

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS ACTIVISTS STILL MISSING

A group of individuals wearing police vests, took Garífuna activists Alberth Centeno Tomas, Suami Mejía García, Gerardo Rochez Cáliz, and Milton Martínez Álvarez from their homes on 18 July 2020. They belong to the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH) and are still missing. We demand authorities to determine their whereabouts, ensure an independent, effective, and impartial investigation into their disappearance, and bring those responsible to justice.

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

Óscar Fernando Chinchilla
Attorney General

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Dear Attorney General Óscar Fernando Chinchilla,

I am extremely concerned about the enforced disappearance of the four Garífuna activists Alberth Snider Centeno Tomas, Suami Aparicio Mejía García, Gerardo Mizael Rochez Cáliz and Milton Joel Martínez Álvarez, members of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), and taken from their homes in the Garifuna community of Triunfo de la Cruz by a group of 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 nearly one year later.

Seven months after their disappearance, OFRANEH organized the Investigation and Search Committee for the Disappeared from Triunfo De la Cruz (SUNLA), an independent group composed of human rights organizations, with the participation of experts and relatives of the disappeared, to monitor the investigation by Honduran authorities. SUNLA requested to be included in the official investigations, a request that was rejected by Honduran authorities, according to the Committee.

I urge you to adopt all the necessary measures to find Alberth Snider Centeno Tomas, Suami Aparicio Mejía García, Gerardo Mizael Rochez Cáliz and Milton Joel Martínez Álvarez, and ensure an independent, effective and impartial investigation into their enforced disappearance to bring those responsible to justice. I also urge you to allowing the participation of their relatives in the ongoing investigations, providing them with up-to-date and accurate information on its progress, ensure that they are able to contribute with information, suggest lines of inquiry as well as asking for evidence.

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. Years before, 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](#) attacks against its members. On 12 May 2020, 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 alerted on threats, intimidation, harassment, and the killings of activists in Honduras, including the killing of the renowned defender Berta Cáceres in 2016. This situation is far from changing, [with the killings between June and July 2020](#) of Scarleth Cáceres, activist and defender of LGBTI rights from the Arcoiris 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. Previously, on 2 April 2020, Iris Argentina Álvarez, a land rights defender of the *campesino* group Cerro Escondido, was killed during a violent eviction.

Honduras is the most dangerous country in the world for land and environmental defenders. According to the [latest Global Witness report](#), Honduras has the highest per capita rate of killings these defenders in the world. Despite this, the Honduran state has not yet signed the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement), the first binding international instrument that includes the protection of environmental defenders.

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: 2 August 2021

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 (They/them/their).

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/3018/2020/en/>