have farmed, possessed & taken care of the land.

The state has done nothing to protect the integrity of the land titles in Trujillo Bay and more generally across the north coast of Honduras, and has allowed Canadian, US, European tourism developers, energy & mining companies, individuals and wealthy Honduran to illegally steal the land from the Garifuna communities. Several people have been criminalized as a result, and the two women recently detained are some of many accused, all in order to push through several

projects including hotel resorts, gated tourist communities, a possible Model city, the mining and energy industry, and the privatization of the shipping port.

Last July 18, 2020, five Garifuna land/rights defenders forcibly disappeared by the Honduran regime – never to be seen since then. Though the worst is feared, OFRANEH is leading efforts demanding their re-appearance, and truth and justice in their case.

ACT NOW

Write to Honduran Vice Human Rights Minister for Protection of Defenders, Rosa Seaman (rosaseamansheran@gmail.com) and acting Human Rights Minister Jackie Anchecta (Jackieanchecta@gmail.com).

Send copies of your letters to:

- Human rights representative at US Embassy, Nate Rettenmeyer (RettenmayerND@state.gov) and Ariel Jahner (jahnerAR@state.gov).
- Canadian Ambassador James K. Hill (sjcra@international.gc.ca).

And to your elected politicians:

- U.S. Senate: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/contact>
- U.S. House: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>
- Canadian Parliament: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Parliamentarians/en/members>

Demands:

1. immediate release of Jenifer Solorzano & Mariela Solorzano.
2. Drop all charges against the women who are being criminalized for their community's defense of ancestral Garifuna land titles in Trujillo Bay.
3. End the harassment & murder of all Garifuna land & human rights defenders that continue to be subject to attacks led by the Honduran government and encouraged through the impunity surrounding several cases of murder, threats, and harassment of the Garifuna, including the forced disappearance of the four young Garifuna men from Triunfo De la Cruz in 2020.

Background: Forced disappearance of the Garifuna 5

- Canadian government Twitter hypocrisy, August 30, 2020. The Canadian government – that fully supports the corrupt, repressive, anti-democratic Honduran regime - should delete its “International Day of the Disappeared” tweet: <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/canada-stands-with-honduran-regime-doing-the-forced-disappearances>
- 5 Black Men Kidnapped by 'Police' in Honduras Are Still Missing, by [Jared Olson](#), August 21, 2020, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/v7gjp3/5-black-men-kidnapped-by-police-in-honduras-are-still-missing

- Minority Group Fears 'Genocide' in Trump-Backed Honduras, by Jeremy Kryt, Aug. 10, 2020, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/garifuna-minority-group-fears-genocide-in-trump-backed-honduras>
- Indigenous men in Honduras are being abducted. Are the police to blame?, by Jackie McVicar, August 5, 2020, <https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2020/08/05/indigenous-men-honduras-are-being-abducted-are-police-blame>
- 21 days since Garifuna land defenders disappeared by Honduran regime – Statement by Ofraneh (Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras), <https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/21-days-since-garifuna-land-defenders-disappeared-by-honduran-regime>

Archives on OFRANEH

Articles, reports, films & urgent actions related to OFRANEH's work & struggle in defense of Garifuna territory & rights: <https://rightsaction.org/ofraneh>

More information

- OFRANEH (Organizacion 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, @RightsAction, www.rightsaction.org

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Funds needed – OFRANEH and other community defense struggles in Honduras and Guatemala

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- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

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