

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS ACTIVISTS STILL DISAPPEARED

Five individuals wearing Police Investigations Directorate (DPI) vests, took four Garífuna activists Alberth Centeno Tomas, President of the Board of Triunfo de la Cruz on behalf of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), Suami Mejía García, Gerardo Rochez Cálix and Milton Martínez Álvarez, members of the OFRANEH, and a fifth person, Junior Juárez Mejía, from their homes on 18 July 2020. The Secretary of Security ordered a search operation, but they are still missing. We demand authorities to determine their whereabouts, ensure an independent, effective and impartial investigation on their disappearance, and to bring those responsible before justice.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*Secretary Julián Pacheco Tinoco
Secretary of Security, Honduras
El Ocotal, Comayaguela, M.D.C.
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Dear Secretary Julián Pacheco Tinoco,

I am extremely concerned about the enforced disappearance of the four Garífuna activists Alberth Snider Centeno Tomas, Suami Aparicio Mejía García, Gerardo Mizael Rochez Cálix and Milton Joel Martínez Álvarez, members of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), and a fifth person, Junior Rafael Juárez Mejía, taken from their homes in the Garifuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz by five individuals wearing DPI-like vests on 18 July 2020.

Despite a search operation carried out by the National police and an investigation started by the Public Prosecutors Office, their whereabouts remain unknown.

I urge you to adopt all the necessary measures to find Alberth Snider Centeno Tomas, Suami Aparicio Mejía García, Gerardo Mizael Rochez Cálix, Milton Joel Martínez Álvarez, and Junior Rafael Juárez Mejía, and ensure an independent, effective and impartial investigation into their enforced disappearance, bringing those responsible to justice.

Yours sincerely

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Garifuna communities of Triunfo de la Cruz are part of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña, OFRANEH), an organization that works to protect the economic, social, and cultural rights of the Garifuna communities. On 8 October 2015, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in favour of the Garifuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz, founding the Honduran state guilty of violating the right of the community to collective property. Already on 28 April 2006, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted the community of Triunfo de la Cruz with precautionary measures, asking the government of Honduras to adopt the necessary measures to protect the right of the community to ownership of ancestral lands.

Since the start of a total curfew in Honduras on in March 2020, due to COVID-19, Amnesty International has received several reports of serious attacks against human rights defenders, including members of OFRANEH. According to the organization, on 20 April, police officers stifled a protest in Oak Ridge, Roatan island, demanding a boat not to dock at the local port for public health reasons, and on 6 May, police officers threatened a group of young Garifuna people guarding the community of Travesía, Cortés department, with dropping tear gas bombs. OFRANEH also denounced the killing of Edwin Fernández, a member of the organization, on 20 May in the community of Río Tinto, Atlántida department.

The [Civic Council of Popular Indigenous \(COPINH\) also denounced](#) recent attacks against its members. On 12 May, José Trochez, was detained by the Honduran army while he was doing humanitarian work. On 15 June, members of COPINH received information warning them about an imminent attack against its members and facilities. COPINH also reported that on 21 June, a group of around 60 people showed up in its Utopia facility in La Esperanza, Intibucá department, threatening to take over it. One day later, members of the organization received a digital leaflet in which an unknown group threatened the organization with burning the Utopia facility. These attacks occurred after the organization offered its facilities as an isolation center for people in prison infected with COVID-19.

Over the last four years, Amnesty International has alerted on threats, intimidation, harassment, and the killings of activists in Honduras, which is one of the deadliest countries in the world to be a human rights defender, including the case of the renowned defender Berta Cáceres in 2016. This situation has not changed. [Between June and July 2020](#), Scarleth Cáceres, activist and defender of LGBTI rights from the Arcoíris Association; Marvin Damián Castro, defender of the territory of the municipality of Pespire, Choluteca and part of the coordination of the Movimiento Ambientalista Social del Sur por la Vida (MASSVIDA), and Yonis David Castillo Lázaro, from the community of Guapinol, were killed. Previously, on 2 April 2020, Iris Argentina Álvarez, a land rights defender of the *campesino* group Cerro Escondido in southern Honduras, was killed during a violent eviction.

The Inter-American Convention on The Forced Disappearance of Persons defines an enforced disappearance as “the act of depriving a person or persons of his or their freedom, in whatever way, perpetrated by agents of the state or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support, or acquiescence of the state, followed by an absence of information or a refusal to acknowledge that deprivation of freedom or to give information on the whereabouts of that person, thereby impeding his or her recourse to the applicable legal remedies and procedural guarantees”. Honduras ratified the convention in 2005. Honduras also ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in 2008, which defines an enforced disappearance similarly.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 19 October 2020

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Alberth Snider Centeno Tomas, Suami Aparicio Mejía García, Gerardo Mizael Rochez Cáliz and Milton Joel Martínez Álvarez, and Junior Rafael Juárez Mejía (They/them/their).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AMR3727802020ENGLISH.pdf>