



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

**International Organisations present a report to the European Parliament about human rights violations in Honduras**

**Ongoing murders and grave human rights violations in El Bajo Aguán**

**On July 11<sup>th</sup> 2011, FIDH, APRODEV, CIFCA, FIAN International, IUF and Via Campesina International presented at the European Parliament the conclusions and recommendations from the report of the international fact finding mission to Bajo Aguán valley, which took place from February 26<sup>th</sup> to March 4<sup>th</sup> 2011. They denounced the continuation of murders and grave human rights violations in Honduras.**

The mission report summarises the situation of repression and violence faced by members of communities and rural organizations in the valley of Bajo Aguán. They are in a state of total lack of defence and protection before authorities' actions and omissions committed within the framework of the agrarian conflict in this region. In this context, between January 2010 and June 2011, 32 peasants' murders were registered. The direct implication of security forces, both public and private, have been documented in these murders, the claims also include acts of torture, threats, and harassment against the peasants organized in the defence of their rights.

The international organisations, which participated in the mission, denounce this situation of extreme violence and impunity to European parliamentarians. The rural movements, that legitimately claim their right to land, have been faced with systematic abuses and violations to their rights such as the right to life, to personal integrity, to freedom and personal security, as well as the violation of their right to food, health, housing and education. Moreover these crimes remain in impunity, as there have been no proper investigations or sanctions by the authorities. This situation has led to the stigmatisation and criminalisation of the rural movement.

Threats, kidnappings, disappearances and murders, are still going on in total impunity, without any indication of a sustainable and just solution to the conflict. Only between March 18th 2011 and June 15th 2011, 9 peasants were murdered, and during May and June 2011, 6 peasants were seriously injured during forced evictions. At the same time, despite the recent agreements reached in June between governmental, rural, and business representatives, most of the agrarian conflict in the region remains without resolution.

The International organisations presented to the European Parliament some of the recommendations for the national authorities and the international community.

We urge the national authorities to:

- Investigate with due diligence and sanction the crimes and other grave human rights violations which took place in El Bajo Aguán, including the prosecution of both the direct and intellectual perpetrators of these acts;
- Immediately stop the repression and violence against the rural movement, particularly the forced evictions, and adopt effective measures that offer protection to the people at risk;
- Properly regulate the private security sector, demanding that they fully respect the human rights of the population, or otherwise immediately withdraw their permits to operate in the country;

- Comply with the legal requirements and the political agreements relating to the agrarian conflicts, and take the necessary measures to achieve a sustainable and just solution to the problem of land ownership.

The organisations recall the fundamental role of the international community to guarantee the protection and promotion of human rights in Honduras. We observe with deep consternation the return of Honduras to the OAS, without considering the absence of guarantees regarding the investigation and sanction of serious human rights violations committed during and after the coup d'état in this country.

Therefore, we urge the International Community to reinforce its attention and actions on the human rights situation in Honduras, particularly in El Bajo Aguán. That should include:

- Contributing with strong and concrete measures to a greater protection of the people at risk, particularly relating to El Bajo Aguán;
- Carrying out a permanent monitoring of the situation in El Bajo Aguán, especially of the progress in the resolution of the agrarian conflict, and the investigations and trials of those responsible for the murders, including technical advice to national authorities;
- Ensuring the effective local implementation of the EU guidelines on the protection for human rights defenders;
- Establishing a permanent office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras.

Note: For access to the full report, visit <http://www.fidh.org/honduras>