

Garifuna land and rights defender Alfredo Lopez Alvarez receiving death threats in Honduras

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/garifuna-land-rights-defender-receiving-death-threats-in-honduras>

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In the 1990s, Alfredo spent over 6 years as a political prisoner in Honduran jails for his work and activism in defense of Garifuna land and human rights, threatened by corrupt, violent for-export African palm producers and international tourism operators.

Today, still defending Garifuna land and rights, still at great risk.



Alfredo, speaking with a Rights Action delegation, May 2013, in front of Garifuna lands illegally captured by powerful African palm producers. PC: Camila Rich

Garifuna Leader Faces Death Threats if he Does Not Leave Triunfo de la Cruz Community

By [Marcia Perdomo](mailto:marciaperdomo@criterio.hn), marciaperdomo@criterio.hn, October 27, 2022

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Tegucigalpa - The Honduran Black Fraternal Organization (Ofraneh) denounced the death threat against the representative of the Triunfo de la Cruz Land Defense Committee, Alfredo López Álvarez, if he does not leave the community and cease the struggle for the restitution of the rights of the Garífuna people.

The statement was made during the session "Non-compliance with the judgments of the IACHR Court: the Garífuna case of Honduras" during the second day of the Central America Donors Forum 2022 (CADF) held in Tegucigalpa, capital of Honduras.

Criterio.hn spoke with López Álvarez, who pointed out that things are going from bad to worse, because previously threats were not made directly. They even established a deadline of 24 hours for him to leave the community because the third parties of Playa Escondida believe that the community does not deserve to be there.



The territorial defender assured that he will not give in to threats and will continue to help the community and the organization. "I don't owe anything to anyone nor do I live off anyone, I am very independent. I don't have to leave my house," he affirmed.

López Álvarez won a case against the State of Honduras before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) in February 2006 after his right to personal liberty, right to personal integrity and right to judicial guarantees and judicial protection were violated, following an arbitrary illegal detention, which ended up resulting in his imprisonment in a detention center for 6 years and 4 months.

THE VULNERABILITY OF THE GARÍFUNA PEOPLE

The origin of the problems that the Garífuna people face in Honduras lies in the government's disrespect for their communal territory and the State's failure to comply with the Triunfo de la Cruz and Punta Piedra rulings. This has allowed third parties to appropriate the lands.

This last incident in which López Álvarez was threatened is a clear example of the lack of action on the part of the Honduran State.

[Álvarez] shared that the origin of the threat comes from the fact that the community opened a cemetery, after the previous cemetery had reached capacity. The new cemetery is within the ancestral territory of the community of Triunfo de la Cruz, Tela, in the Honduran Caribbean, but was seized by the residents of Playa Escondida.

"Playa Escondida is where all the invading politicians live, who have houses to go for walks and vacations," and even Colombians, who believe they own the community, said López Álvarez.

THE STATE OF HONDURAS MUST URGENTLY INTERVENE

According to Edy Tábor, lawyer of the Bufete Justicia para los Pueblos and representative of Ofraneh, the State of Honduras has a responsibility to intervene to restore the territory to the Garífuna community, especially because this land has been taken by people with a lot of power in Honduras and abroad, with the objective of implementing hydroelectric, mining, and mega-tourist projects.



Caption: Edy Tábor, Justice for the Peoples Law Firm

He warned that as long as there are no public officials who make decisions and assume responsibility, the conflict will continue. This lack of government action is costing the lives of Garífunas who have been murdered for demanding land restitution and land titling, not only in Triunfo de la Cruz in Tela, Atlántida, and Punta Piedra in Iriona, Colón, but also in the rest of the communities along the Honduran Caribbean coast.

Tábor remarked that the State has the obligation to clean up the territory and prevent further acts of violence against the Garífuna people. One of the concrete acts that the State can carry out is to put a stop to the criminalization of the Garífuna.

In addition, he said that the State must guarantee their safety and prevent the repetition of regrettable events such as the forced disappearance of the four Garifuna of Triunfo de la Cruz, and actions such as those denounced by Alfredo Lopez, who took the State to the Inter-American Court, won the case and now receives threats to leave his community in 24 hours.

"This is an urgent, serious situation and the State must react immediately," concluded the legal professional.

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By Miriam Miranda, OFRANEH

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By Carlos Martinez, El Faro news, July 31, 2022

<https://elfaro.net/en/202207/centroamerica/26304/The-Survivors-of-Cayos-Cochinos.htm>

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