

March 20, 2014

John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State  
Julie Ciccarone, Mission Director, USAID Honduras  
Amanda Johnson Miller, Human Rights Officer, US Embassy, Honduras  
Juan Orlando Hernandez, President, Honduras  
Rigoberto Chang Castillo, El Ministerio de Derechos Humanos, Justicia, Gobernabilidad y  
Descentralización, Honduras  
Abogado Jorge Alberto Revira Avilés, Magistrado Presidente de la Corte Suprema de Justicia,  
Honduras  
Ramón Antonio Sabillón Pineda, Director de la Policía Nacional de Honduras  
Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Banegas, Fiscal General, Honduras

Dear Sirs and Madams,

The attached letter, signed by 56 human rights and social justice organizations, is motivated by the denial of justice, once again, to José Isabel Morales Lopez. It is a denunciation of the February judicial proceedings and actions of:

- The Public Prosecutor, Jose Reynaldo Canales, from the Ministerio Publico in Trujillo, Colon, Honduras who exhibited prosecutorial misconduct and manipulation of the court
- The Judges of the Tribunal of Trujillo and La Ceiba: Carol Jaqueline Ortega, Luis Alberto Juárez, and Ricardo Geovany Rodríguez, all of whom exhibited judicial misconduct during the course of a trial
- The Judges from the Court of Appeals in La Ceiba: Dilia Iracema Guillén, Garin Enoc Urquía y Rubenia Esperanza Galeano, all of whom, together with the above named judges, violated orders from the Supreme Court of Honduras
- And finally, the Sub-Commissioner of the National Police in the Department of Olancho, Henry Osorto Canales who perjured himself in court with impunity as well as having a history of intimidation, threats and abuse of authority as a member of the National Police.

As human rights defenders, we are outraged by these abuses of authority of the aforementioned members of the justice system of Honduras, and the environment of impunity in which they are able to operate in violating the rights of Jose Isabel Morales Lopez, a peasant farmer from the Aguán region of Northern Honduras and a recognized political prisoner by Human Rights organizations around the world.

We call for the immediate liberty of José Isabel Morales Lopez. We demand a full investigation into the human rights violations and judicial irregularities surrounding the trial as well as the threats and intimidation against the family and community. We further demand that all police, military and security aid be cut until human rights violations end, specifically the continued aid by the United States to the National Police and USAID funding to the Ministerio Publico given the ongoing abuses being perpetrated.

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The organizations signing below express our outrage for the injustice committed against Jose Isabel "Chabelo" Morales Lopez and the entire campesino movement with the verdict emitted against him by the Honduran court on February 7, 2014.

We recognize that once again in Honduras the power and influence of the landowners and their campaign to criminalize the entire campesino movement has overcome justice.

Chabelo was charged with murder related to a confrontation in August 2008 between police commander and landowner Henry Osorto and the campesinos in the community of Guadalupe Carney in the Aguan Valley. The confrontation began when Osorto's guards, which included some members of his family, attacked a small group of campesinos working on land that is part of an abandoned military base distributed to campesinos under agrarian law but in dispute. The confrontation ended with a number of deaths mainly from Osorto's forces. With no concrete evidence related to the specific deaths, arrest warrants were issued for residents of the community whose names were obtained from property documents and resident lists. Chabelo is the only person to be tried and he has spent 5 years in prison so far.

Early in November 2013 the Supreme Court, ruling on appeal, declared that Jose Isabel must receive a new trial and that he should be freed from prison pending the trial, however the judges from the court in Trujillo, in direct violation of the Supreme Court order, refused to free him. Two of those same judges then appeared in La Ceiba as members of the judges' panel in his new trial, which began January 27th, clearly violating the principal of impartiality. This second trial was marked by changes in testimony and contradictory testimony from prosecution witnesses and rulings against the defense, and by the consistent testimony from defense witnesses that Chabelo was not at the scene of the confrontation until after the events. Henry Osorto who is now the head of the National Police in the province of Olancho ranted in his testimony that the campesinos are organized in terrorist cells, and that they are all violent terrorists. Osorto dramatically changed his testimony from the previous trial. Recounting a phone conversation with one of the victims during the confrontation, he now claims that Chabelo was identified by his full name and that Chabelo himself grabbed the phone and spoke to Osorto. This is totally contradictory to Osorto's earlier testimony that did not identify Chabelo in any way.

What was once again very clear is that Chabelo is a symbol of the campesino movement in Honduras and that the entire movement was put on trial again. The landowners in the Aguan including Osorto and the enormously powerful Miguel Facussé have declared war on the campesinos, escalated violence in the region in which nearly 200 campesinos have died, and they exercise improper influence on the judges, courts and police — all in order to continue their accumulation of thousands of hectares of African palm cultivation.

Demands for Chabelo's immediate liberty have come from human rights and campesino organizations across Honduras. The retrial was accompanied by the Jesuit organization ERICSJ and Radio Progreso; the Coordinadora of Popular Organizations in the Aguan (COPA); the Fraternal Black Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH); the Permanent Observatory for Human Rights in the Aguan; all the campesino organizations in the Aguan; and international observers were present from several organizations.

We hold the Honduran regime responsible for the ongoing agrarian conflict, for the violence that has led to the deaths of more than 120 campesinos in the Aguan Valley and for the lack of impartial justice.

But, as U.S. and Canadian organizations we also hold our own governments responsible for the same injustice, the continuing violence in rural Honduras and for the ongoing human rights violations - all of which are empowered and even orchestrated by US and Canadian military and police aid and training, mining interests and political support for the continuation of the 2009 coup d'état by the governments of Porfirio Lobo and now Juan Orlando Hernandez. Militarization, weapons, and the theft of Honduran land by multinationals and local oligarchies can only lead to an ever more violent, insecure situation for the Honduran people.

We call for the following:

- Immediate Liberty for Jose Isabel "Chabelo" Morales
- An end to US and Canadian police, security and military aid
- Accountability by the US and Canadian companies involved in mineral and palm oil extraction in Honduras for the violations of human rights.
- A full investigation into the prosecutorial misconduct on the part of the Public Minister Reynaldo Canales which includes an investigation of the inconsistent testimonies of Henry Osorto Canales, Sub-commander of the National Police, Department of Olancho

Respectfully,

1. La Voz de los de Abajo, Chicago
2. Rights Action
3. US El Salvador Sister Cities
4. Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice, Madison, Wisconsin (WNPJ)
5. Latin America Solidarity Committee--Milwaukee
6. Wisconsin Bail Out the People Movement
7. The Center for Alternative Mining Development Policy in La Crosse
8. Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)
9. Latin America/Caribbean Committee of the Loretto Community
10. Missourians Organizing for Reform and Empowerment
11. Radios Populares, Chicago, IL
12. The Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA) in St. Louis
13. FNRP/LIBRE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
14. Bay Area Latin America Solidarity Coalition (BALASC)
15. Task Force on the Americas
16. School of the Americas Watch, San Francisco, California
17. School of the Americas Watch, Oakland, California
18. Colectivo Honduras USA Resistencia = Libre
19. Alliance for Global Justice

20. Nicaragua Network.
21. W Joseph Connolly PhD, President, Communication Center #1, St Louis
22. Anti-War Committee-Chicago
23. Gay Liberation Network-Chicago
24. Portland Central America Solidarity Committee (PCASC)
25. Hondureños Por La Pachamama (HPP) -Portland
26. School of the Americas Watch, National
27. Chicago-Cinquera Sister Cities
28. Nicaragua Center for Community Action
29. St. Louis Chapter, Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.
30. Organization for Black Struggle
31. CEPRHI, Ecumenical Committee of English Speaking Religious Personnel
32. Nicaragua Solidarity and Fair Trade Resource – Chicago
33. National Immigrant Solidarity Network
34. Action LA Network
35. 8th Day Center for Justice
36. Common Frontiers, Canada
37. International Action Center
38. The May 1st Coalition 4 Worker and Immigrant Rights
39. The People's Power Assembly
40. Witness for Peace Southwest
41. National Lawyers Guild, Task Force on the Americas
42. Inter-Religious Task Force on Central America, Cleveland
43. Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA)
44. Leonor Hurtado, Asociación Q'anil, Guatemala
45. Zainab Amadahy, SPIRIT WIZE
46. Volunteer Clinic of the FCJ Refugee Centre, Toronto
47. Christie Refugee Centre, Toronto
48. Julie Webb-Pullman, Journalist, Aotearoa New Zealand
49. Wellington Zapatista Support Group, Aotearoa New Zealand
50. Latin American Committee, Aotearoa New Zealand
51. Denver Justice & Peace Committee
52. Karla Lara, Artista Hondureña
53. Red Nacional de Defensoras de DDHH en Honduras
54. Friends of the Earth Australia
55. SHARE – El Salvador
56. Fearless Leading by the Youth (FLY), Chicago