



## Human Rights Violations Attributed to Military Forces in the Bajo Aguan Valley in Honduras

*Over the past three years at minimum 88 members or associates of campesino movements have been killed in the Bajo Aguan Valley in a campaign of targeted killings.*

*This report documents 34 acts of violence and other crimes attributed to the Honduran military's 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion during the same period of time, typically in coordination with the private security forces of palm oil corporations, Honduran National Police agents and other military units, in a pattern of aggression that appears to confirm the general opinion in the region: that members of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and other security forces in the region collaborate in what can only be characterized as death squad activity.*

*This report also describes extensive military assistance and training provided by the U.S. armed forces to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and military units closely associated with it.*

By Annie Bird, Co-Director, Rights Action

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**Table of abbreviations used in the report**

CABEI – Central American Bank for Economic Integration

CDM – Clean Development Mechanism

COFADEH – Committee of the Family of the Disappeared and Detained of Honduras

CONADEH – Honduran National Commission for Human Rights

CREM – Regional Military Training Center

ERIC – Team for Community Reflection and Investigation

IDB – Inter American Development Bank

INA – National Agrarian Institute

MARCA – Authentic Revindicative Campesino Movement of the Aguan

MCA – Campesino Movement of the Aguan

MCRGC – Campesino Movement for Refoundation – Gregorio Chavez

MCRNA – Campesino Movement of the Aguan for National Recovery

MUCA – MD – Unified Campesino Movement of the Aguan – Right Bank

MUCA – MI – Unified Campesino Movement of the Aguan - Left Bank

MOCRA – Campesino Movement for the Recovery of the Aguan

SOCSOUTH - U.S. Special Operations Command South

SOUTHCOM – U.S. Armed Forces Southern Command

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WB –The World Bank Group

## Report Summary

The land conflict in the Aguan began in the mid-1990s when the titles of dozens of cooperatives which had obtained the land through the agrarian reform program were transferred to agri-businessmen. In the late 1990s, 28 campesino (small farmer) palm oil cooperatives presented lawsuits demanding annulment of title transfers they alleged had been carried out through fraud and coercion.

Following protracted lawsuits and difficulties in maintaining legal representation, between 2006 and June 2009 campesinos protested and occupied disputed land, resulting in an investigation into the legality of the land sales by the executive branch and Supreme Court. After this investigation came to a halt following the June 29, 2009 military coup, campesinos returned to the strategy of establishing possession of disputed farms, occupying 26 of the farms in December 2009 and January 2010.

An overwhelming array of testimonies describe violence directed against the campesino movements and their supporters by State security forces, including the Honduran Army's 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, over a time frame that coincides with a series of killings of at least 88 campesinos and their supporters, and 5 bystanders apparently mistaken for campesinos, the majority targeted assassinations. This report documents thirty-four human rights' violations directly attributed by witnesses to uniformed members of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion or under other conditions that present compelling evidence of their participation. These are just a portion of the reported violations, which include threats, excessive use of force, torture, forced disappearances, and assassinations, among other acts of violence.

Impunity surrounding violations is so prevalent that it appears to constitute a policy of the state. Security forces apply the law unequally, criminalizing campesinos while providing protection to local businessmen, some reported to engage in drug trafficking. High-ranking government officials have distorted the nature of the conflict, accusing campesinos of engaging in criminal activities and claiming that an armed movement is operating in the region, unsubstantiated accusations that wrongly position campesino movements as the object of anti-terrorism and anti-narcotics operations just as regional security initiatives are being promoted by the international community.

The US military has trained and provided material assistance to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion since at least 2008. Honduran press reports also indicate that Spanish and Israeli Special Forces have trained the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, while local informants reported the presence of Colombian and Panamanian trainers.

Multilateral investment banks and the CDM have implemented partnerships with Dinant Corporation, facilitating funding of the corporation without regard to the conditions provoked by the military coup or the reports of grave human rights violations, contributing to the impunity which facilitates the violence.

The report recommends that the United States government cease assistance to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and related military units, and investigate the frequent allegations that the unit assists drug trafficking

networks; the international community backing the Central American System for Integration (SICA) Regional Security Strategy should identify a strategy capable of preventing the targeting by security forces of populations in competition for resources with politically influential sectors; multilateral investment bank's loans should be conditioned on the existence of national legal systems capable of protecting the fundamental human rights of populations impacted by the investments; the relationship between private security companies and the military must be closely monitored and permanent human rights monitoring by multilateral human rights protection mechanisms should be established in the Aguan and in Honduras.

### **Objectives and Methodology**

The content of this report, unless otherwise indicated, is based on dozens of interviews conducted with witnesses, survivors, local human rights advocates, and journalists since August of 2011. Security of sources is of extreme concern in this region where violence is ongoing, so the names of those interviewed are not published. Rights Action staff and in two cases a delegation of human rights observers bore witnesses to some of the abuses in Los Laurles, Rigores and the Panama community.

This report is limited to describing the abuses, many of them grave human rights violations, in which soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion were present and/ or direct participants; in either case the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion is a responsible party to the violations. Though other armed security forces with which the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion collaborates, principally the Colon police and the Orion private security corporation, are also authors of violations, the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion is the focus of the report given what appears to be extensive international assistance and training provided to that unit. However, the report does describe in some detail important aspects of the context surrounding these violations.

The cases presented in this report constitute only a portion of the violations that have occurred in the Aguan region. Many more abuses have been documented with the direct participation of other armed forces in the region with whom the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion frequently collaborates, such as the Colon police and the Orion company security forces. Other acts of violence have occurred which fit the pattern of action of the violations committed by the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Colon police and the Orion security corporation but where witnesses were not present or did not identify the authors. Additional reports exist of abuses with the direct participation of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, reports which have not as yet been fully documented.

Recognizing those who helped make this report possible has posed a significant problem. As often occurs in the course of denouncing human rights abuses, it is difficult to discern when revealing a person's identity may place them in greater danger and when it may serve as a measure of protection. Under these conditions it is important to recognize the work of the Human Rights Observatory of the Aguan, comprised of local human rights activists whose ongoing documentation of abuses has been

critical. This work they undertake at significant personal risk. The February 2012, Encounter for Human Rights in the Aguan was an important moment for focusing international presence and attention into the area. Karen Spring has been extremely important in her consistent observation of the area, and in her review and comments on the report. Alex Main of the Center for Economic and Policy Research has been extremely helpful in review of the text, as has Laura Carlson of the Center on International Policy. John Lindsey Poland of the Fellowship for Reconciliation was also extremely helpful with advice about researching military spending.

### **Land Conflicts in the Bajo Aguan**

The Lower Aguan River Valley, or the “*Bajo Aguan*,” forms part of the North Coast of Honduras. It is composed of five municipalities in the Department of Colon, Tocoa, Saba, Trujillo, Sonaguera, and Bonito Oriental, which together have a population of approximately 150,000 people. The North Coast is the home of Garifuna Afro indigenous communities. Though outside laborers began to move into the area as the United Fruit Company operations expanded throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the population grew in the 1970s and 1980s as the Aguan became the focal point of Honduras’ agrarian reform programs and campesino farmers were brought in by the government to colonize the area. As part of the agrarian reform program, cooperatives planted large extensions of land with African palm, a new crop being explored for vegetable oil production.

In the 1980’s the Center for Regional Military Training [CREM], located in Trujillo bordering the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion’s Rio Claro base, served as a site for U.S. training of Central American militaries and a base of operations for the Contra movement in its attacks against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. After the CREM’s closing in the late 1980s, the land was purchased by the Honduran government from a U.S. citizen of Puerto Rican descent<sup>1</sup> who owned the farms when it was used as a military training center. The lands at the time of that purchased were titled to the National Agrarian Institute, destined for land reform purposes. However, influential Hondurans, principally military officers, took over the large farm, which had ocean access.<sup>2</sup>

Multiple interviews described the former CREM area as a focal point for drug trafficking. The prevalence of drug trafficking activities surrounding the Contra movement, with the knowledge of their National Security Council contacts, is well documented in the Senate report on the findings of a 1988 Senate Foreign Relations commission headed by Senator John Kerry, now Secretary of State.<sup>3</sup> The 1990’s saw an expansion of the presence of armed bands in the area at the service of politically influential businessmen often associated with drug trafficking and with the military.

Laws passed in 1992 and 1994 modified agrarian reform legislation, altering restrictions on land sold to campesino farmers through the agrarian reform program from later being resold. These changes in the

land reform program, the land modernization, were elements of a structural adjustment program funded by the World Bank between 1988 and 1993.<sup>4</sup> The vast majority of agrarian conflicts in the Aguan began with a series of land sales that occurred after the land reform laws were modified. Testimonies indicate that large landholders, particularly Honduran businessman Miguel Facussé, accumulated land through coercive and fraudulent land purchases. Cooperative leaders were subject to extreme intimidation, including assassination attempts, while others were reportedly killed, in this way pressured to sign sales contracts without required authorization from cooperative members.

In addition, paramilitaries were used to occupy land and obtain titles through the agrarian reform program. Corrupt municipal officials also sold national lands though they lacked the legal capacity to do so. Land purchased in illegitimate sales was then either sold directly to the businessmen or corporations they owned, or to what are known in the region as “prestanombres” or “testaferos;” individuals whose names are used for titling purposes with the understanding that the real owner is a third person. Another commonly reported method of accumulating land was to expand the borders of a property for which a title had been obtained.

The ‘testaferos’ developed into a second level of power in the region, themselves becoming local businessmen and landholders who both protect the interests of Miguel Facussé and other large landowners, and in turn receive protection. Some violations documented in this report involve two landholders widely described as drug traffickers, Erick Rivera and Reinaldo Villalobos, both engaged in agrarian conflicts with communities, both, as discussed in detail below, appear to have benefitted from assistance from security forces employed by Facusse.

Afro-indigenous Garifuna communities describe a State practice of wrongly treating lands to which Garifuna communities held communal title for many decades as ‘fiscal’ or national lands eligible for agrarian reform. In this way the government sold off Garifuna land to colonizing campesinos which were frequently later acquired by large landholders.

One case is that of the Ejido de Limon in the municipality of Limon which borders the municipality of Bonito Oriental in the Bajo Aguan. A portion of the Farrallones Farm reportedly formed part of the Ejido de Limon on Garifuna lands but was acquired by Miguel Facussé through a series of land sales that occurred in the manner described above. The Garifuna community of Limon then decided to protect one section of their traditional lands, an area now known as the Vallecito farm, by employing the same methods used to separate them from their property rights, through the acquisition of a title through the agrarian reform program. The Vallecito title was obtained in 1995 by the Garifuna community of Limon. The same year, Miguel Facussé began expanding the cultivation of African palm on Vallecito from a neighboring farm he controlled, taking 100 hectares of Vallecito. Through legal challenges and international pressure, in 2004 the community was able to regain control of the lands from Facussé.

However, the same year the Garifuna community won their challenge of Facussé's appropriation of a section of their farm, Reinaldo Villalobos used violence, killing and torturing community leader Eusquadio Bonilla and intimidating others, to take control of the entire 1,000 hectare Vallecito farm, with the exception of the 100 hectares that had been subject to the legal dispute with Facussé. Villalobos, a renowned drug trafficker, had been a resident of the newly growing community of Icoteas, which was established in Limon by paramilitaries and colonists who had sold land to Facussé.

In 1997, the World Bank, which had financed agrarian loan programs that assisted campesino cooperatives in creating the African palm plantations and the processing facilities, financed the Dinant Corporation as it took control of the African palm cooperatives and expanded palm productions into new areas, like the Ejido de Limon.<sup>5</sup>

### **Palm Cooperatives Demand Return of Lands**

Among the lands sold in the 1990s were 35 African palm plantations which had been the property of cooperatives and were sold principally to Miguel Facussé, owner of the Dinant Corporation, but also to Rene Morales and Reynaldo Canales, owners of the Agropalma/ Oleopalma Corporation. Cooperative members explain that in the vast majority of these transactions, fraud and coercion were used to force cooperatives to sell. In addition to the African palm plantations, many other land conflicts exist in the region, particularly with 'independent producers' for Chiquita Brands, and other large landholders who acquired land in the 1990s.

Testimonies indicate that in 1998 leaders from 28 cooperatives came together to present civil suits demanding the annulment of the title transfers. In 2001 the Unified Campesino Movement of the Aguan (MUCA) was formally constituted with the objective of recovering possession of the farms that had belonged to the African palm cooperatives.

In the late 1990s another new campesino movement was formed, the Campesino Movement of the Aguan (MCA) which in 2001 occupied the CREM lands. Over the course of the past decade farms illegally acquired within the CREM have been expropriated by the Honduran government and sold to MCA members through the Agrarian Reform laws, a process which has been surrounded by violence.

Over the same period of time, cooperative leaders who formed part of MUCA reported difficulty in maintaining legal representation resulting from threats and bribery of their lawyers. Only three cooperatives were able to sustain the suits to their conclusion in 2012. The difficulties in sustaining civil suits led campesinos to the conclusion that it was necessary to pressure the government to encounter solutions. In February 2006 over seven thousand campesinos, members of MUCA, held a protest



leading to an agreement to investigate the title transfers between campesinos, then president Manuel Zelaya and the Supreme Court.

The agreed upon investigation never occurred, which led MUCA to pursue another tactic in addition to demanding the annulment of the title transfers; petition for the purchase of the land through mechanisms established by the Agrarian Reform program, as the lands in dispute met the conditions necessary to qualify for agrarian reform. Agrarian reform laws establish a legal limit, or “sobretecho,” to the amount of land any one person can own in a region, and if a person owns over that amount they must obtain a permit from the National Agrarian Institute. Miguel Facussé held many times the limit established by law, and campesinos report that he had not obtained permission.

In the over 30-year history of the agrarian reform program it has become standard practice for agrarian reform petitions to be initiated after campesinos establish possession of lands which meet the conditions established by law to qualify for agrarian reform. Following the standard procedures of this mechanism, in June 2008 campesinos established possession of the La Concepcion farm, but were evicted six days later without due intervention by the National Agrarian Institute, the agency charged with implementing agrarian reform.

Again on June 9, 2009 campesinos took possession of the Quebrada Seca palm oil processing plant and a machine house in the town of Tocoa. The negotiations surrounding that action led to an agreement in which the campesinos returned the processing plant and the government formed a commission to review the title transfers overseen by the Supreme Court and the President. The machine house remained in the possession of the Cooperatives as they still held the title; Facussé had simply taken the property without transfer of the title. The commission first met with MUCA leader Fabio Ochoa on June 23, 2009. Later that day Ochoa was shot. He survived but with permanent disability. The commission ceased to function following the June 29, 2009 military coup.

In 2008 Dinant secured loan commitments in excess of US\$90 million from multilateral banks, including \$30 million from the World Bank, \$20 million from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, \$20 million from the German DEG bank and \$23.5 million from the Inter American Development Bank in both direct investment and syndicated financing.<sup>6</sup> Following the coup, only the German government development bank DEG cancelled the loan after complaints from human rights organizations, while the WB, IDB and CABEI began loan disbursements in late 2009. The WB is currently reviewing its loan, but also provided early funding to Dinant in the late 1990s while campesino cooperatives were initiating lawsuits challenging Dinant’s land acquisitions. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) authorized carbon credits for Dinant in July 2011, with full knowledge of the widespread allegations of grave human rights violations associated with the company, explaining that it was not ‘equipped’ to investigate human rights abuses.<sup>7</sup> The CDM is an agency of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

### **Campesino Farmers Establish Possession of Farms**

After five months of a de facto government offering no possibility of compliance with agreements, on December 9, 2009, MUCA initiated a process of land recovery, taking possession of 26 of the 28 farms. This was followed by almost three years of negotiation to establish the terms of the purchase of 6 of the 28 farms. Extreme violence enacted against campesinos carried out by Orion security guards employed by palm oil businessmen, the Colon police, the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, a series of special operations, and with occasional support from the 4<sup>th</sup> Naval base in La Ceiba seriously undermined the negotiations process.

Analysis of the pattern of violent acts in relation to the different stages of negotiation indicates that the objective of the violence has been, and continues to be, limiting campesinos' capacity to effectively negotiate. In this context approximately 89 campesinos and their supporters, neighbors and bystanders have been killed in three years mostly in death squad style killings, the vast majority of which have been standalone operations whose only objective was the execution.

The sale of 6 farms to MUCA and one to a splinter of MUCA called the Authentic Revindicative Campesino Movement of the Aguan, or MARCA, occurred in late 2012. MARCA was formed by four cooperatives that chose not to sign the April 17, 2010 agreement establishing the negotiation for purchase in favor of continuing their civil suits. Though MARCA was later forced through violent attacks to negotiate the purchase of the San Esteban farm, where their settlement is located, the remaining cases related to the three cooperatives, San Isidro, La Trinidad and El Despertar, were subject to rulings in late 2011 and 2012 which annulled the title transfers. Ownership of the farms reverted back to the cooperatives.

The palm oil corporations' security forces were evicted from the farms on June 29, 2012. Less than three months later MARCA's lawyer, Antonio Trejo, was shot in a parking lot, in a crime not associated with robbery or any motive other than the murder. Trejo was reported to be the only lawyer who had withstood threats and bribery by palm oil corporations. On February 16, Antonio Trejo's brother, Jose Trejo, a member of MARCA who had vocally called for an investigation into his brother's murder, was himself murdered as he drove in the streets of Tocoa.

It is important to note that the 5 farms purchased by MUCA total slightly less than 4,000 hectares, far short of the 11,000 hectares whose purchase the government had committed to facilitating in the April 17, 2010 agreement with MUCA, and the 28 farms campesinos claim rights to total 20,000 hectares.

Three new campesino movements have emerged making further demands for the land in dispute: the Movement for National Recovery of the Aguan, MCRNA, emerged in July 2011, and the Campesino Movement for Refoundation - Gregorio Chavez, MCRGC, and the Campesino Movement for Recovery of

the Aguan, MOCRA, both emerged in July 2012. All of the new movements' demands stem from the disputed acquisition of the 28 palm oil farms and one additional farm that had been separated from a campesino cooperative as part of the same process, and often in reaction to acts of extreme violence by large landholders in the area.

As the land conflicts continue, so do the killings of campesino movement members which now apparently target MOCRA in particular. On November 30, 2012, MOCRA member Wesley Santos was killed as he drove a motorcycle past the entrance to the La Aurora community. Luis Antonio Ramos Reyes and Manuel Antonio Pérez were shot on January 13, 2013 while driving to the community of Salama, Tocoa. On February 2, 2013, in two separate incidents, MOCRA member Juan Perez was shot as he rode his bicycle through along the highway past the town of El Tigre and MUCA member William Alvarado was shot as he rode his bicycle through the town of Taojico.

### **The 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion**

Soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Colon police and private security forces principally from the Orion security corporation employed by the Dinant palm oil corporation and later also employed by the Agropalma / Oleopalma corporation have consistently been identified as initiating acts of violence against campesino movements over a time span which coincides with the execution of dozens of death squad style executions of members of the campesino movement.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion is a special-forces unit that operates and trains from a base in Rio Claro, Trujillo, Colon, but may also operate from the base of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in Tegucigalpa. The 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion also has an outpost in Tocoa, Colon. The 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion's operations in the Aguan are often supported by other military units, particularly the 4<sup>th</sup> Naval which has an outpost in the Aguan. In addition, both the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion installations and the installations of the Colon police since April 2010 have housed military and police operations temporarily assigned to the area.

An August 20, 2011 article in the La Prensa newspaper describes Colonel Raynel Enrique Funes Ponce as the commander of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion.<sup>8</sup> However, an October 1, 2012 La Prensa article describes Col. Funes as commander of the special-forces units of the 15th and 1st Battalions, while explaining that the two operate as one unit.<sup>9</sup> A January 2012 article posted on the Honduran armed forces web page explains that Col. Funes assumed the command of the Special Forces in the 1st Battalion in January 2012, at the same time that Coronel Selman David Arriaga Orellana assumed command of the Special Forces in the 15th Battalion.<sup>10</sup> However an August 10, 2012 newspaper report describing the theft of two M-16 automatic weapons from the 5th Battalion in the same department of Trujillo identifies Col. Arriaga as commander of that battalion.<sup>11</sup> According to a March 4, 2004 diplomatic cable leaked by

Wikileaks, Arriaga had been vetted by the U.S. Department of State to participate in the command of the Xatruch II unit sent by Honduras to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It appears that command of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and associated operations are subject to frequent change, one of the reasons that the command structure for the troops in the Aguan is complex. The series of special operations and joint task forces sent to the region further complicates gaining clarity with regard to the command structure.

### **Special Operations Trueno, Tumbador and Xatruch II and Xatruch III**

Operation Trueno (Thunder), the first military occupation which involved an estimated 7,000 soldiers, came to the region in April 2010. A second occupation of approximately 1,000 soldiers, named Operation Tumbador, arrived in November 2010. Local sources and newspaper reports indicate that the commander of the Tumbador operation which began in November 2010 was the current Minister of Security Pompeyo Bonilla.<sup>12</sup>

In August 2011 a joint task force of military and police called Operation Xatruch II arrived, and was renewed by Operation Xatruch III in August 2012. Xatruch II was also the name of the second Honduran military unit to be deployed to Iraq, though it is unclear what, if any, relationship the Aguan operation by the same name bears to the unit that served in Iraq. Soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion appear to act as part of the Xatruch II and Xatruch III operations, which are headquartered in the Rio Claro military base.

The Honduran daily *El Proceso Digital* reported on August 17, 2011 that police commander Julio Espinal commanded the Xatruch II operation.<sup>13</sup> However, in January 2012 police commander Santos Armando Rodriguez Flores was cited by the press as the commander of the operation<sup>14</sup> in reporting related to his citation to testify before courts regarding the shooting death by Xatruch II agents in the Aguan on October 28, 2011 of José Rubén Martínez Murillo and brothers Josué Gerardo and Rafael Antonio Mencía Amaya, young men with no known association with the campesino movements.<sup>15</sup> In June 2012 it was reported that Rodriguez Flores was transferred to a special investigations unit of the police.<sup>16</sup> An August 14, 2012 article in *La Prensa* reported that police commissioner Leonel Armando Alvarez had assumed control of the Xatruch operation.<sup>17</sup>

In December 2012, Honduran press reported that a military Colonel, German Alfaro, replaced one Rafael Moreno as commander of Xatruch III, explaining that Rafael Moreno had commanded Xatruch III for 'several months.'<sup>18</sup> Though unclear whether Rafael Moreno is a military or police officer, press reporting on the withdrawal of Honduran troops from Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004 quoted one Col. Rafael Moreno as spokesperson for the unit.<sup>19</sup> If the same person, Moreno would be the second commanding

officer in the Aguan Xatruch II operation to have participated in the Xatruch II deployment in Iraq, along with Col. Arriaga.

### **The 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and Orion Security**

Many local reports describe a close relationship between the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the Orion corporation which provides security for Dinant Corporation and Agropalma / Oleopalma Corporation. There are multiple on-the-ground reports that private security guards on several occasions have been given military uniforms and military issue weapons to participate in operations alongside the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and one report of 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion soldiers wearing Orion uniforms. Reports also indicate that private security guards are trained by and with the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

One on-the-ground report indicates that active duty military officers work in Dinant security operations, naming a Lt. Pineda, who was reported to direct Orion operations in the Aguan. The same source indicates that a former commander of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Col Jose Antonio Melgar, is an owner of Orion.

Campesinos estimate that private security forces quadrupled in size between Dec 2009 and April 2010, recruiting agents principally from the Aguan. This has greatly increased already existing social tensions; guards and campesino movement members are neighbors, frequently even relatives. Certain communities, such as El Tigre, Ilanga and Los Ocotes, for example, are heavily associated with security guards, while others, such as La Concepcion and La Aurora are heavily identified with campesino movements.

Campesinos often report that security guards carry illegal and military grade weapons such as FAL, R-15 and AK-47's. A July 2012 newspaper article described the arrest of five security guards transporting illegal weapons, and unconfirmed on the ground reports claim that in October 2011 security guards were arrested with similar illegal weapons but released after a military Colonel claimed ownership of the weapons, and that his status as active duty military authorized him to possess the weaponry.<sup>20</sup>

The rapid growth of security forces with untrained agents created a need for training. There have been reports of the training of Orion security forces on the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion base in Rio Claro, as well as training of Orion agents with 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion members in operations outside of the base. These reports frequently mention the use of Colombian and Panamanian trainers.

In October 2009 the United Nations Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries reported that Honduran businessmen had recruited 40 former Colombian AUC paramilitaries to work in private security in Honduras.<sup>21</sup> This report came weeks after Colombian newspapers reported on September 13, 2009 that Honduran palm oil businessmen were recruiting former AUC members. Local reports in the Aguan also

indicate that Israeli security forces provided security for the palm processing plant in Quebrada Seca in early 2010, and that same year Colombians and Panamanians provided training to the expanding security forces.

### **15<sup>th</sup> Battalion Training and Assistance from the U.S. and Other Foreign Security Forces**

While local witnesses indicate that private security forces are trained by foreign trainers, and that private security forces are trained jointly with the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, local sources have also reported that the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion has been trained by U.S. Army Rangers since before the 2009 coup, and also by Colombians and Panamanians since 2010. The U.S. Ranger training was confirmed by a Honduran national newspaper article on August 30, 2011, which reported on an August 29 graduation ceremony for 32 soldiers, out of 70 who participated, from a 33-day Ranger training course in the Rio Claro base. According to the article, the soldiers were trained in survival, explosives, patrol tactics, river operations, infiltration techniques, and land, aid and water extraction.<sup>22</sup>

On October 1, 2012 a Honduran newspaper ran an article reporting on training of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion by U.S. Army Rangers, Spanish and Israeli special forces. This article also described the special-forces that operate from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in Tegucigalpa and from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Rio Claro, Trujillo as one unit, that the Rio Claro facility is used for training of the unit. The article explains that U.S. assistance has facilitated improvements in the bases and equipment, explaining that the unit has even had support of CB22 helicopters, described as the most advanced in the American fleet. The article describes Special Operations Forces as trained in insertion, parachuting, explosives, long distance sharp shooting, intelligence, advanced marksmanship, urban operations, close combat, martial arts, and offensive driving. The article explains that the Special Forces operate 'behind enemy lines to obtain information about the objective.'<sup>23</sup>

Many reports of abuses involve some of the techniques described above. For example, a frequently reported abuse is aggressive rapid pursuit by vehicles with armed men, on at least one occasion this pursuit has led to fatal automobile accident, others in the massacre of the occupants of the pursued car, offensive driving incidents. There have also been two incidents of sharp shooting attacks recorded, one in the Guanchias farm before the April 17, 2010 agreement, and another on the La Aurora farm after campesinos had been settled there by the National Agrarian Institute. In the first case a group of three campesinos were resting when one noticed a point of red light on his body and then saw one on his friend's forehead, who was sleeping against a palm tree. He pushed his friend to the side and almost immediately a silent bullet exploded into the tree where his friend had been. In the second incident two campesinos were tending a palm plantation near the border of La Aurora that is several hundred meters

from a 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion outpost and Orion security headquarters. Without a sound a palm tree beside one of them burst into splinters with the impact of a silent bullet.

Public reporting on military spending demonstrates that the US Special Operations South (SOCSOUTH), of which the 75th Rangers Regiment forms part, in 2008 conducted two training activities of 135 Honduran soldiers with the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Battalion costing \$477,205 and \$842,556; a total of over US\$1.3 million. This training was described as consisting of techniques in patrolling, reconnaissance, troop leading, procedures, airmobile advanced light infantry, and land navigation.<sup>24</sup>

The facilities of the 15th Battalion are much too limited to house the military forces now present in the Aguan, while U.S. troops are a significant presence in Trujillo hotels. The three large hotels in the town of Tocoa have been contracted for that purpose and are often filled to capacity with soldiers. Reports indicate that at different times buildings belonging to Miguel Facussé through the Dinant Corporation have been utilized to house troops, and his land has been used to carry out training. Local reports indicate that the facilities in the Rio Claro military base that houses the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion are currently undergoing expansion.

The US Special Operations South, SOUTHSOC, has financed expansion and improvement of facilities in the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion at least since 2011. On September 29, 2011 a \$98,999 contract for upgrades to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion base in Rio Claro was signed between a Honduran contractor and the U.S. Special Operations South, SOCSOUTH, work expected to be completed in February 2012.<sup>25</sup> On September 30, 2011 SOCSOUTH's 112<sup>th</sup> Signal Detachment signed a \$137,131 contract for the barracks construction on the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion's Rio Claro base, work scheduled to be completed February 29, 2012<sup>26</sup> and on September 30, 2012 the US Southern Command signed a \$115,326 contract for the construction of fencing at the Rio Claro base, work scheduled to be completed June 30, 2013.<sup>27</sup>

### **Security Operations Criminalize Campesinos and Protect Drug Traffickers**

The Honduran president, while authorizing the successive security operations for the Aguan, has described the security forces' missions as being focused on restoring order. However, members of the Xatruch III operation have been clear in statements to the press and in interviews that the objective of the operation is exclusively to protect properties claimed by businessmen whose ownership is in dispute with campesino movements. It is relevant to note that President Porfirio Lobo is from the Aguan region, the town of Bonito Oriental, where his family, particularly his older brother Ramon Lobo, yields a great deal of influence.

During interviews and in press statements, officials refer to members of campesino movements as criminals, while press reports have on several occasions cited military sources associating campesino



movements with armed terrorist organizations.<sup>28</sup> These comments distort the events themselves and the nature of the conflict, converting it from a long-standing agrarian dispute into a 'guerrilla' or 'terrorist' movement with the objective of destabilizing the State. High-ranking members of the armed forces, the Minister of Security and even the president, have made similar statements on multiple occasions.

During 2010 and 2011 these statements tended to focus on accusations that Nicaraguans and Venezuelans were agitating in post-coup Honduras, promoting armed movements, with occasional accusations of ties to the Colombian guerilla movement FARC. These accusations mostly occurred as tensions were high regarding Venezuela's regional leadership in withholding recognition of the de facto government in Honduras, and later in the lead up to the Nicaraguan elections. No evidence to support these assertions has been made public.<sup>29</sup>

On September 6, 2012, as concern grew in the U.S. congress over Iranian influence in Latin America, an Israeli newspaper The Times of Israel ran an article citing Israeli Radio as the source which reported that Iran had established a Hezbollah training center in Nicaragua near the Honduran border. Over the following week a series of Latin American newspapers reproduced the story. Then, as the The Tico Times English language Costa Rican newspaper reported, "Other Israeli media outlets picked up the report, citing "local media" in Nicaragua as the source of information. In Nicaragua, however, no local media is reporting that Hezbollah has a training camp here."<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the past three years, Honduran authorities have levied accusations of ties to drug trafficking networks against campesino movements, even as events they report starkly contradict reports from the area. Many of the accusations centered around Erick Rivera, a renowned area drug trafficker who, before his death in June 2012 had been engaged in active land disputes with at least two campesino communities. Despite these long standing conflicts, police made statements to the press cited in the June 2, 2012 La Prensa article describing Rivera as a campesino leader. This gross distortion which in essence accuses the campesinos of participation in drug trafficking clearly contradicts events of the previous several years. The description even contradicts a report in the same newspaper published on April 15, 2012 in which Rivera is described as a local businessman in conflict with campesinos, an article in which he issued an ultimatum to the State "If by the 20<sup>th</sup> of April there is not an agreement or a way in which my lands are recovered with the intervention of the authorities, blood will run." The military did in fact intervene in that dispute the following day, committing a series of violations.<sup>31</sup>

This narrowly defined mission of security operations designed to protect businessmen's land holdings, particularly those of Miguel Facussé, was underscored in a September 12, 2012 interview with Tocoa police sub commander Oscar Mejia in which he explained that the Xatruch operation's activities were limited to actions relating to securing the properties invaded by campesinos and that Xatruch personnel



could not participate in providing security to Afro-indigenous Garifuna farmers and personnel from the National Agrarian Institute engaged in a measurement of the Vallecito Farm.<sup>32</sup>

In November 2011 Reynaldo Villalobos, a renowned local drug trafficker, died in a boat accident and by August 2012 reports circulated that his Colombian widow was attempting to sell the section of the Vallecito Farm which Villalobos had renamed “Rancho El Dorado.” Thus, Garifuna communities renewed efforts they had sustained since the lands had been stolen to reclaim the farm through legal complaints. The process was initially blocked by security forces’ refusal to provide security for the Agrarian Institute to carry out land measurements. But after substantial international pressure, including a protective measures order from the Inter American Commission for Human Rights of the Organization of American States, the measurements were carried out.

It is important to note that many testimonies have implicated Miguel Facussé in drug trafficking, and indicated that his properties, particularly beachfront properties like Farrallones farm, are used to receive both boats and airplanes carrying narcotics. A State Department cable, 04TEGUCIGALPA672, dated March 19, 2004 released by Wikileaks describes the landing of a drug plane on March 14, 2004 on the Farrallones property belonging to Facussé, and refers to a previous drug plane landing that had been detected on the property the previous year, and an incident with a speedboat. The cable stated, “Facusse's property is heavily guarded and the prospect that individuals were able to access the property and, without authorization, use the airstrip is questionable... The source also claimed that Facussé was present on the property at the time of the incident.”

### **Human Rights Observation in the Aguan**

While it appears as though the Bajo Aguan has been the site of the most large scale death squad killings since the peace processes in Central America, the response from the international community has been limited. Violations have been reported mostly by local, national and international solidarity organizations, such as the Human Rights Observatory of the Aguan, FIAN, COFADEH, Rights Action, FIDH, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, as well as the campesino movements themselves. Several significant human rights focused events were coordinated to attempt to bring greater pressure to bear on national and international actors to improve the situation.<sup>33</sup> However, the direct involvement of multilateral human rights bodies has been limited to just the IACHR lawyers attending the May 2011 public audience in Tocoa, though not as part of a formal mission and without the capacity to report.

The limited international human rights observation is a problem generally in Honduras but particularly in the Aguan. Shortly after the 2009 coup, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights sent a human rights advisor to the United National Development Program office in Tegucigalpa. In 2011 there

was discussion of opening a new office of the High Commissioner in Latin America, and Honduras was reported to be one of two candidates, but the UNOHCHR prioritized establishing a new office in Paraguay. The human rights advisor continues to function; however, he is extremely limited as he does not have a formal mandate and is subject to the administrative parameters of the UNDP office in Tegucigalpa. During a September 2011 interview, the UNOHCHR advisor Antonio Maldonado explained that the UNDP security policies prohibit him from visiting the Aguan. In addition, there were unconfirmed reports that safety conditions prevented UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders Margaret Sekaggya from visiting the Aguan during her February 2012 visit to Honduras.

While unable to undertake in situ reporting on the Aguan, the UN Special Rapporteurs and the IAHCR have expressed concern about reports of violations but have not directly monitored the situation. Other than the reporting from human rights organizations and Honduran press, only the Honduran government human rights commission CONADEH and the U.S. Embassy, through the U.S. State Department's annual human rights country reports, have directly reported on the violence. CONADEH published two reports on the Aguan, "Land Rights in the Bajo Aguan" released in September 2011, and "Violent Deaths of People in the Bajo Aguan." The United States Department of State reported on the Aguan in the 2009 and 2010 human rights conditions country reports for Honduras.

The lack of more substantial in situ international monitoring negatively impacted the reporting of human rights violations, especially since significant discrepancies exist between the reporting from CONADEH and the State Department, and from non-governmental human rights organizations operating in or visiting the region described above, and the campesino movements

CONADEH and the State Department reported significantly lower numbers of campesinos killed than did human rights organizations and the campesino movements. Further, there was little clarity regarding reports of members of security forces killed. While numbers of killings were reported, there was not confirmation of the identity of the individuals, nor the conditions under which their deaths occurred. Another key difference between U.S. State Department and Honduran government reports and those of human rights organizations was that the State department and CONADEH generally characterized the killings as having occurred in confrontations while human rights organizations denounced a pattern the emergence of a pattern of targeted killings.

According to CONADEH's report "Violent Deaths of People in the Bajo Aguan", between December 2009 and December 2011, reported in the context of the land dispute the violent deaths of 25 campesinos, 15 security guards, two police officers, one soldier, a company manager and six bystanders, going on to specify that 20 of those deaths occurred in 2011.<sup>34</sup> The 2011 State Department report cited a two-year total of 55 killings related to the conflict, including field hands, private security guards, security force members, one judge, and bystanders.<sup>35</sup> Over that period of time, campesino movements and human

rights organizations had denounced the killing of 51 campesinos, 5 bystanders and 1 journalist, reports which had been widely reproduced in the media and internet.

The generalized characterization of the killings in the Aguan as ‘confrontations’ has been made by both CONADEH and the State Department in their 2010 and 2011 human rights country reports described the situation in the Aguan as “confrontations” that “resulted in the deaths *or injuries* of approximately 17 agricultural workers, 13 private security guards, and one police officer.[emphasis added.]”<sup>36</sup> In contrast, during 2010 human rights organizations denounced 24 killings of campesino movement members and injuries to dozens more. By the end of 2011 human rights organizations had denounced the killing of 49 campesinos, 5 bystanders and 1 journalist, mostly in death squad style assassinations.

Both the 2010 and 2011 State Department reports characterize the killings as having occurred during “confrontations.” However, of the 24 killings reported by human rights organizations and the press in 2010, 10 were reported to be targeted killings of campesinos in transit or in homes, 2 deaths took place in car accidents following high speed pursuit by armed gunmen, 3 in the context of a land occupation, 5 in the massacre near El Tumbador farm, 1 death following kidnapping and torture and 1 under unclear circumstances. The State department report described the November 15, 2010 killing of 5 MCA members, which significant evidence indicates was the result of a surprise attack on campesinos in land they owned, described in detail below, as the result of a confrontation.<sup>37</sup> In the Honduras Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2011, the State Department again characterized the killings as “confrontations,” even though only 6 out of the 32 campesino killings denounced by human rights organizations in 2011 occurred on lands in dispute, 19 were targeted killings generally on public roads while victims walked, rode bicycles or drove, and 7 were disappearances in which four of the disappeared were later found dead with signs of torture and three victims remain disappeared.

One clear example of the differences in reporting of the killings and conditions surrounding them is that of the killing of 17-year old Geovanny Ramirez in June 2010. CONADEH claims that “on June 14, 2009 campesino Geovany Ramirez, a minor, was executed before witnesses and police present in the La Aurora Cooperative, near the El Agua bridge,” going on to explain that the lack of action by authorities is unexplainable.

The State Department human rights country report states “On June 20, the body of 17-year-old Oscar Yovani Ramirez was found shot with 15 bullet holes at the La Aurora African palm farm in the Aguan Valley, Tocoa. Police reported that before authorities received information about the location of the body, they apprehended and detained at the farm’s entrance five agricultural workers who had been discharging rifles. After police learned about the discovery of Ramirez’ body, agricultural workers reportedly refused to allow officers to enter and investigate the site. In detention the workers told police that Ramirez was not with them at the time of the arrival of the police on June 20 and that

Ramirez was last seen on the morning of June 19. Human rights organizations alleged that police and private security guards killed Ramirez.“

However, neighbors explained that Ramirez had disappeared on June 19, 2010, and that early the following morning five MUCA members who were standing at the entrance of La Aurora witnessed police and private security vehicles enter the town. They immediately alerted neighbors, and witnesses saw the cars dump Ramirez’s gruesomely tortured body in La Aurora. The same police cars then arrested the men that had seen the security forces enter, and beat them in detention. Discrepancies between the State Department reports, CONADEH’s reports and the reports from human rights organizations and testimonies collected for this report occur in other instances.

It is notable that given the magnitude of the violations in the Aguan, CONADEH has not fulfilled its mandate in the Aguan, releasing only two incomplete reports.

### **Security Personnel Killed in the Context of the Land Dispute**

This investigation has not focused on developing and verifying a comprehensive list of security personnel killed in actions related to the land dispute. Limited time and the very large number of incidents reported made it necessary to define a precise focus of the investigation. The role of the military, especially the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, was of the most immediate concern, given the gravity of State implication in death squad activity. In the same way, the report did not focus on developing a detailed body of information regarding incidents involving actions by the police or private security guards.

The killing of security guards is of particularly grave concern given the long term impact this could have on the social fabric of the region. As has been mentioned before, most security guards working for Orion are from the Aguan. They are neighbors, even family members of campesinos in the movements. A number of the members of the campesino movements have at some time worked for the palm oil businessmen, many as security guards. During the course of collecting interviews, expressions of the proximity of the security guards and the campesinos were frequently heard, such as disbelief that the specific person, a longtime friendly neighbor, had opened fire, or discussion of second hand information that a security guard involved in a killing lived just a few houses from the widow.

Reports of confrontations resulting in deaths of security forces in some cases was raised as a concern by campesino movements, who express concern that instances may exist in which guards have also been the victim of targeted assassinations or ambushed by other security forces with the intent of criminalizing campesino movements. One source described an August 16, 2011 incident in which a truck recognized to belong to security guards opened fire on a group of security guards who had recently ended their shift, as well as the September 2012 death in Las Camarones farm.

At least one detailed report of a potential security guard fatality in exchange of fire with campesinos was received, though the guard's identity and death have not been confirmed. According to the reports, on July 29, 2012 members of the San Isidro Cooperative, part of MARCA, were attacked by gunfire as they pulled up to the Cooperative office in the town of Tocoa. Orion security guards blocked off both ends of the street with sedans and opened fire on the campesinos from both sides. One of the five campesinos had a registered handgun and returned fire, at which point the attack ended. Five campesinos, Eldyn Noel Ortiz, Jimmy Burgos, Santos Eliseo Pavón, Gilberto López and Jorge Nájera, were wounded in the attack. It was reported that the sister of a security guard was later interviewed on the local radio, explaining her brother had been fatally injured in the incident. She was reported to blame his death on Miguel Facusse for not providing prompt medical attention.<sup>38</sup>

While the Dinant corporation at different times has made statements asserting that security guards have been killed, information regarding their names and the conditions under which they were killed has not been released, making reporting more difficult.

Press reports have provided the names of 10 private security guards killed over the past three years, while CONADEH named an additional guard, making a total of 11 named guards, described in more detail in Annex II. However, CONADEH reported that 15 members of security forces had been killed in 2010 and 2011, and local sources reported one unnamed guard in 2012. While CONADEH reports the name of one police officer killed, they also report an additional unnamed police fatality. Both press and CONADEH reported a Dinant corporation manager had been killed. In addition, the human rights organization COFADEH and family members of the soldier killed inside the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Josue Banoff, are pursuing the investigation and prosecution of the authors of that crime, described in detail below.

Of the named 13 security personnel, press reporting of the killings describe 2 targeted assassinations in one incident, 2 killed an ambush or mishandling of weaponry depending on the source, 1 in a separate incident described by the press as an ambush, and 8 in the context of evictions or land occupations. However, it is important to note that in the course of collecting primary source information regarding campesino killings over a period of a year and a half significant inconsistencies with press reporting have been noted. Further, local sources reported some evidence exists that the two security guards killed in a targeted assassination may have been the victim of the same assassins who killed campesino Matias Valle approximately three weeks prior.

### **Campesino movement members and associates killed in the context of the land dispute**

Eighty eight killings of campesino movement members or associates have been reported, in addition to five of bystanders apparently believed by assassins to be campesinos in the Aguan since January 2010 [see annex I for detailed descriptions]. It is important to note that there are other reports of murdered

campesinos which have not been investigated and are therefore not included. A list of these killings with a brief description can be found in Annex I. This list is compiled from interviews conducted since August 2011, first hand observation, from communiques the Aguan Human Rights Observatory, communiques from MUCA, and from a report by the International Human Rights Federation [FIDH].<sup>39</sup> Most of these killings have been stand-alone operations whose only objective was the execution.

It is important to note that the time frame in which this pattern of violence that can clearly be identified as death squad activity coincides with the pattern of violence against campesinos directly exercised by the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and other military operations they have supported, which is documented in the cases presented below. This lends credence to the widespread assertions from local informants that the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and other security operations with which the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion cooperates participate in the death squads.

While media, CONADEH, and U.S. State Department reports have characterized the killings as the result of “confrontations,” the vast majority were targeted killings whose only apparent objective was the assassination.

Reports provide detailed descriptions of 78 clearly targeted assassinations, and 3 disappearances. In addition, 6 killings occurred in the context of land occupations or evictions, 1 death from excessive use of teargas, 1 death in an exchange of fire near a highway, and 1 death in unclear circumstances. An additional 3 campesino leaders were killed while traveling on the road with large quantities of cash to pay workers, 1 of those was first abducted and later killed. In the three cases, the cash was stolen, indicating robbery could have been a motive in the murder, though in other respects they fit the pattern of targeted assassinations.

Of the targeted assassinations, 53 of those were shot and killed while the victims were in transit, driving, riding a bicycle, waiting for a bus, walking along public highways or exiting their homes. An additional 2 campesinos were killed while in transit on roads in farms in dispute, while 4 more were reportedly victim to targeted assassinations on farms in dispute, not while an occupation or eviction was occurring. An additional 13 targeted assassinations occurred while the victim was in his home or on a farm which was not in dispute, that is to say there was no dispute regarding the victim’s right to be where they were, indicating little potential for a confrontation. There were witnesses to almost all of the killings, and many were carried out by gunmen in automobiles that circulate without licenses plates and are known to be associated with security forces, or by gunmen on motorcycles wearing ski masks. Three men were killed during car crashes that resulted from high speed pursuit of vehicles by armed men.

Reports describe an additional 11 targeted killings proceeded by abductions, including the one described above which involved robbery. In 8 of these cases the bodies, most tortured, were later found, while three victims remain missing. In two of these cases, two men were taken from neighboring farms into

the Panama Farm by security guards, one tortured body was recovered while the other remains missing. In two separate incidents a total of three men disappeared while fishing on the Aguan River in areas patrolled by security guards, their bodies were recovered, one decapitated. In two incidents, three were taken while riding bicycles on public roads, two remain missing though their bicycle was recovered on a farm controlled by agribusiness security guards. In two cases, one man and a 17 year old boy, the victims disappeared under unclear circumstances, and their bodies later appeared, the gruesomely tortured body of the minor was reportedly left by police and security guards. One man was kidnapped by masked men while he carried a large quantity of money, his body appeared the next day, the money stolen, the one of three cases in which robbery was an element to the murder.

While it is clear that some deaths have occurred during armed confrontations, these represent only a small portion of the killings. The only clear case of an exchange of fire outside of a farm in dispute was that of Santos Mejia, killed in a shoot-out with police near the highway after he attempted to avoid a checkpoint while he was carrying a weapon prohibited by the August 2012 disarmament decree. Mejia belongs to a division of a campesino movement which split with others and obtained the assistance of the military in illegally evicting fellow campesinos from a shared farm.

Five killings described as targeted assassinations were killed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July farm near the entrance to the Tumbador farm on November 5, 2010 in what witnesses describe as an ambush on undisputedly campesino owned land approximately an hour after an attempted occupation.

Six killings apparently occurred in the course of either a land occupation or eviction, a context in which the possibility of an armed confrontation may be plausible, however according to campesino versions of the events, in three of the cases campesinos were shot in the back, and in at least one case gunmen opened fire by surprise, without warning. Information regarding two of the killings, of Uvaldo Rigoberto Menjívar and José Ramón Villalta on July 17, 2010, was only received via newspaper coverage, which reported they were killed in a land occupation, but no further details were provided. Both Miguel Ángel Alonso Oliva, killed on April 1, 2010, and Javier Melgar, killed on August 14, 2011, were reportedly shot in the back during an attempted occupation. Witnesses explain that Roney Díaz was also shot in the back, during a land occupation on May 7, 2011. In this case witness report men dressed in Orion security uniforms but recognized to be soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion opened fire on him without warning.

Segundo Mendoza was killed on October 15, 2011 in an action which according to descriptions could have been either an armed attack against campesinos inside of a farm which had been occupied for some time or an attempt to carry out an illegal eviction of the campesinos from that farm. According to some reports, Mendoza and several others were performing agricultural labor in the La Consentida farm when a security force dressed in all black uniforms the campesinos did not recognize, with black ski masks, opened fire without warning on the group. As the group scattered one report explains that



Mendoza returned fire in an attempt to defend the group before being killed. Police were present and removed Mendoza's body, taking it to the coroner's office in La Ceiba. The body was returned to the family with one hand missing.

Five additional cases occurred on lands in active dispute, a context in which a confrontation could reasonably occur. However reports of the killing of Israel García Pérez on July 26, 2012 describe a clearly a targeted assassination, explained in more detail below, by unrecognized security forces dressed in the same manner as those responsible for the killing of Segundo Mendoza, all black with black ski masks, with logistical support from a helicopter and high speed boats. Marvin Daneri Trochez was reportedly fatally shot on August 9, 2012 in the Panama farm by professional civilian assassins associated with a death squad composed of soldiers, police and civilians who were also responsible for the triple homicide on November 3, 2012 for which a police officer was arrested the following day. Witnesses report that José Recinos Aguilar, Joel Santamaría, Genaro Cuesta were killed June 5, 2011 in the San Esteban farm when a passing police patrol truck opened fire on them while driving by, killing the three instantly. The same vehicle collected their bodies and took their bodies and delivered them to the morgue.

### **Human Rights Abuses Currently Under Investigation and Prosecution**

The Public Prosecutors office has initiated investigation and judicial procedures in the following three cases related to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion which operates from the Rio Claro military base in Trujillo, Colon.

- November 3, 2012 extrajudicial execution of three campesinos

On November 3, 2012 three members of the MCRNA, Reynaldo Rivera Paz, José Omar Rivera Paz and Orlando Campos, were fatally shot as they waited for a bus near the town of Rigores. Orlando Campos survived the shooting for several hours and was able to provide testimony to CONADEH that an agent assigned to the Ceiba police force but resident of Rigores, Marvin Noé García Santos had been among the assassins. CONADEH then exerted pressure to secure a forensic exam of the police issue weapon assigned to Garcia Santos, testing that confirmed his participation in the triple murder. Garcia Santos was arrested on November 4, 2012 in the town of Rigores charged with the November 3rd crime. Local reports indicate he is still in prison awaiting trial. None of his accomplices were arrested.

Since the August 9, 2012 murder of two MCRNA members on the Panama farm, MCRNA members had denounced the existence of a cell of assassins operating around the town of Rigores which included police and military from the 4<sup>th</sup> Naval and the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, as well as civilians with criminal histories. The November 4 arrest confirmed in part the accusations of the campesinos, lending increased



credibility to the reports of military participation in the group. Given this credible accusation it is of concern that the Commander of the Honduran Armed Forces had used the August 9, 2012 murders as a platform to criminalize the campesino movement.

- May 27, 2012 fatal shooting of Ebed Yanes in Tegucigalpa

Fifteen year old Ebed Yanes was shot in the back while riding his father's motorcycle the evening of May 27, 2012 in Tegucigalpa. The military claims he did not stop at a military checkpoint in the city street. Ballistics tests carried out by the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights office demonstrate that the shots were fired from weapons carried by a patrol from the Special Forces unit that operates from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Col. Raynel Funes Ponce, who commanded evidence be manipulated, has been identified in different media as the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> and of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion describing the two units as functionally one. An October 1, 2012 article in La Prensa newspaper explains that one Special Forces unit operates from both Battalions.<sup>40</sup> Allegedly three soldiers are facing charges related to the shooting.<sup>41</sup>

- November 15, 2010 fatal shooting of five campesinos and wounding of four others in the Tumbador farm

The El Tumbador farm is part of a larger property which in the 1970s and 1980s was the Center for Regional Military Training (CREM), an area whose history is described in greater detail above. During the 2000's all CREM lands were expropriated by the government and sold to small farmers by the Agrarian Reform Institute except for the El Tumbador Farm, under control of Miguel Facusse. However, in 2008 Legal Decree 18-2008 was passed, though later overturned in 2011. This decree facilitated the expropriation of dozens of farms named in the law, including El Tumbador.

As is standard practice in the implementation of agrarian reform, in April 2010, while Legal Decree 18-2008 was in effect, small farmers occupied and began farming the El Tumbador Farm. In August a series of incursions by heavily armed guards working for Dinant into the farm intimidated farmers into leaving the land. According to the witnesses, the Agrarian Reform Secretary explained to the farmers that their continued occupation of the farm was necessary in order to proceed with the expropriation.

As a result, at about 5 am on November 15, 2010 approximately 40 or 50 campesinos went, with their agricultural tools, to enter the El Tumbador farm. There were approximately 6 to 8 Dinant guards at the gate with AK-47s and R-15 weapons. When the group was about 50 meters from the gate, the guards began shooting. Four were wounded and the campesinos withdrew to evacuate the wounded and rest in a shelter in a farm owned by the 14<sup>th</sup> of July Campesino Business, close to the entrance to El

Tumbador. As news of the shooting spread in the Guadalupe Carney town, about 150 townspeople gathered on the lands of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Julio.

Campeños began to receive telephone calls from neighbors reporting that truckloads of security guards were headed for the farm. However no guards arrived at the entrance to El Tumbador farm, rather they parked on the highway and walked in about 200 meters, through vegetation, to carry out a surprise ambush on the crowd. At approximately 7 am the crowd was unexpectedly and without warning fired upon from two sides. Some reports from neighboring communities indicate that two commandos of approximately 50 soldiers each departed from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion traveling toward El Tumbador prior to the second shooting. Campeños report the security forces that attacked them were wearing Orion uniforms and black uniforms with ski masks, but explain that because it was a surprise attack from hidden forces, it was difficult for them to identify all that participated.

Campeños reported that they threw themselves into the brush for cover when the attack was initiated by a machine gun mounted on a tripod they identified as an M-60, a military issue automatic weapon. That initial fire was followed by fire from AK-47s and R-15s. The campeños reported that they were able to hide in the broken terrain and brush, particularly along a ravine, and escape. For over four hours security forces searched the brush for campeños, some survivors report having been found by security forces, who pointed guns at them and told them to run. Teodoro Acosta, Ignacio Reyes, Raúl Castillo and Ciriaco Muñoz were killed when the attack began. The body of José Luis Saucedo Pastrana, shot three times in the face, was found later a distance from the site of the shooting.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion base in Rio Claro is a few minutes from the site of the shooting. Multiple reports explain the El Tumbador farm is often used for training by the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, some reports indicate that joint operations between the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and US Army Rangers have been carried out in El Tumbador. Dinant security guards are reported to have a headquarters and training center in the farm.

Honduran human rights organization ERIC, a Jesuit organization, has pursued the case, and charges have been formalized against some of the material authors of the massacre, but the prosecution is not advancing.

### **Human Rights Abuses in which some investigative measures have occurred**

In the cases listed below there is confirmation that formal complaints were lodged in the criminal justice system and in some cases authorities have carried out some investigative measures.

- July 2, 2012 - abduction, torture and assassination of Gregorio Chavez on the Panama Farm

The Panama / Paso de Aguan Farm had been the property of the Paso de Aguan Cooperative. In the mid-1990s they were forced to sell the farm to Miguel Facussé and the Dinant Corporation in conditions which rendered the sale illegitimate. The community itself was divided into individually titled plots of land that each family retains title and possession of. However the Dinant Corporation assumed ownership of the cooperative office located in the town, which they used as an office for security forces. An extension of land on the opposite end of the very large farm, neighboring the Rigores community, has been occupied by a campesino movement since August 2011, and the Dinant Corporation has maintained a large security force presence in the farm surrounding the Panama community.

On July 2, 2012 Panama Community leader and catechist Gregorio Chavez disappeared while tending his garden which borders the Panama Farm. When he did not return for supper, his family searched the garden and found blood, rope and a trail of flattened plants leading into the farm, indicating he had been shot or otherwise injured, bound and dragged into the Panama Farm. The community immediately requested police assistance, attempting to gain entry into the farm. The community attempted to search the security office in the town, with police, where they identified a bicycle that had belonged to José Antonio López, a man who had disappeared from the town of Rigores months earlier. Police took the bicycle, and close to midnight security guards entered the town and burned the security office in order to destroy evidence townspeople had hoped to obtain from the office.

The following day groups of townspeople in the company of Trujillo police began searching the farm, a search which lasted almost four days before a fresh grave was discovered. During this time, military from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion established a checkpoint at the entrance to the Panama community, a measure that the townspeople understood to be intimidation. Upon discovering the grave on July 6 medical examiners from La Ceiba arrived to oversee the exhumation, as did international human rights observers present in the area, who witnessed all the Orion security forces and 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion members evacuating the area together in trucks used by the Dinant corporation to transport palm fruit.

International observers documented the extremely unprofessional exhumation of Chavez's body, which had a plastic bag over his head. Bringing victims near suffocations is reported to be a method of torture used by local security forces. The family has been unable to obtain a copy the autopsy report to determine the cause of death or whether other signs of torture were present on the body. No effort by investigators to obtain other evidence at the scene was observed. Despite repeated requests for investigative measure, no further investigative measures have been observed.

The Honduran human rights organization COFADEH is acting as legal representative of the family of Gregorio Chavez and has formally lodged complaints with the Prosecuting Attorney, requesting specific measures of investigation.

- May 10, 2012 fatal shooting of Alex José Banoff<sup>42</sup>

Alex Josue Banoff, a 20 year old a Special Forces soldier in the 15<sup>th</sup> battalion died on May 24, 2012 from a gunshot to the neck sustained on May 10, 2012 in the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Alex had returned to the base that day, May 10, after a 10 day leave to recover from injuries sustained during an unexplained training exercise. His mother left him at the base slightly before 10:30 am. When she was still just a few minutes away she received a telephone call informing her he had accidentally shot himself in the neck but it was not serious. While returning to the base she encountered him in the road in an ambulance, which she boarded. She asked if he had shot himself. He responded that he had not, that they had 'set a trap for him,' but out of fear for her safety refused to say who had shot him.

Alex had been sent on special missions to the Miskito, Olancho and Tegucigalpa. During a special mission in Tegucigalpa he had been able to communicate to a relative that he was worried about the mission. On that trip, upon arrival in Tegucigalpa in a helicopter he and three fellow soldiers had hoods placed over their heads and were transported to a very high security location. Upon arrival when masks were removed two of his companions objected because they did not like the place, so they were beaten severely, Alex attempted to escape through a window but saw a truck was blocking them. Reportedly, he claimed he had not been beaten.

The Honduran human rights organization COFADEH is acting as legal representative of the family of Alex Banoff and has formally lodged complaints with the Prosecuting Attorney, requesting specific measures of investigation.

- September 19, 2011 Torture and illegal detention of minor Bernabe Cruz, excessive use of force during an operation in the Rigores community

A neighborhood of the town of Rigores organized as part of the Campesino Movement of Rigores (MCR). Families who had lived in the town for over ten years were violently and illegally evicted by police, military and Orion private security guards employed by the Dinant corporation on the Panama farm on June 24, 2011. During the operation their cement block homes had been burned and bulldozed. The eviction occurred while the campesinos were in the midst of a titling process with the National Agrarian Institute and while the related expropriation of the land from renowned drug trafficker Eric Rivera was being executed.

This neighborhood of Rigores borders the La Consentida farm, which was occupied by the Campesino Movement for National Recovery of the Aguan (MCRNA) in September 2011. On September 16, a National Police Officer was killed while another police officer and three soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion were injured in a vehicle arriving at the Consentida Farm. Government spokesman reported they had

been killed in an ambush, although campesinos at the scene reported that it appeared as though a grenade or similar explosive had detonated in the interior of their vehicle.

On September 19 at approximately 1 pm a helicopter hovered over the community so close to the ground that the roofing materials were lifted from the makeshift shelters in which residents of Rigores had lived since the June 24 eviction. At approximately 4pm soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and police arrived in Rigores on foot, and proceeded to the home of Rodolfo Cruz, President of the MCR, which they entered without explanation, detained Rodolfo Cruz's 16 year old son Bernabe Cruz, and dragged him into brush on the edge of the town. They entered other homes in a similar manner, detaining 15 year old Darwin Leonel Cartagena, Silverio Diaz and Rafael Garcia Robles. Terrified family members heard shots fired in the area the men and boys had been taken.

The detainees were extensively beaten, soldiers and police placed the guns in their mouths threatening to shoot them, and they threatened to tie them up and throw them into the Aguan River. They abandoned all of the victims except for Bernabé Cruz, who was tortured by placing a plastic bag over his head until he felt he had asphyxiated, and covered him in gasoline threatening to set him on fire, while they questioned him about who were the "guerrillas." Later he was taken to the police station in Tocoa, a base of operation of the Xatruch operation, where he spent the night. During this detention he was beaten and police threatened to cut him into pieces.

The Honduran human rights organization COFADEH is acting as legal representative of the Bernabe Cruz and has formally lodged complaints with the Prosecuting Attorney, requesting specific measures of investigation. The family has been subject to frequent intimidation, most recently on February 2, 2012 their home was surrounded by armed men who threatened to kill them.

- May 21, 2011 Forced disappearance of Olvin Gallegos and Segundo Gomez

On May 21, 2011 at approximately 10 am or 11 am, Olvin Gallegos and Segundo Gómez, members of the Authentic Revindicative Campesino Movement of the Aguan, MARCA, were kidnapped while riding a bicycle from the San Esteban Farm to the El Despertar farm, both property of MUCA at that time in the midst of a legal dispute with palm oil businessmen. The highway between El Despertar and San Esteban passes through the El Mochito Farm, a property controlled by Reynaldo Canales' company Impalma but whose ownership is disputed by members of MUCA. Fellow MARCA members saw them enter the section of the highway that passes through El Mochito. Fellow movement members were waiting for them at the El Despertar farm, but saw that they never left El Mochito.

A group of MARCA members gathered and visited the processing plant in El Mochito and requested permission to look for their friends at approximately 3pm. They encountered two police patrol cars,

with approximately 30 police, and two military commands from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, totaling approximately 100 soldiers, all wearing ski masks, in the street outside of the plant guarding it. The chief of security for Impalma told them he had not seen the two men, and denied access to the plant.

Three days later family members and friends of the disappeared men, accompanied by the police, were allowed to search the El Mochito farm, and the bicycle was found in the area known as Impala Lote 1. Over the ensuing months family members continued the search, obtaining permission to search farms and periodically borrowing boats to search the banks of the Aguan River. They remain disappeared.

Olvin's sister, Doris Gallegos, with whom he had raised their three younger siblings, was particularly persistent in the search. She began receiving constant threatening telephone calls. Orion security guards came at night to surround the home where she was renting a room. She escaped with her younger siblings through a window, and moved with the children to another rented room. There guards again surrounded that home, but she prevented her kidnapping with an ID card borrowed from a friend which she used to convince guards they had mistaken her identity. The family was again forced to move.

- March 30, 2011 shooting and excessive use of force against peaceful protestors in Planes, Colon resulting in injuries to Neptaly Esquivel and 11 others<sup>43</sup>

On March 30, 2011 hundreds of campesinos demonstrated as part of a national day of protests against changes a law restructuring Honduras' education system in Planes, Sonaguera, Colon. Slightly after noon, as protesters prepared to end the demonstration, which had begun at 7am, they were attacked without warning by Colon police and military that fired excessive quantities of tear gas and live bullets at the peacefully assembled crowd. Twelve people were injured including Neptaly Esquivel who was pursued by a soldier and shot at close range in his hip, leaving him permanently disabled. The Honduran human rights organization COFADEH is providing legal assistance to the victims, who have presented complaints to the public prosecutors' office.

### **Human Rights Abuses Widely Reported by Human Rights Organizations and in the Press**

Though it is not clear whether formal denouncements of the follow violations were made, it is clear that the violations were publicly and widely denounced to the media and human rights organizations. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of the reported abuses.

- November 17, 2012 threats in the La Confianza community

The evening prior to the November 18, 2012 primary elections, military from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion entered the La Confianza community and circulated in the community telling residents that they were there to 'take a tacamiche,' which was understood by neighbors to mean they intended to kidnap a community member. Tacamiche is a derogatory word that refers to campesinos. La Confianza is the home of MUCA leader Joni Rivas, who is a leading congressional candidate in Colon, and participated in the LIBRE party's primary elections. Just one week before, on November 10, 2012, Joni Rivas and fellow MUCA leader Vitalino Alvarez suffered an assassination attempt when a passing truck opened fire on them as they entered the La Confianza community.

- September 27, 2012 Abuse of Authority in the Los Camarones Farm

On September 27, as part of a series of actions clearly intended to intimidate campesino movements, a security force consisting of several hundred security agents including police, security guards and military from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, carried out an eviction of campesinos who had recently occupied the Los Camarones farm. Prior to the eviction a group of approximately 100 guards were seen changing into military uniforms close to the Rio Claro base. Campesinos in the region regularly report seeing guards change into military uniforms and recognizing Orion security guards dressed in military uniforms at checkpoints, though rarely are able to identify the dates of these incidents. A security guard was killed during the Las Camarones eviction. Campesinos suspect that the assassination may have been an act carried out with the intention of criminalizing the campesino movement.

- September 27, 2012 illegal entry and excessive use of force in the La Concepcion community

Also on September 27 more than 100 soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion entered the town la La Concepcion and searched homes without a warrant. Daniel Molina, spokesman for the Xatruch task force, explained on the radio that this was their new mode of operation.

- September 23, 2012 abuse of authority and intimidation of the community of San Esteban

On September 22, 2012, at approximately 8pm, lawyer Antonio Trejo was shot and killed in a parking lot outside of a church where he had been conducting a marriage ceremony. He died in a hospital shortly after midnight in the early hours of September 23. Antonio Trejo had been the legal representative to MARCA.

After a series of rulings beginning in late 2011, Trejo achieved the annulment of title transfers that in the mid-1990s had passed ownership of the El Despertar, La Trinidad and San Isidro farm from campesino cooperatives to palm oil businessmen Rene Morales and Miguel Facussé. On June 29, 2012, after 18 year long civil suits, the Orion security forces were evicted from those farms and not only the ownership but also the possession of the farms was restored to the cooperatives. The rest of the cooperatives that initiated the same legal proceedings with El Despertar, La Trinidad and San Isidro had been unable to sustain the suits principally due to their inability to sustain legal representation as lawyers were bribed and threatened.

Shortly after Trejo's death in the early hours of September 23, Orion security guards who had in early July taken possession of a section of the La Trinidad farm, fired off guns and shouted in celebration. Later this same day, the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion initiated a series of operations with the clear intention of threatening and intimidating campesinos, particularly around the farms Antonio Trejo had represented.

At the entrance to the El Despertar farm, the military installed a checkpoint in the road. Cooperative members recognized several Orion private security guards dressed in military uniforms, carrying military issue weapons and generally acting as a soldier.

In the morning of September 23, eight commandos, making a total of approximately 500 soldiers circulated around El Despertar and La Trinidad farms. The cooperative members who own these farms live in constant fear of a violent eviction event though they formal title and possession of the farm was returned to the Cooperatives on June 29, 2012, with no possibility of appeal. On local radio, the spokesman of the Xatruch joint task force, Daniel Molina, has frequently referred to the operations objective of carrying out evictions on the farms. The Cooperatives' lawyers lodged abuse of authority charges against two judges who signed existing eviction orders despite not having jurisdiction over the cases and referring to nonexistent appeals processes as the basis for the order. However the Supreme Court, charged with supervision of judges, has not investigated or otherwise acted in response to the complaints.

- September 23 and 25, 2012 trespassing and abuse of authority in the Panama Community

The increased mobilization of troops from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and other security forces in the Aguan also impacted the Panama community. Following the murder of the town's catechist, Gregorio Chavez, on July 2, 2012, members of the Panama Community occupied the area of the Panama Farm surrounding the community of Panama, forming the Campesino Movement for Refoundation - Gregorio Chavez [MCRGC]. On September 23, 2012 approximately 150 soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, accompanied by the man who had been head of security in Dinant for the Panama Farm, entered the community of Panama, apparently carrying out a military operation that looked like a military assault rather than



patrol not only in the streets but in the yards and beside the homes of community members, evoking fear of a violent eviction even though the ownership of the homes by residents is uncontested. Daniel Molina, spokesman for the Xatruch III joint task force, which operates with the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, since August had made statements on the radio indicating the intention to carry out multiple evictions.

The following day there was a concentration of military at the entrance to the Panama farm on the opposite side of the farm, near the community of Rigores, where another campesino movement, the Movement for National Recovery of the Aguan, maintains an occupation. On September 25 the operation that occurred on September 23 inside the Panama Community was repeated.

- September 23, 2012 Trespassing and threats against the community of La Lempira

On Monday, September 24, 2012, at about 6:30 am, approximately 100 soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion occupied the town of La Lempira, searching without warrant approximately 10 houses in the La Ceibita, and Campo Cayo neighborhoods.

- September 9, 2012 - excessive use of force during the eviction of the Los Laurles farm resulting in the death of Hector Navarra and torture and excessive use of force against detainees

On September 9, 2012 members of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Tocoa police and Cobra police carried out a violent eviction on the Los Laurles farm, a property whose ownership is claimed by the Dinant Corporation but is contested by its former owners, a campesino cooperative. When security forces arrived at the farm, campesinos offered to leave voluntarily, but the security forces blocked the exit to the farm. Peacefully assembled campesinos offered no resistance to detention, but once the first group was handcuffed and lay face down on the ground, security forces kicked them, beat with guns and sprayed gas directly onto their faces and bodies. A group of approximately 10 children between 6 and 10 years of age were separated from their parents, handcuffed, lay face down on the ground. If they lifted their head to look for their parents they were hit. They were released into the custody of a local human rights observer who quickly arrived at the scene.

After detaining the first group, the security forces began firing tear gas from high power launchers directly into the assembled campesinos from a distance of approximately 3 meters, which can be lethal. This forced campesinos to flee into the farm as the exit was obstructed, though some were able to escape over the fence. Some neighbors gave them refuge after witnessing the brutality, and security forces proceeded to fire large quantities of tear gas into many neighboring homes. Hector Navarro, a neighbor who suffered from throat cancer, suffered a pulmonary reaction and died 13 hours later. A

group of two campesino women and four children 12 months 13 months, 4 years and 12 years old took refuge in a home with an open air kitchen. Security forces fired a large quantity of tear gas into the kitchen from a distance of approximately four meters, from which the small children were clearly visible, until the women came into the street looking for emergency medical attention for the children.

Campesinos that fled into the interior of the farm were pursued by security forces that fired on them with live ammunition and tear gas. Orion Security guards who had entered the farm with the troops from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Xatruch III and the Tocoa police had gone directly to occupy a stand of palm trees in the back of the farm, the area to which fleeing campesinos were corralled by security forces. Campesinos hid among the brush and in creek beds. Security forces evacuated the farm, leaving campesinos hiding from the heavily armed security guards all through the night. One campesino, Otoniel Sanchez, was able to call his brother and explain he was hiding and surrounded by guards but had heard screaming, when his telephone lost power. Campesinos who had witnessed the operation, afraid that the remaining campesinos would be killed, asked lawyers in Tegucigalpa to submit a writ of Habeas Corpus in the name of Otoniel Sánchez, and lodged a formal complaint with the Investigative Police (DNIC) explaining that the campesinos had been illegally detained by State security forces in coordination with Orion Security forces. During the night the campesinos trapped in the farm escaped in one by one and hid in neighboring homes.

Earlier in the day the first group of detainees was transported to the police station in Tocoa by police in the back of a pick-up. Two other groups were detained in the vicinity of the farm; security forces entered homes and detained neighbors witnessing the events along with fleeing campesinos. A total of 40 people were detained. Nine were released within hours of detention including four small children and their mothers, a 14 year old, two neighbors who clearly had not been in the farm, though other neighbors remained detained, and a pregnant woman who was hemorrhaging after having been kicked in the back by security forces. 31 were released pending trial on charges of land usurpation, one woman who had an old pistol was charged with illegal weapons possession.

Two detainees were brutally beaten and threatened with death by Cobra police while they were handcuffed in the bed of the truck. The beatings continued in the Tocoa police station until the arrival of an international human rights observer, who upon witnessing disoriented men with head injuries, among other injuries, requested medical attention. Police refused to allow a local doctor in to examine the detainees. Observers were then denied entry into the detention center, and though police claimed a military doctor had attended the many injured, upon release the following day detainees reported that only one man had received medical attention. Two detainees reported having been tortured through the night by Cobra police, suffering prolonged beatings, gas sprayed onto their bodies and simulated drowning. The day after the eviction human rights observers witnessed police arriving with suitcases, new Cobras to replace the Cobras stationed in Tocoa police station.

- August 9 to 13, 2012 Criminalization of the campesino movement surrounding the shooting death of two campesinos in the Panama Farm

On August 9, 2011 campesinos members of the Campesino Movement for National Recovery of the Aguan (MCRNA) were ambushed by gunmen in the Panama Farm near the town of Rigos killing Marvin Daneri Trochez Miraz. A friend of the victim, known to the Trochez family only as Carlos, was killed while under pursuit by the assassins in the truck in which he had been traveling with Trochez. Campesinos believe that the intended target had been the victim's father also named Marvin Trochez, a leader of the MCRNA, in whose pickup truck the victims had been traveling. Family identified the gunmen as two young men from the town of Rigos associated with a group of assassins composed of police and military, a group that included an agent assigned to the Ceiba police force but resident of Rigos, Marvin Noé García Santos, arrested on November 4, 2012 for a triple murder of MCRNA members. It is believed soldiers from the 4<sup>th</sup> naval base in La Ceiba and from 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion may form part of this group.

Newspaper reports published the morning following the double murder on August 9 quoted Rene Osorio, General Commander of the Armed Forces of Honduras explaining that campesino leaders Marvin Trochez and Gerardo Argueta had been killed in a conflict between the two campesino leaders. Marvin Trochez [father] later explained that Argueta, a friend of the family, played no role in his son's death and would have no motive to initiate such an attack. Argueta was a leader of a campesino business in the Marañones Farm expelled by the army from the farm on April 16, 2012 following a border dispute between Argueta and a neighbor to the Marañones Farm, locally renowned drug trafficker Erick Rivera, in an incident further described below whose land interests have been protected by security guards employed by Miguel Facussé.<sup>44</sup>

General Osorio's statements appeared in an article that characterized the conflict in the Aguan as disputes related to organized crime interests with quotes from President Lobo, criminalizing the campesino movement. Osorio stated, "The incidents arise on the farms that they [the campesinos] have taken for drug trafficking purposes, the stealing of drugs, as I understand, and to control certain areas. The death of Gerardo Argueta and Marvin Trochez was a confrontation between them."

- July 26, 2012 illegal incursion into the Los Laureles farm and fatal shooting Israel Garcia

During the night of July 26, 2012 security forces in a black uniform and ski masks not recognized by campesinos entered the Los Laureles farm. In a very fast operation they entered the farm, shot and killed Israel Garcia Perez, a former Orion security guard, and left at some time between 10pm and 11pm.

Witnesses saw at least some of the security forces enter in two fast motor boats along the Aguan River. The boats resembled those used by the 4<sup>th</sup> Naval Base in La Ceiba, which has outposts in the Aguan. Half an hour prior to the operation a helicopter had hovered at tree level over the farm for an extended period of time. The participation of the fast boats and a night flight capable helicopter makes it likely that the military participated in this operation. Further, the operation that was carried out is a Special Forces type operation, which could be considered “infiltration and reconnaissance in enemy territory” a skill being taught to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion by the US military.<sup>45</sup> It is worth noting that in May 2012 the Chief of the US Drug Enforcement Agency’s mission in Honduras told a Rights Action representative that only the US military has night flight capable helicopters in Honduras.

- July 23, 2012 indiscriminate shooting against the community of La Lempira

Soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion surrounded the community of La Lempira and initiated indiscriminate fire against into palm plantations where community members were beginning to work at approximately 6am, provoking fear but no injuries. Campesinos were forced to hide among the palm trees for over 4 hours. The La Lempira community, members of MUCA, had been settled in the farm by the government in April 2010 while land purchase negotiations were underway.

- June 29, 2012 Intimidation of cooperative leader

At midday on June 29, 2012, four armed and masked security guards pursued the President of the La Trinidad Cooperative, Julian Hernández to his home shortly after security guards had been evicted from the La Trinidad, San Isidro and El Despertar farms. The victim recognized Col. Fúnez, commander of the special-forces in the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and Mr. Bulnes, manager of the Agropalma processing plant, as participants in the aggression.

- April 13-16, 2012 abuse of authority, illegal detention and beating on Las Marañones farm

An internal division within the campesino cooperatives and businesses in the Marañones farm began in the end of 2011, a situation which became aggravated by a land conflict between renowned local drug trafficker Erick Rivera, and two of the twelve campesino organizations that formed part of MUCA in the Marañones farm, the campesino businesses led by Juan Galindo and Gerardo Argueta. Some reports indicate that in this context, Rivera supplied arms to the campesinos also in conflict with Argueta and Galindo.

On April 13, 2012 a patrol composed of Tocoa police and soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion entered the Marañones farm and detained the president of one of the two campesino businesses in conflict with Rivera, Juan Galindo. Human rights organizations immediately denounced the illegal detention, and he was soon released, police explained that an arrest warrant had existed for a different person with the same name. On April 15, 2012, La Prensa newspaper published an article regarding the land conflicts in the area in which Rivera, whom the article describes as a local farmer, gives the Honduran government until April 20, 2012 to secure the return of his land, otherwise he threatens to himself resolve the conflict, in which case he explained “blood would run.”

The 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion intervened in the Marañones April 16, 2012, escorting a group of armed campesinos into the settlement on Marañones and standing by while this armed group burned the homes of the members of the campesino businesses led by Juan Galindo and Gerardo Argueta and bound and beat Jose Peralta. One month later, on May 16, 2012, Jose Peralta was wounded as he drove on the highway near the San Isidro farm. In that attack his father, also Jose Peralta, was killed, and his brother in law, Antonio Velez, was wounded. Reportedly a FAL rifle was used in the attack, which is a Honduran military issue weapon.

The two campesino associations of which Galindo and Argueta were presidents were in this manner expelled from the Marañones Farm and Xatruch II, a military- police joint task force, established a permanent post in the Marañones farm. On April 17, 2012 families affected by the April 16 violence presented a formal complaint to the Human Rights Procurators office in Trujillo, Colon.

It is worth noting that following the May 31, 2012 assassination of Erick Rivera in San Juan Pueblo, Atlántida press reporting cited police forces in describing Rivera as a campesino leader, explaining he had been expelled from Las Marañones farm. This version of events presented by police appears to be intended to criminalize campesinos given Rivera’s well known reputation as a drug trafficker.<sup>46</sup>

- January 26, 2012 Protection of a renowned organized crime figure following his unprovoked shooting of farmers

On January 26, 2012 two campesinos from the Marañones settlement were attacked with AK-47s and 9mm guns by assassins wearing ski masks as they rode a motorcycle from the town of Ilanga to the Las Marañones farm. The campesinos abandoned their motorcycle on the side of the highway fleeing into the brush. The motorcycle was taken to Tocoa by the attackers with the assistance of police from Tocoa. Campesinos believed Erick Rivera to be responsible for the attack. One hour after the attack witnesses reported that two military commands from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and one police car escorted Erick Rivera, renowned drug trafficker, into the town of Tocoa.

- October 14, 2011 Illegal detention and torture of Carlos Alberto Hernandez

On October 14, 2011 Carlos Alberto Hernández of the Movement for the National Recovery of the Aguan, MCRNA, was kidnapped in the entrance to the community of Rigores by the Xatruch II joint task force, police and military from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion at approximately 7pm. There he was tortured, beaten, kicked, beaten with a rifle and threatened with death if he did not provide information about the leaders of the MCRNA. He was placed in a police patrol car, and taken to the municipality of Sonaguera to an area near the town of Parmas, where the beating continued. To police held him upside down by his feet over the side of the truck bed of the police patrol truck while it was in motion, threatening to let go if he did not provide information about the children of Marvin Trochez, a leader of MCRNA, as well as providing information about other members of MCRNA and arms they supposedly possessed. He was detained overnight in the Sonaguera police station where he was sprayed with water and beaten in his cell by police, until finally being released at approximately 6pm on October 15, 2-11. Police told Carlos they intended to kidnap Marvin Trochez and remove his skin while he was still alive.

- Excessive use of force during apparently illegal evictions in the La Consentida Farm on September 7, 2011, September 16, 2011, September 19, 2011, October 4, 2011, and October 6, 2011

On September 7, 2011 an eviction was carried out on the La Consentida and Panama Farms, against campesinos organized into the MCRNA, and on September 8, 2011 campesinos returned to the farms. Evictions were subsequently carried out on September 8, September 16, September 19, October 4, and October 6, 2011. An executing judge was not identified in any of the evictions and no eviction order was presented. All of the evictions employed the use of violence from the first moments of the eviction; campesinos were not warned prior to the eviction or given the opportunity to leave before force was employed. Campesinos were beaten and there was an excessive use of tear gas.

A few hours after the September 16, 2011 eviction, campesinos returned to the La Consentida farm. Security guards, police and military from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion arrived in a convoy of four vehicles. As the convoy arrived in front of the La Consentida farm, police and military officers were wounded in a patrol car, two fatally.

A police spokesman made statements to the press that the vehicle had been victim to an armed attack that left one police officer dead and another injured. Eyewitnesses reported that it appeared as though a grenade had exploded in the interior of the patrol car.

- September 16, 2011 Excessive use of force during searches in the town of Rigos

On September 16, 2011, following the death and injury to police officers, Tocoa police and military from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion entered the town of Rigos that borders the La Consentida Farm, entering homes without order and with violence, destroying the makeshift houses in the process. During the action documentation relating to the decade long negotiation of the land title of the Rigos community was stolen from the home of Marvin Trochez. All men they encountered in their homes that day, 21 in total, were first beaten and then arrested. In the Tocoa police station, the detainees were beaten and several were tortured while in custody. They were doused in urine and threatened with death. When international human rights activists called the police station they were told the detainees would be killed and that they were being treated like dogs. All were released the following day without charges.

- August 14, 2011 Violent Eviction in Finca Panama

The morning of August 14, 2011 farmers established possession of the Panama Farm, a farm they dispute ownership of with Miguel Facussé. More than 100 soldiers from the 15th Battalion and approximately 40 security guards from two different companies arrived shortly after the campesinos had arrived in the farm. In a confusing incident five security guards were shot and killed and 17 year old Javier Melgar was shot in the back while his feet were tangled in a wire fence he had been attempting to cross in an effort to flee. Campesinos claim the soldiers immediately began shooting when they arrived at the scene but shot security guards, apparently confused as there were two types of uniforms. U.S. Army Rangers were conducting a 30 day training course in the 15th Battalion at the time of the killings.

- June 24 and July 1, 2011, Excessive use of force and illegal eviction, followed by a second attempted illegal eviction of the Rigos Community

The New Hope neighborhood in the town of Rigos has been established for over 10 years, though local drug trafficker Eric Rivera claimed to own the property. As the land's title had originated with the agrarian reform, after many years of negotiation, the National Agrarian Institute was in the midst of expropriating the land from Rivera when, on June 24, 2011 private security guards stationed in the Panama Farm, employed by the Dinant corporation and Miguel Facussé, along with Colon police and soldiers from the 15th Battalion illegally and violently evicted families, bulldozing cement block homes, school buildings and a church.

A second illegal eviction was attempted in the Rigos community on July 1, 2011, but the presence of a large delegation of international human rights observers averted the action, though during a tense

standoff private security guards pointed guns at the observers but refused to show an eviction order. Soldiers from the 15th Battalion which had accompanied into the community remained at a distance from the delegation. The U.S. Embassy was notified of the aggression against U.S. citizens.

- May 7, 2011 Excessive use of force resulting in the shooting death of Roney Diaz, and injuries to Juan Licona and Manuel Vasquez

Campeños report that on May 7, 2011 while campesinos occupied the San Esteban farm, private security guards fatally shot Roney Diaz in the back, while wounding Juan Licona and Manuel Vasquez. Some witnesses recognized soldiers from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion who were wearing Orion security uniforms. Family of the victim attempted to denounce the killing to the public prosecutor, who refused to take the complaint. Family members were later subject to threats and surveillance by armed men.

- January 8, 2011 Illegal detention and torture of Juan Chinchilla

On January 8, 2011, Juan Chinchilla, a MUCA representative to the negotiations process, was kidnapped by Orion security guards, police and military. He had stopped at a shopping mall where he noticed that a head of security for Dinant was observing him. He and a friend then noticed a grey double cabin pick-up truck they recognized as belonging to Dinant security operations arrive in the parking lot. The truck followed them to an auto mechanics' shop where Chinchilla's motorcycle was being repaired. Noticing the truck circling, so he remained in the shop for several hours until he thought the truck had gone.

After dinner he left on his motorcycle. Noticing he was followed by two motorcycles, he stopped in a gas station to call neighbors to alert them he was almost there but was being followed. As he approached the turn off to his community, he was stopped by a black pick-up truck that crossed the highway in front of him. It contained six armed men with ski masks wearing Cobra police and military uniforms. The two motorcycles stopped behind him with two armed men each, and armed men on the side of the highway all pointed their guns at him, telling him to drop his motorcycle and get in the truck.

A hood was placed over his head, and he was taken to a building approximately 40 minutes away with a chemical smell he believed to be a palm oil processing plant. He was tied to a chair, and spent the night there. During the night two men came to question him about the campesino movement. He recognized the men as people he had seen in protests against the military occupation of the National Agrarian Institute facilities during mid December 2010. One of them he identified as having been in the company of a Colonel in command of troops controlling the protest, the Colonel had threatened Chinchilla in front



of witnesses. There was a great deal of movement in the building, he saw military, police and private security uniforms.

The following day, when his head was again covered with a hood, he heard a truck with a big motor arrive, and two men enter the building to speak with his captors. Shortly after, other men entered and a discussion began regarding the problem that news of his capture was widespread in the area, nationally and internationally, and search parties were looking for him. The two men spoke between themselves in English and with the group in Spanish with an American accent. They argued that Chinchilla should be taken out of the department, and must be moved immediately as workers would be arriving the next day. Later he heard men speaking a language he did not recognize.

A hood was placed over his head and he was moved to another facility, this one he recognized as the warehouse in the El Chile farm, controlled by Miguel Facusse. There guards threatened to torture him, showed him torture instruments, burned his hair while threatening to throw gasoline on him, and burned his arm with a heated wire inserted under his skin. When he reacted to the abuse, they hit him in the eye. Shortly after, one of the two men who had first interviewed him, whom he had recognized from protests, arrived and told his guards not to hurt him, he had to travel that night and they needed him for two more weeks. The two English speakers arrived with notebooks, and explained to the Hondurans the route to remove him from the area, claiming he needed to be taken overland as there were reports that the campesinos would begin blocking the highways. They planned to move out in three groups of eight, one car in advance, Chinchilla in the middle group and a third group following, then climb a mountain and horses would be waiting above.

They transported Chinchilla in a car to the end of the road. It was dark, his hands and feet were unbound and in place of a hood they put a ski mask on him. They hiked up a path in a mountain that divides the municipalities of Bonito Oriental and Tocoa in Colon from San Esteban in Olancho. After over an hour of walking they entered a forested area. There were six men with him but he had noticed their guns were not cocked, and he decided to run in the dark through the trees, they shot after him, so he fell to the ground and rolled downhill into a ravine, and ran down the ravine. He ran for what seemed to him to be hours until he began coming across houses, and knocked on the doors until one allowed him to use their telephone having heard the news that a man had been kidnapped. His friends arrived and took him to a safe place, he remained in hiding for months after the incident. In the weeks following his escape, his father, brother and son received constant threats and visits from armed men.

- February 13, 2010 attempted illegal eviction, shooting and injuries on the La Concepcion farm

On February 13, 2010, at approximately 8 am, a police patrol truck entered the La Concepcion Farm and left, pausing to speak with Orion company security guards near the entrance. The guards then put on

ski masks and entered the farm where they trained their guns against the families, demanding that the families leave the farm. Farmers called the Tocoa police who claimed they did not have a patrol car available to respond, but two police patrols arrived shortly with vehicles and soldiers from the 15th Battalion. Upon arrival, police and military opened indiscriminate fire without warning in the direction of the families, wounding Margarito Peralta and Pedro Parachico in the back. Farmers gathered 223 bullet casings after the incident.

- February 13, 2010 indiscriminate fire into the La Occidental farm

Upon leaving the La Concepcion farm, security forces including members of the 15th Battalion opened indiscriminate fire into the settlement in the La Occidental farm from the highway. No one was injured.

- January 27, 2010 illegal detention, threats, shooting and injuries in La Suyapa Farm

On January 27, 2010 members of the Unified Campesino Movement of the Aguan (MUCA) established possession of the La Suyapa farm, one of 28 farms of which MUCA members claim rightful ownership, but which agro businessman Miguel Facussé assumed possession of in the mid-1990s. Several hours later police, private security guards and members of the 15th Battalion illegally detained three MUCA members walking along the highway near the La Suyapa farm, took the detainees into the farm and near the farmers' settlement trained their guns on the detainees while threatening to kill them if the farmers in the settlement did not leave the farm. When the families did not respond to the threats, the security forces indiscriminately fired on the settlement, wounding Edwin Díaz, Rosendo Reyes, Rodolfo García y Marco Antonio Estrada.

## Report Findings

1. A very large number of reports implicate the military units understood to form part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion or operate from the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion's base in Rio Claro over a period of three years in at least 34 criminal acts which are documented in this report, including extrajudicial executions, forced disappearance, torture, excessive use of force, abuse of authority, threats, among other abuses. It is important to note that there are indications that many other human rights violations have been carried out, as yet undocumented.
2. At least 77 of the 89 killings of campesinos reported since January 2010 clearly have the characteristics of death squad killings, contradicting reports from the Honduran government human rights commission CONADEH and U.S. State Department that characterize the killings as the result of "confrontations." While it is clear that armed confrontations have occurred, reports indicate that the large majority of the killings were targeted assassinations in acts whose only apparent objective was the killing. It is clear that some security forces have been killed in confrontations. Up to four killings of security forces could be understood to be targeted assassinations, and reports indicate that it cannot be ruled out that the same death squads targeting campesinos may have played a role in at least one incident of security guard murders.
3. Violence and repression enacted by the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion against members of campesino movements occurred over a time frame that coincides with the operation of a death squad targeting members of campesino movements in the region. This pattern, in addition to elements of many different testimonies, tends to validate what is presented as a general understanding in the campesino movement; that the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion is assisting or directly participating in death squad activities. While in many of those executions the actual crime may have been carried out by private security forces or police forces operating in conjunction with the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, or by unidentified assassins who operate in the area with almost complete impunity, the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion also bears responsibility. International law is clear that "the State has direct responsibility for the actions of non-State actors that operate at the behest of the government or with its knowledge or acquiescence."<sup>47</sup>
4. During the time in which systematic killing of campesinos has occurred, press reports indicate the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion has received ongoing training and material assistance from Special Forces units from the United States, Spain and Israel. Local reports indicate training was also provided by individuals of Colombian and Panamanian origin.
5. The conflict in the Aguan is clearly an agrarian dispute that grew from specific local conditions which have been ongoing for approximately 18 years. The June 29, 2009 military coup in

Honduras led to the reversal of advances made by the campesino movement principally in 2008 and 2009, which in turn led to an escalation in the conflict.

6. High-ranking military officers and high-level government officials have repeatedly made statements that distort the nature of the conflict and the objectives of the campesino movements in the Aguan, accusing campesino movements of links to organized criminal activities and even forming part of a guerrilla movement backed by Nicaragua and Venezuela, without presenting evidence. These distortions position the campesino movements as objects of anti-terrorism and anti-narcotics initiatives at a time when the international community, particularly the U.S. Department of State, the IDB, the WB, Germany, Spain, Colombia, Brazil and Chile are backing investments in regional security initiatives.
7. The cases presented in this report illustrate a disturbing pattern of unequal application of the law. The State has invested an impressive quantity of security forces, implicating an extensive investment of resources, in security operations whose objectives as stated by ranking officials in the operation are exclusively the protection of properties controlled by men they describe as 'businessmen' against campesinos they describe as 'criminals,' even as the property rights are the object of extensive, ongoing and legitimate contention.
8. The 15th Battalion and other State security forces have provided protection for at least two 'businessmen' widely considered in the region to be associated with drug trafficking activities: Erick Rivera and Miguel Facussé. Another illustration of the tendency to protect 'businessmen' with known drug trafficking connections was the refusal of security forces of which the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion forms part to protect State land surveyors and Garifuna community members during the measurement of the Vallecito Farm, an action which would substantiate property rights of Garifuna farmers whose lands were illegally appropriated by a locally renowned drug trafficking family, the Villalobo family. This refusal to allow measurements to proceed was only reversed after substantial international pressure was brought to bear on the government.
9. Testimonies received in the course of documenting these abuses indicate an extremely close working relationship between the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the Orion security company employed by palm oil businessmen. The degree of collaboration described demonstrates that the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion has been critical in providing State protection for crimes carried out by Orion. While agents of the Orion security company participated directly in many of the cases documented in this report, it is important to note that there are reports of many more abuses by Orion which were not documented in this report.
10. The abuses documented in this report illustrate a pattern of impunity and a lack of sufficient response on the part of relevant judicial authorities. The lack of investigation and prosecution

occurs on such a large scale that it can be attributed to conscious decisions within the relevant State institutions, particularly the Prosecuting Attorney's office, but also the office of the National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH). The degree of national and international attention the abuses have received, with little to no improvement in investigation and prosecution, leads to concern that the lack of investigation responds to decisions taken at the highest levels within these institutions.

11. This report finds that actions taken by the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration directly contributed to the context of impunity which facilitates the ongoing death squad activity, as they provided loans to the Dinant Corporation, a principal actor in the conflict, even as reports of the land conflicts in the Aguan were widespread and a general context of impunity and repression carried out by the State in the context of the military coup was also widely reported upon.
12. While the Aguan has been a focal point of extreme human rights violations related to a conflict in which the international community has significantly intervened through provision of assistance to agri-businessmen and security forces that protect their interests, there has been a significant absence of the international human rights community in reporting on the violations, limited to reporting from non-governmental human rights organizations and the U.S. State Department, and there has been a notable discrepancy between the two. The State Department reporting unfortunately reinforces the Honduran State's actions to criminalize campesinos.
13. As the conflict continues, the context of impunity provides conditions to facilitate the deepening of the human rights crisis in the Aguan and the spread of large scale violations to other vulnerable areas, areas with significant land disputes often in areas where mega development projects are planned. The international community, specifically the World Bank, the Inter American Development Bank, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the United States, Canada, Germany, Spain, Colombia Chile Brazil and all other nations and multilateral institutions that comprise the group of friends of the Central America Regional Security Strategy<sup>48</sup> share responsibility through action and inaction for the grave human rights crisis.

## Recommendations

1. The United States government and other nations providing assistance to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and related units must cease assistance given the grave human rights violations and other crimes associated with the unit. Further, relevant agencies of the United States government should evaluate the assistance already provided to the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion and related military units in

reference to the repeated and frequent allegations that the unit assists drug trafficking networks that operate in the region through action and inaction.

2. As the international community backs the SICA Central American Regional Security Strategy, and the United States military assumes a more direct presence in Central America with the stated objectives of reducing the flow of drugs and lowering the high crime rates frequently associated with organized crime networks whose principal interest is drug trafficking, specific and direct efforts must be made to prevent the drug war efforts from being misdirected to target populations with economic interests that are in competition with the economic interests of politically powerful sectors of Central America.
3. Mechanisms must be developed to condition multilateral investment bank's loans and the UNFCCC carbon certification on the existence of conditions in which the national legal systems are capable of protecting the fundamental human rights of populations negatively impacted by their project partners. This is especially critical as the WB and IDB begin financing security operations. The existence of a facto government following a military coup, or the expansion of the military into police functions would clearly constitute a condition under which a human rights protective national legal framework does not exist.
4. Many aspects of the relationship between the Orion corporation and the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion are extremely important to examine, especially given the growth of private security companies throughout Central America. The reported close collaboration and even exchange of agents between military units and the Orion private security corporation has grave implications for the State which must be the subject of close examination in the case of Orion and the 15<sup>th</sup> Battalion, but also more generally in the region.
5. There is a critical need for international human rights observation in the Bajo Aguan region and in Honduras generally with a mandate to generate publically accessible reports on human rights conditions, with unrestricted access to information relating to the State's investigation and prosecution of human rights abuses. A specialized mission of the United Nations could carry out such a mandate, though the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights and the Inter American Commission on Human Rights are two agencies also suited to provide such observation.
6. The conflict in the Aguan must be treated and resolved as what it is, a land rights dispute. The underlying dispute must be examined by an impartial body. The legality of the title transfers that occurred in the 1990s, the modifications in the land reform laws, and other relevant issues should be examined a panel of recognized experts in agrarian law under conditions which allow campesinos to fully participate in providing information.

**Annex I: Partial List of Campesinos, their Supporters and Neighbors Killed since January 2010**

The following is a list of 89 members of campesino movements, bystanders, neighbors, a journalist and a lawyer, all killed since January 2010. It is important to note that there are other reports of murdered campesinos which have not been investigated and are therefore not included.

1	Juan Ramón Mejía	MUCA	January 26, 2010	Mejia's body was found on the side of the road near the Cacho del Buey bridge on the right bank outside of Tocoa. He had died of internal injuries.
2	Francisco Montes	MUCA	February 4, 2010	Cano and Montes were killed in an automobile accident when the truck in which they were traveling was subject to a high speed pursuit by heavily armed men in a grey double cabin pick-up truck, who pursued them in the Buenos Amigos and Las Guanchias farm. Also injured were Jose Peralta, Elder Diaz, Isidro Orellana, Oscar Castillo.
3	Isidro Cano	MUCA	February 4, 2010	
4	Feliciano Santos	MUCA	February 14, 2010	Santos was killed when shot twice as he traveled along the highway to the Suyapa Farm on the Left Bank of the Aguan, Manuel Lopez was injured in the same attack.
5	Nauhum Palacios	journalist	March 14, 2010	Palacios, who had been awarded protective measures from the Inter American Commission on Human Rights on July 24, 2009 was shot by gunmen who awaited his arrival at his home in Tocoa. His car received 42 bullets, two people that accompanied him were injured one of whom reportedly later died.
6	Yorleny Yadira Sanchez Rivas	bystander	March 14, 2010	
7	Jose Concepcion Carias	MCA	March 17, 2010	Secretary and president of the Brisas de COHDEFOR campesino business, Cardoza and Carias were killed as they walked home after a day of work.
8	Jose Antonio Cardoza	MCA	March 17, 2010	
9	Miguel Ángel Alonso Oliva	MUCA	April 1, 2010	Alonso Oliva was shot in the back by security guards during the occupation of the Boleros farm on the Left Bank of the Aguan river.
10	José Leonel Álvarez Guerra	MUCA	April 7, 2010	Shot five times by two assassins on a motorcycle who awaited him outside the home of his in-laws where his wife was staying in the final days of her pregnancy. He was killed in front of his wife and children.

11	Giovanni Ramírez	MUCA-MD	June 19, 2010,	Seventeen year old Giovanni Ramirez disappeared on June 19, 2010. At approximately 5am on June 20, 2010, five residents of the La Aurora settlement witnessed two police vehicles and a security guard truck enter La Aurora, where they dumped Giovanni Ramirez's badly tortured body. The five witnesses called MUCA leaders to alert them of the events, but were immediately detained by the police as security forces departed the community. In the Tocoa police station they were badly beaten. MUCA members quickly arrived demanding their release, they were released without charges.
12	Uvaldo Rigoberto Menjivar	unconfirmed	July 17, 2010	According to a July 18, 2010 La Prensa newspaper report, Menjivar and Villalta were killed, during an attempted occupation of the San Isidro farm, during the course of which one security guard was killed and three injured. This version has not been compared to local reports.
13	José Ramón Villalta	unconfirmed	July 17, 2010	
14	Esteban García	MUCA-MD	August 9, 2010	García was shot by armed men in a white sedan as he rode his bicycle from visiting family in the community Colonia del Aguan to his home in the settlement of the 25 <sup>th</sup> of April.
15	Victor Manuel Oliva	MUCA-MD	August 17, 2010	Villegas, Amaya and Oliva were shot at approximately 3pm as they drove from Tocoa to Las Maranones in the left bank of the Aguan river when they were ambushed by Dinant security guards driving a blue double cabin pick up truck who opened fire with an AK-47, instantly killing the three.
16	Rodving Omar Villegas	MUCA – MD	August 17, 2010	
17	Sergio Magdiel Amaya	MUCA – MD	August 17, 2010	
18	Enrique Larios Cruz	MCA	September 10, 2010	Larios and Rodriguez were killed at 6:30 am by unknown assassins who pursued them from the town of Agua Amarilla to the town of Honduras Aguan on the left bank of the Aguan in Trujillo.
19	Rodriquez Valdez	MCA	September 10, 2010	
20	Francisco Miranda Ortega	MUCA	September 10, 2010	Ortega was killed slightly before 3pm while he rode his bike towards Tocoa from the La Aurora settlement. At the Cacho del Buey bridge over the Aguan River he was shot by unknown assassins on both sides of the bridge.
21	Raúl Castillo	MCA	November 15, 2010	Castillo, Saucedo, Monoz, Acosta and Reyes Garcia were killed in the 14th of July farm near the gate to the Tumbador farm, by Dinant security guards who ambushed them without warning about an hour after an attempted occupation. Presence of the 15th Battalion has also been reported, the incident is further described above.
22	José Luis Saucedo	MCA	November 15, 2010	
23	Ciriaco Monoz	MCA	November 15, 2010	
24	Teodoro Acosta	MCA	November 15, 2010	
25	Ignacio Reyes García	MCA	November 15, 2010	
26	Ermin Navarro	MUCA-MD	January 2, 2011	Shot as he walked along the highway near the turnoff into La Aurora Settlement.



27	Félix Rigoberto Fúnez	Coop Prieta COAPAL MA	February 11, 2011	According to press reports, Funez, president of the Prieta cooperative, and Gonzales were driving on the road between Saba and Tocoa when their pick up truck received 15 bullets, killing both. The two cooperative leaders were returning from the bank with cash that was stolen.
28	Fredy Castro Gonzales	Coop Prieta COAPAL MA	February 11, 2011	
29	Tarin Daniel García Enamorado	MUCA-MD	April 14, 2011	Garcia and Acosta from La Concepcion went fishing on the Aguan river early on April 14. Their bodies were found April 15 with hand bound behind their backs. Garcia had been decapitated. Local residents claim Dinant security guards had been on the river at the time they went to fish.
30	Carlos Alberto Acosta	MUCA-MD	April 14, 2011	
31	Roney Diaz	MARCA	May 7, 2011	Diaz was killed, and two others wounded in a shooting carried out by men dressed in Orion security uniforms but recognized as 15th battalion soldiers, during an occupation of the San Esteban Farm, as described above.
32	José Paulino Lemos	MCA	May 10, 2011	Lemos went to sell fish near the Rio Claro military base and was shot and killed along the road on his bicycle.
33	Pascual López	MCR	May 15 2011	Lopez was tending cattle in his lands near the border of the Panama Farm, controlled by Dinant security. A 12 year old boy accompanying him witnessed guards shoot out of the farm wounding Lopez, the boy ran to get help, when he returned with others a trail of blood led into the Panama farm, but police refused to search the farm Lopez's body has not been found.
34	Sixto Ramos	MCA	May 18, 2011	Ramos was shot as he was driving by unidentified gunmen.
35	Olvin Gallegos	MARCA	May 21, 2011	Gallegos and Gomez disappeared while riding their bicycle on the highway that crosses El Mochito farm. The bicycle was later found on that farm but their bodies have not been located. Searching family members have been threatened and pursued.
36	Segundo Gómez	MARCA	May 21, 2011	
37	Agustín Bustillo	MUCA-MD	May 24, 2011	Bustillo was kidnapped by several heavily armed men as he went from the La Confianza farm to the INA headquarters. His body was found 5 days later on the banks of the Aguan River. His family made a formal denouncement to the police.
38	José Recinos Aguilar	MARCA	June 5, 2011	Recinos, Santamaria and Cuesta were standing in the San Esteban farm when a passing police patrol truck opened fire on them while driving by, killing the three instantly. The same vehicle collected their bodies and took them to the morgue.
39	Joel Santamaría	MARCA	June 5, 2011	
40	Genaro Cuesta	MARCA	June 5, 2011	

41	Luis Alonso Ortiz Borjas	MUCA-MI	July 16, 2011	Ortiz Borjas and Morales Enamorado traveled from the town of Marañones to buy food at a store in the town of Ilanga, where several gunmen opened fire on them with AK-47's and then loaded their bodies, presumably deceased, into their truck and left. Their bodies have not been recovered.
42	Constantino Morales Enamorado	MUCA-MI	July 16, 2011	
43	Julián Alvarenga	MUCA-MI	July 23, 2011	Alvarenga traveled from Marañones to get food in the Tocoa market on a motorcycle, he was shot by men in a pickup truck.
44	Javier Melgar	MCRNA	August 14, 2011	Melgar was shot in the back, on the Panama farm shooting described above, apparently by security guards or military.
45	Bonifacio Dubón	Pepsi publicist	August 15, 2011	The vehicle in which these five were traveling was shot on the highway by the entrance to the San Isidro farm, according to eyewitnesses by Dinant security guards. The Pepsi advertising car had just pulled out of the INA training center, where MUCA families had taken refuge from flooding.
46	Elvin Geovanni Ortiz Castro	Pepsi publicist	August 15, 2011	
47	Eleuterio Lara Reyes	Pepsi publicist	August 15, 2011	
48	Karla Vanesa Cacho Castillo	Pepsi publicist	August 15, 2011	
49	Migdalia Elizaldes Sarmiento Duarte	store owner	August 15, 2011	
50	Secundino Ruiz Vallecillo	MARCA	August 20, 2011	Ruiz, vice president of MARCA, was shot while driving his truck by two masked gunmen aboard a motorcycle three blocks from the Tocoa police station just four days after the Xatruch II force arrived. Police took over an hour to arrive at the scene. A man riding with him was wounded.
51	Arnoldo Portillo	MUCA-MD	August 20, 2011	Portillo left his home and never came back, the following day his brutally mutilated body was found in the town trash dump.
52	Pedro Salgado	MUCA-MD	August 21, 2011	Salgado, Vice President of MUCA, and his wife Licóna were killed in their home with a machete. Salgado had been subject to constant threats. Two men were arrested for the killing, it is unclear what evidence exists or if the judicial process has proceeded.
53	Reyna Mejía	MUCA-MD	August 21, 2011	
54	Olvin David González Godoy	MUCA-MI	September 2, 2011	Gonzales Godoy was shot and killed at approximately 6 am by unknown assassins as he left the Marañones Farm to visit his parents.
55	Miriam Enelda Fiallo	Coop Prieta COAPAL MA	September 29, 2011	German Castro, President of the Prieta Cooperative, and his wife Miriam Enelda Fiallo, were driving into their community in the couple's pick-up truck when unidentified gunmen opened fire killing Miriam and seriously wounding Castro.

56	Carlos Humberto Martínez	MUCA-MD	October 2, 2011	Martinez was killed by gunfire as he undertook agricultural labor on the Lempira farm near the property line with the San Isidro farm. The gunfire originated from the San Isidro farm, which maintains a strong security force.
57	Santos Zelaya Sefarino Ruiz	MUCA-MD	October 11, 2011	Sefarino was killed on the La Aurora farm when he performed agricultural labor near the property line of the San Isidro farm by shots that originated from inside the San Isidro farm, which maintains a strong presence of security forces.
58	Segundo Mendoza	MCRNA	October 15, 2011	Mendoza and several others were performing agricultural labor in the La Consentida farm when they were ambushed by a security force dressed in all black uniforms with black ski masks, who opened fire without warning on the group. Police were present and removed Mendoz's body, taking it to the coroners' office in La Ceiba. The body was returned to the family with one hand missing.
59	Catalino Efraín López	MARCA	November 1, 2011	A group of MARCA members had visited the cemetery for the Day of the Dead celebrations when a passing truck with Orion security guards opened fire on them, killing Lopez and Lemus, while wounding Nilda Funez in front of a group of children who traveled with the victims.
60	José Luis Lemus	MARCA	November 1, 2011	
61	Matías Vallé	MUCA-MD	January 20, 2012	Valle was shot by two masked assassins aboard a motorcycle as he stood on the side of the road awaiting a bus in front of the community Quebrada de Arena. He had been under almost constant threat for two years, like most of MUCA and its member coops leadership. His family received telephone calls after his murder informing them of the intention to remove his head from the grave to collect a ransom, Valle was buried in a secret location.
62	Marvin Jose Andrade	Neighbor Cayo Campo	March 12, 2012	His body was found on the side of the road, tortured and burned over 50% of the body. He was a neighbor to the MUCA community of La Lempira.
63	Edilberto Flores	MUCA-MI	March 29, 2012	Flores was killed while traveling with four others in a vehicle, this report based solely on a newspaper article, which characterized the incident as a confrontation, though a MUCA leader quoted said the group was returning from work.
64	Arnoldo Trochez	MUCA-MI	April 10, 2012	Trochez was shot and killed while he performed agricultural labor on the Las Marañones farm.

65	Adonis López	MUCA-MD	April 11, 2012	Lopez was shot and killed as he drove his pick-up truck past a section of the Salama Cooperative farm that borders that San Isidro farm, which is under heavy control by Dinant security guards.
66	José Antonio López	Neighbor Rigos	May 5, 2012	Lopez went to fish on the Aguan river near the Panama farm and never returned. Many affirm that Panama farm security forces often fire against those fishing on the Aguan river, His body was found three days later. Area residents identified his bicycle in the Panama farm security office in the Panama community.
67	Juan José Peralta Escoto	MUCA-MI	May 16, 2012	Peralta Escoto, his son and son in law were ambushed while driving on the highway near the La Confianza farm by unidentified assassins using automatic weapons. Peralta Escoto was killed while Velez and Peralta Barrera recovered. Peralta Barrera has been subject to constant threats.
68	Jose Efraín Del Cid	MUCA-MI	May 18, 2012	Gunmen opened fire on del Cid's truck as he stopped in the town of Sonaguerra to leave a friend at his home. He was killed while his companion was uninjured.
69	Gregorio Chávez	Neighbor Comunidad Panamá	July 2, 2012	Chavez was tending his garden near the border of the Panama farm in the evening, when he did not return for dinner his family went to the garden to see pieces of rope and flattened plants making a path into the farm. Search parties were formed and his body was exhumed by the coroner on July 6 in the Panama farm, showing signs of torture.
70	Jacobo López Erazo	MUCA-MD	July 7, 2012	Erazo left his home in the town of Quebrada Seca at approximately 4am to go to work, but upon entering his vehicle multiple assassins shot him killing him instantly.
71	José Luis Dubón	MUCA-MD	July 8, 2012	Dubon was shot in the Ceibita neighborhood of the La Lempira settlement by assassins. On May 24, 2012 he had been arrested without warrant or cause in Tocoa, taken to the Tocoa police station and released without charges.
72	Israel García Pérez	MOCRA	July 26, 2012	Garcia was killed at approximately 10pm, by team of armed men in black uniforms who entered the farm approximately half an hour after a helicopter had hovered over the farm, executed Garcia and left. It is reported his had was cut off.
73	Evaristo López	MARCA	July 29, de 2012	At approximately 10:15 pm, Lopez was shot and killed as he drove from the San Esteban farm to the town of Zamora looking for medicine.
74	Marvin Daneri Trochez	MCRNA	August 9, 2012	Carlos and Marvin were killed by assassins reportedly associated with a death squad with the participation of

75	Carlos apellido desconocido	MCRNA	August 9, 2012	police and soldiers inside the Panama farm in an incident described at length above.
76	Jose Braulio Diaz Lopez	MUCA	August 27, 2012	Diaz was shot in the town of Tocoa, near that hospital, at approximately 4pm while changing a tire by a masked gunman on board a motorcycle.
77	Santos Mejia	MUCA-MI	September 8, 2012	Mejia, a member of the Isla 1&2 cooperatives in the Left Bank movement that separated from MUCA-MD and had expelled other campesino cooperatives from the Maranones farm with the assistance of the Xatruch operation on April 16, 2012 as described in detail above, was carrying a weapon while riding a motorcycle, when the motorcycle made a U turn to avoid a checkpoint, police opened fire on Mejia, who fled into the brush. He was pursued and killed in an exchange of fire with police.
78	Héctor Navarra	Neighbor near Los Laureles	September 9, 2012	Navarra, who suffered from throat cancer, lived in a house at the entrance to Los Laurles farm. During a violet eviction police and military shot a large quantity of tear gas into houses surrounding the farm believing campesinos had taken refuge in nearby houses. Navarra suffered a respiratory collapse and died several hours later.
79	Herman Alejandro Maldonado	MCRNA	September 12, 2012	Maldonado and Ortega were traveling on a motorcycle on the highway past the El Remolino farm, where they were killed by shots originating inside the El Remolino farm. They were followed by fellow campesinos in a pick-up who stopped to assist them, and out of fear that the attack would continue transported them to the nearby Panama town to seek emergency medical attention, both died from injuries. El Remolino is heavily controlled by Orion security forces.
80	Ivis Ortega	MCRNA	September 12, 2012	
81	Antonio Trejo	Lawyer for MARCA	September 22, 2012	At approximately 8:30pm, lawyer Trejo left a church where he was officiating a marriage ceremony to retrieve the marriage certificate from his car when he was shot five times. He died in the hospital a little after midnight.
82	Reinaldo Rivera Paz	MCRNA	November 3, 2012	Brothers Reinaldo and Jose Rivera Paz were shot by a group of assassins along with Orlando Campos as the three stood waiting for a bus the Desvio del Coco on the left bank of the Aguan river, near the community of Rigores. Campos survived and identified to a CONADEH representative that one of the attackers was a police agent assigned to La Ceiba that resides in Rigores and has been reported to form part of a death squad which also includes soldiers. Ballistics tests
83	José Omar Rivera Paz	MCRNA	November 3, 2012	

84	Orlando Campos	MCRNA	November 3, 2012	were carried out on agent Marvin Noe Garcia Santos, which confirmed the weapons use in the triple homicide, and Garcia was arrested November 4. None of his accomplices have been arrested.
85	José Cecilio Pérez Martínez	MARCA	November 9, 2012	Perez Martinez, President of the El Despertar Cooperative, was intercepted by armed men who kidnapped him in his pickup truck. His body was found in the truck the following day in the El Tigre community. He had withdrawn payroll for Despertar member, which was stolen.
86	Adelmo Leiva	MARCA	November 25, 2012	At 9am assassins on a motorcycle fatally shot Leiva at the moment he boarded a bus with his wife and young daughter.
87	Wesley Santos Avila	MOCRA	November 29, 2012	Wesley Santos was shot ten times as he rode a motorcycle past the entrance to the town of La Confianza toward Tajoica by gunmen in a red car.
88	Luis Antonio Ramos Reyes	MOCRA	January 11, 2013	Ramos and Perez were fatally shot by assassins near the Tocoa cemetery as they drove to the town of Salama.
89	Manuel Antonio Pérez	MOCRA	January 11, 2013	
90	Juan Perez	MOCRA	February 2, 2013	At approximately 4:00pm, Perez rode his bicycle through the town of El Tigre on his way home when he was killed by unknown gunmen.
91	William Alvarado	MUCA-MD	February 2, 2013	At approximately 6:30pm when Alvarado rode his bicycle through the town of Tajoica he was fatally shot by gunmen passing in a truck.
92	Santos Jacobo Cartagena	MUCA-MD	February 16, 2013	Cartagena was shot by heavily armed assassins at 1:20 in the afternoon as he awaited a bus on the highway at the turn off to the Lan Confianza community.
93	Jose Trejo Cabrera	MARCA	February 16, 2013	Trejo was shot by assassins as he drove in the city streets of Tocoa in the San Isidro neighborhood. The brother of murdered lawyer Antonio Trejo, he had been actively engaged in pursuing an investigation of his brother's killing.

**Annex II: Partial List of security forces reportedly killed in the context of land disputes in the Aguan<sup>49</sup>**

1	February 14, 2010	Hector Acosta	Security Guard	El Herald newspaper reported death of three security guards during an attempted lad occupation.
2	July 17, 2010	Armin Edilberto Figueroa	Security Guard	La Prensa reported he was killed during an occupation of the San Isidro farm, along with two campesinos.
3	June 4, 2011	Jose Modesto Suarez	Security Guard	CONADEH reported he had been killed on La Trinidad farm by a group of armed men.
4	June 7, 2011	Luis Alonso Martinez	Dinant manager	Shot as he left a store.
5	August 14, 2011	Marco Antonio Guillén	Security Guards	Killed on the Panamá Farm in what some sources described as an attempted eviction, others describe as an ambush by the military and others describe as an ambush by campesinos against security guards.
6	August 14, 2011	José Alfredo Aguilar		
7	August 14, 2011	José Ángel Guzmán		
8	August 14, 2011	José de Jesús García		
9	August 14, 2011	Ramon Lobo Hernandez	Dinant laborer	
10	September 15, 2011	Anthony Costly	Police	It was widely reported that Costly and Bernal, part of the Xatruch II operation, were killed in an armed attack on the convoy. Campesinos reported that witnesses saw a grenade explode in the vehicle, an apparent accident, and a police commissioner blamed a supposed guerrilla group for the attack.
11	September 15, 2011	Mariano Garcia Bernal	Soldier	
12	February 9, 2012	Elvin Francisco Castro Juárez	security guard	Newspapers reported on February 9, 2012 the two had been gunned down by an assassin on a motorcycle, but the report was repeated on March 27, 2012 that the same two men had been killed March 26. In February local sources had expressed concern about this double murder, as it came shortly after the murder of campesino movement leader Matias Valle as local reports indicated that the description of the motorcycle used in both assassinations and the characteristics of the assassins were identical.
13	February 9, 2012	Santos Julio	security guard	

14	May 1, 2012	Jose Elan Duarte	security guard	A December 2012 newspaper article describes the exhumation of five bodies in the Aguan, beginning with Duarte, though no print media reports of the killings appear to have been published at the time. Local sources reported that another security guard whose name is not known was killed on July 29, 2012, but that death was not reported in the print media.
15	Sept. 1, 2012	Marvin Orlando Rivera	security guard	El Heraldo reported Rivera was killed on September 1, 2012 on an unspecified farm in the municipality of Bonito Oriental.
16	Sept. 18, 2012	Mauri Joel Fuentes	security guard	Newspaper reports indicated he was killed during an eviction on the Los Camarones farm. Campesinos expressed concern that this killing may have been carried out by security forces with the intent of criminalizing campesinos. Campesinos reported seeing security guards put on 15th Battalion uniforms prior to eviction.



## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> In 1983, US citizen of Puerto Rican descent, Temistocles Ramirez, began lawsuits against Casper Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, demanding compensation for his ranch which had been taken over for the Center for Regional Military Training [CREM]. The case went to the Supreme Court which ruled against Ramirez, which, according to the New York Times, found that his victory in an appeals court “undermined the United States' ability to meet its overseas commitments.” In November 1989, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution authorizing compensation to Ramirez. On July 11, 1991, the Honduran government titled the land to the National Agrarian Institute for land reform purposes. Ramirez had purchased the farm in January 1975, just 8 years before lawsuits began, from Fausto Fortin Insetroza, who had acquired the property, 5,724 acres, in April 1972 from the National Agrarian Institute, in a questionable sale given that this kind of land was designated by law for agrarian reform purposes. Newspaper coverage of the conflict in Central America passed images of the National Security Council's Oliver North on Ramirez's porch. The CREM was used not only to launch Contra attacks in Nicaragua, but also as a launching point for the U.S. operation in Granada.

- "La Procuraduría General de la República en 1991, siendo procurador Leonardo Matute Murillo (QDDG), traspasó ese predio de 5,724 hectáreas al INA mediante escritura pública que está debidamente registrada en el Instituto de la Propiedad de Trujillo el 11 de julio de 1991".
- Asbury, Edith Evans. "American Rancher in Honduras Furor." New York Times, December 20, 1983. <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/12/20/world/american-rancher-in-honduras-furor.html>
- Farnsworth, Clyde, "Help for the Contras; Sympathy (no cash) for Lost Ranch." New York Times, April 30, 1987. <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/30/us/washington-talk-help-for-the-contras-sympathy-no-cash-for-lost-ranch.html>
- United States Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit. - 724 F.2d 143, "724 F.2d 143: Temistocles Ramirez De Arellano, et al., Appellant v. Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, et al." Argued Oct. 13, 1983. Decided Dec. 22, 1983. Rehearing En Banc Granted Feb. 23, 1984. <http://law.justia.com/cases/federal/appellate-courts/F2/724/143/265127/>
- 101st CONGRESS 1st Session, "S. 1902 For the relief of Temistocles Ramirez de Arellano, T. Ramirez & Company, Inc., and Empacador Del Norte, S.A." U.S. Senate, Washington, DC, November 17, 1989. <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c101:S.1902.IS>
- El Herald, "Se reaviva conflicto de tierras en Honduras." Tegucigalpa, November 16, 2010. <http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/AI%20Frente/listado-nota/Ediciones/2010/11/17/Noticias/Se-reaviva-conflicto-de-tierras-en-Honduras>

<sup>2</sup> "Honduras: Violaciones de Derechos Humanos en el Bajo Aguán: Informe Preliminar de la Misión de Verificación Internacional Realizada del 25 febrero a 4 marzo de 2011" APRODEV (Asociación de Agencias de Desarrollo ligadas al Concejo Mundial de Iglesias), CIFCA (Iniciativa de Copenhague para América Central y México), FIAN Internacional (Organización Internacional por el Derecho a la Alimentación), FIDH (Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos), Rel-UITA (Regional latinoamericana de la Unión Internacional de los Trabajadores de la Alimentación, Agrícolas, Hoteles, Restaurantes, Tabaco y Afines), Vía Campesina Internacional. March 25, 2011. [http://www.viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/sp/Informe\\_mision\\_final.pdf](http://www.viacampesina.org/downloads/pdf/sp/Informe_mision_final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Drugs, Law Enforcement and Foreign Policy." Washington, December 1988. <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB113/north06.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The Land Modernization Laws of 1992 and 1994 were among a series of 'reforms' promoted in the Structural Adjustment loans that began in 1988 and ended in 1993, the two which specifically promoted the changes in Agrarian reform laws were the Second Structural Adjustment Loan for the Agricultural Sector [SAL II Ln. 3257-HO]

and later the Structural Adjustment Credit for the Agricultural Sector [Cr. 2208-HO]. Among the Structural Adjustment objectives was the divestment of the state businesses and banks that a series of seven world bank loans made during the 1970s and 1980s had capitalized, banks and businesses that provided support to the African palm cooperatives in their efforts to establish palm oil plantations, pioneer palm oil production and build the palm oil processing capacity.

<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=217672&piPK=95916&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=223661&category=regcountries&regioncode=7&countrycode=HN&pagenumber=8&pagesize=10&sortBy=BOARDSORTDATE&sortorder=DESC>

<sup>5</sup> In May 1997 the World Bank's International Finance Corporation approved a \$55 million loan to Cressida Corporation, which now operates under the name of Dinant. International Finance Corporation, Press Release "IFC to Finance Honduran Manufacturing and Agribusiness Company." Washington, June 26, 1997.

<http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/pressroom/ifcpressroom.nsf/1f70cd9a07d692d685256ee1001cdd37/cf9fb05a80c52cba85256977004b4b44?OpenDocument>

<sup>6</sup> America Economía, "Banco Aleman Congela Credito." April 13, 2011.

<http://www.americaeconomia.com/negocios-industrias/banco-aleman-congela-credito-corporacion-dinant>, Compliance Advisor Ombudsman of the International Financing Corporation, "Appraisal Report: Corporacion Dinant S.A. of C.V." Washington, August 13, 2012. [http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/cases/document-links/documents/CAOAppraisalReport\\_Dinant\\_August132012.pdf](http://www.cao-ombudsman.org/cases/document-links/documents/CAOAppraisalReport_Dinant_August132012.pdf),

Inter American Investment Corporation, "Projects Database: HO3623A-02: Dinant Holding Company." No date.

<http://www.iic.org/en/projects/honduras/ho3623a-02/dinant-holding-company>,

El Heraldo, "Miguel Facussé hara millonaria inversión." Tegucigalpa, January 22, 2010.

<http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2010/01/22/Noticias/Miguel-Facusse-hara-millonaria-inversion>

<sup>7</sup> Biofuel Watch, "Palm oil in the Aguan Valley, Honduras: CDM, biodiesel and murders." September 4, 2011.

<http://www.biofuelwatch.org.uk/2011/palm-oil-in-the-aguan-valley-honduras-cdm-biodiesel-and-murders/>

<sup>8</sup> "Clausuran Curso de Comando para la Guerra No Convencional," La Tribuna; August 30, 2011.

<http://old.latribuna.hn/2011/08/30/clausuran-curso-de-comando-para-la-guerra-no-convencional/>

<sup>9</sup> Orellana, Xiomara, "Comando de élite protege a Honduras por cielo, tierra y mar;" La Prensa, Tegucigalpa, October 1, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Secretaria de Defensa Nacional; "Inician Traspasos de Mando en las Fuerzas Armadas;" January 23, 2012;

<http://www.sedena.gob.hn/index.php/component/content/article/1-latest-news/148-inician-traspasos-de-mando-en-las-fuerzas-armadas.html>

<sup>11</sup> La Prensa, "Roban Dos fusiles del Quinto Batallon." Tegucigalpa, August 10, 2012.

<http://r.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/Roban-dos-fusiles-de-Quinto-Batallon#.UPbJBGekZGN>

<sup>12</sup> FIDH, "Human Rights Violations in the Bajo Aguan." September 2011.

<http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/honduras573ang.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> El Proceso Digital, "Este Viernes Arrancan 100% los Operativos Xatruch II en el Bajo Aguan." August 18, 2011.

<http://www.proceso.hn/2011/08/18/Nacionales/Este.viernes.arrancan/41213.html>

<sup>14</sup> La Tribuna, "A los Tribunales Mandan al Jefe de la Operacion Xatruch." La Tribuna; Tegucigalpa, January 24, 2012. <http://www.latribuna.hn/2012/01/24/a-los-tribunales-mandan-al-jefe-de-la-operacion-xatruch/>

<sup>15</sup> One local source with reasonable access to information reported that the three, two of whom are children of an influential businessman in the region, had been traveling in the evening with guns. Police searched their vehicles, and found the weapons, but allowed the men to continue, however the two were very soon ambushed and the weapons were stolen. The father pushed for the prosecution of the police, which resulted in the hearing in January 2012.

<sup>16</sup> La Tribuna, "Si Nombran a Maria Luisa Borjas Creere en la Depuracion en la Policia." Tegucigalpa, June 6, 2012. <http://www.latribuna.hn/2012/06/06/si-nombran-a-maria-luisa-borjas-creere-en-la-depuracion-policial-almendares-bonilla/>

<sup>17</sup> La Prensa, "Xatruch II Assume Control del Aguan." August 14, 2012. <http://laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Regionales/Xatruch-III-asume-control-del-Aguan#.UPblZ2ekZGM>

<sup>18</sup> La Ceibena, "Assume nuevo jefe de Xatruch II." La Ceiba. December 8, 2012. <http://www.elceibeno.hn/litoral/2012/12/asume-nuevo-jefe-de-fuerza-xatruch-iii/>

<sup>19</sup> Associated Press, "Honduras to Pull Troops Out of Iraq ASAP." April 20, 2012. <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,117577,00.html>

<sup>20</sup> In October it was reported that a security chief for Orion was arrested with illegal weapons, but that he was released when a military Colonel claimed they were his, and as an acting military officer he had a right to own them. Newspaper coverage of that arrest has not been recovered. However, this article from June 21, 2012 that reported on five security guards arrested with illegal weapons. El Heraldo, "En posesión de un arsenal de guerra capturan a cinco sujetos." Tegucigalpa, June 21, 2012. <http://www.elheraldo.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/En-posesion-de-un-arsenal-de-guerra-capturan-a-cinco-sujetos>

<sup>21</sup> In a press release the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries expresses concern that 40 Colombian former AUC paramilitaries had been recruited by large landholders in Honduras. This announcement came just a few weeks after a Colombian paper reported that palm and sugar cane producers were recruiting former AUC who had worked formed part of the Ramon Isaza command under Walter Ochoa Guisao. "Enlistan Ex AUC para ir a Honduras" El Tiempo. Bogata, September 13, 2009. <http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-3621518> "Honduras: Grupo de Trabajo alerta sobre presencia de mercenarios." UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries, October 9, 2009. <http://www.un.org/spanish/News/story.asp?NewsID=16755#.UREPYWfNLQo>

<sup>22</sup> La Tribuna, "Clausuran Curso de Comando para la Guerra No Convencional." Tegucigalpa, August 30, 2011. <http://old.latribuna.hn/2011/08/30/clausuran-curso-de-comando-para-la-guerra-no-convencional/>

<sup>23</sup> Training of soldiers in the 15th Battalion is described by local informants as well as in press reports such as: Orellana, Xiomara, "Comando de élite protege a Honduras por cielo, tierra y mar;" La Prensa, Tegucigalpa, October 1, 2012. <http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Apertura/Comando-de-elite-protege-a-Honduras-por-cielo-tierra-y-mar#.UGmveVEhKZE> The article describes training as techniques to recover damage or destroy an

objective, capture or recover a person or material, that they are always behind enemy lines to obtain information about the objective, that not all of their actions are armed and they conduct 'clandestine' operations, infiltration and reconnaissance in enemy territory, day or night, specializing in insertion, parachuting, explosives, long distance sharp shooting, intelligence, advanced marksmanship, urban operations, close combat, martial arts, and offensive driving.

<sup>24</sup> Just The Facts website, Foreign Military Training Database, a collaboration of CIP, LAWG and WOLA. [http://justf.org/FMTR\\_Data?country\\_txt=&country\\_chk\[Honduras\]=on&year\\_chk\[2010\]=on&year\\_chk\[2009\]=on&year\\_chk\[2008\]=on&program\\_txt=&recipient\\_unit\\_txt=&location\\_txt=&training\\_institution\\_txt=&course\\_title\\_txt=](http://justf.org/FMTR_Data?country_txt=&country_chk[Honduras]=on&year_chk[2010]=on&year_chk[2009]=on&year_chk[2008]=on&program_txt=&recipient_unit_txt=&location_txt=&training_institution_txt=&course_title_txt=)

<sup>25</sup> United States Office of Management and Budget USASpending.gov, Identifying Agency ID 2100, Product Information Number W9127811P0339, FY 2011. [http://usaspending.gov/explore?fiscal\\_year=all&comingfrom=searchresults&piid=W9127811P0339&typeofview=complete](http://usaspending.gov/explore?fiscal_year=all&comingfrom=searchresults&piid=W9127811P0339&typeofview=complete)

<sup>26</sup> United States Office of Management and Budget USASpending.gov, Identifying Agency ID 2100, Product Information Number W9127811P0341, FY 2011. [http://usaspending.gov/explore?fiscal\\_year=all&comingfrom=searchresults&piid=W9127811P0341&typeofview=complete](http://usaspending.gov/explore?fiscal_year=all&comingfrom=searchresults&piid=W9127811P0341&typeofview=complete)

<sup>27</sup> United States Office of Management and Budget USASpending.gov, Identifying Agency ID 2100, Product Information Number W9127812P0322, FY 2012. [http://usaspending.gov/explore?fiscal\\_year=all&comingfrom=searchresults&piid=W9127812P0322&typeofview=complete](http://usaspending.gov/explore?fiscal_year=all&comingfrom=searchresults&piid=W9127812P0322&typeofview=complete)

<sup>28</sup> Author interview, Police Commissioner Daniel Molina, Tocoa, Colon, September 6, 2012; Author interview, Police Sub Commissioner Erazo, Tocoa, Colon, September 9, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Accusations of Aguan campesino movement involvement in a guerrilla movement began in 2010 and continue until today. More recent reports claim that the group receives training from the Hezbollah in Nicaragua. The March 2010 La Prensa article cites the existence of a Honduran intelligence report that describes an insurgent network related to an armed cell in the Aguan that is trained by Colombian guerrillas and financed through an alliance with drug traffickers, claiming that the network involves the internationally recognized campesino leader Rafael Alegria, church leaders, teachers, human rights organizations, and mentions the regional union – campesino alliance in the Aguan COPA. It concludes, quoting an anonymous high official "It is important to emphasize that the dominate catholic order in the department are the Jesuits, adept at liberation theology, which is a Marxist vision of the gospels." [Es importante recalcar que la orden católica dominante del departamento es la jesuita, adeptos a la teología de la liberación, la cual es una visión marxista del evangelio.] El Heraldo, "Hay Mas de 1,000 Armas en Poder de Campesinos." Tegucigalpa, November 24, 2010.

<http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2010/11/24/Noticias/Hay-mas-de-1-000-armas-en-poder-de-campesinos>; El Nuevo Diario, "Ejercito de Nicaragua Niega Existencia de Grupos Armados en Frontera con Honduras" Managua, August 26, 2011. <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/nacionales/111922>;

El Heraldo, "Nicaragua Estaria Entrenando Grupos Armados en Honduras." Tegucigalpa, November 24, 2010.

<http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2010/11/24/Noticias/Nicaragua-estaria-entrenando-grupos-armados-en-Honduras>;

La Prensa, "Celula Guerrillera se Arma en el Bajo Aguan." February 28, 2010.

<http://archivo.laprensa.hn/Apertura/Ediciones/2010/03/01/Noticias/Celula-guerrillera-se-arma-en-el-Bajo-Aguan>  
El Proceso Digital, "Crisis Agraria ¿Grupo Guerrillero Agita Conflicto en el Aguan?." Tegucigalpa, August 17, 2011.  
<http://www.proceso.hn/2011/08/17/Caliente/Crisis.agraria.A/41138.html>

El Heraldo, "Hezbollah entrena en frontera Honduras Nicaragua." Tegucigalpa, September 10, 2012.

<http://www.elheraldo.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/Hezbollah-entrena-en-frontera-Honduras-Nicaragua>

La Prensa, "Honduras Infiltrados de Nicaragua y Venezuela estarían en el Bajo Aguan." Tegucigalpa, August 17, 2011.

<http://archivo.laprensa.hn/Pa%C3%ADs/Ediciones/2011/08/17/Noticias/Honduras-Infiltrados-de-Nicaragua-y-Venezuela-estarian-en-el-Bajo-Aguan>

<sup>30</sup> Times of Israel, "Hezbollah establish training base in Nicaragua." September 6, 2012.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-hezbollah-establish-training-base-in-nicaragua/>

Tico Times, "Hezbollah rumors continue to hound Nicaragua." San Jose, September 28, 2012.

[http://www.ticotimes.net/Region/Hezbollah-rumors-continue-to-hound-Nicaragua\\_Friday-September-28-2012](http://www.ticotimes.net/Region/Hezbollah-rumors-continue-to-hound-Nicaragua_Friday-September-28-2012)

<sup>31</sup> [Si al 20 de abril no hay un arreglo o una forma de que se recuperen mis tierras con la intervención de la autoridad. La sangre va a correr.] Effectively the army intervened in the Maranones farm on April 16, 2012.

La Prensa, "Conflicto en el Bajo Aguan Tambien es Narcotrafico: Lobo." Tegucigalpa, August 10, 2012.

<http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Tegucigalpa/Conflicto-en-el-Aguan-es-tambien-crimen-organizado-Lobo#.UPcpG2ekZGM>

La Prensa, "Matan en Emboscado al Terrateniente." Tegucigalpa, June 2, 2012.

<http://www.laprensa.hn/content/view/full/78750#.UPcfJ2ekZGM>

La Tribuna, "Militares Preparan desalojo de campesinos del Aguan." Tegucigalpa, August 12, 2012.

<http://www.latribuna.hn/2012/08/12/militares-preparan-desalojo-de-campesinos-del-aguan/>

La Prensa, "Urgen al Gobierno poner fina al caos en el Bajo Aguan." Tegucigalpa, April 15, 2012.

<http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Apertura/Urgen-al-Gobierno-poner-fin-al-caos-del-Bajo-Aguan#.UPC9ymekZGM>

<sup>32</sup> Author Interview Police Sub Commissioner Oscar Mejia; Tocoa, Colon; September 12, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> In February and March 2011 the International Federation for Human Rights [FIDH] conducted a fact finding mission and in October 2011 presented a thematic audience in the Inter American Commission for Human Rights. An International Human Rights Encounter was held in Tocoa in February 2012, which brought together grassroots human rights activists from Latin America, Europe and the United States. Shortly after, in May 2012, FIAN and FIDH in May held a public hearing in Tocoa, which brought together prominent human rights defenders from Latin America, Europe and the US, including lawyers from the IACHR. Rights Action, Alliance for Global Justice and la Voz de los de Abajo have coordinated a series of human Rights delegations to visit the area.

<sup>34</sup> CONADEH, "Muerte Violenta de Personas en el Bajo Aguan." Tegucigalpa, No date.

<http://www.conadeh.hn/index.php/component/content/article/7-conadeh/64-informe-muerte-violenta-de-personas-en-el-bajo-aguan>

CONADEH, "Land Rights in the Bajo Aguan." Tegucigalpa, September 2011. <http://www.conadeh.hn/index.php/7-conadeh/108-informe-la-tenencia-de-la-tierra-en-el-bajo-aguan>

El Heraldo, "CONADEH Pide Solucionar Crisis del Bajo Aguan." September 24, 2011.

<http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2011/09/24/Noticias/Conadeh-pide-solucionar-crisis-del-Bajo-Aguan>

<sup>35</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011." Washington, no date.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>36</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011." Washington, no date.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>37</sup> The reference to the judge killed was likely the case of José Enrique Paguaga Mejía, killed in La Ceiba. Though press reported he had issued eviction orders in the Aguan, there was no reported investigation to establish that the relationship between his killing and the conflict in the Aguan. Indeed, colleagues of Paguaga report he had been involved in many cases relating to organized crime. La Prensa, "Muere juez de letras victima de atentado." October 10, 2011. <http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/Muere-juez-de-letras-victima-de-atentado#.URk1hWe1tmo>

Though in general, it is unclear what sources the State Department used to determine numbers of victims in the Aguan, it would appear they may rely on government sources. United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "2010 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2010 Human Rights Report: Honduras." Washington, April 8, 2011. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/wha/154510.htm>

<sup>38</sup> La Tribuna, "Enfrentamiento en el Aguan Deja Cinco Heridos." July 28, 2012.

<http://www.latribuna.hn/2012/07/28/enfrentamiento-en-el-aguan-deja-cinco-heridos/>

<sup>39</sup> "Honduras: Violaciones de Derechos Humanos en el Bajo Aguan," Federación Internacional de Derechos Humanos. Tegucigalpa, September 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Orellana, Xiomara, "Comando de élite protege a Honduras por cielo, tierra y mar," La Prensa, Tegucigalpa, October 1, 2012. <http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Apertura/Comando-de-elite-protege-a-Honduras-por-cielo-tierra-y-mar#.UGmveVEhKZE>

<sup>41</sup> Arce, Alberto, "Dad Seeks Justice for Son Slain in Honduras," Associated Press, November 12, 2012. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/dad-seeks-justice-son-slain-broken-honduras-0>

<sup>42</sup> All documentation of the death of Alex Banoff Antunez has been carried out by the Honduran human rights organization COFADEH, who are the legal representatives of his parents.

[http://defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2126%3A madre-y-padre-de-militar-llegan-al-cofاده-a-denunciar-muerte-de-su-hijo-en-xv-batallon&Itemid=171](http://defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2126%3A madre-y-padre-de-militar-llegan-al-cofاده-a-denunciar-muerte-de-su-hijo-en-xv-batallon&Itemid=171) ;

<sup>43</sup> All documentation of this incident was conducted by COFADEH. Martínez, Everaldo. "Desalojo Violento en Planes Deja 12 Heridos de Bala," Defensores en Línea, March 31, 2012.

[http://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2372:cofاده-presentara-4-casos-emblematicos-ante-la-justicia-universal&catid=37:mem-y-imp&Itemid=150](http://www.defensoresenlinea.com/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2372:cofاده-presentara-4-casos-emblematicos-ante-la-justicia-universal&catid=37:mem-y-imp&Itemid=150)

<sup>44</sup> La Prensa, "Conflicto en el Aguan es También Crimen Organizado: Lobo." Tegucigalpa, August 10, 2012. Translation by author, "Los incidentes se generan en fincas que ellos mismos se han tomado por aspectos del



tráfico de la droga, del robo de la droga, entiendo, y por liderar algunas zonas. La muerte de Gerardo Argueta y Marvin Tróchez fue un enfrentamiento armado entre ellos.”

<sup>45</sup> Orrellana, Xiomara, “Comando de élite protege a Honduras por cielo, tierra y mar;” La Prensa, Tegucigalpa, October 1, 2012.. <http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Honduras/Apertura/Comando-de-elite-protege-a-Honduras-por-cielo-tierra-y-mar#.UGmveVEhKZE>

<sup>46</sup> El Tiempo, “Matan a Dirigente Campesino.” June 1, 2012. <http://www.tiempo.hn/index.php/sucesos/11910-matan-a-dirigente-campesino>

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions, “Handbook, Chapter Three: Killings by Non State Actors and Affirmative State Obligations.” <http://www.extrajudicialexecutions.org/LegalObservations>.

<sup>48</sup> “The Group of Friends is comprised of the IDB, the World Bank, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the OAS, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, and the United Nations, the European Union, as well as Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Finland, Germany, Israel, Italy, Republic of Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and the United States.” From IDB Press Release “SICA presents Central American citizen security strategy to the international community at an event held in IDB.” Washington, April 14, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Sources: Annex II: Partial List of security forces reportedly killed in the context of land disputes in the Aguan: El Heraldo, “Agudos conflictos por tierras en Bajo Aguan.” February 17, 2010. <http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2010/02/17/Noticias/Agudos-conflictos-por-tierras-en-Bajo-Aguan>; CONADEH, “Informe de Muerte Violenta de Personas en el Bajo Aguan.” Tegucigalpa, No date. <http://www.conadeh.hn/index.php/component/content/article/7-conadeh/64-informe-muerte-violenta-de-personas-en-el-bajo-aguan>; El Heraldo, “Operación Tumbador toma el control del Bajo Aguan.” Tegucigalpa, July 19, 2010. <http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Ediciones/2010/11/18/Noticias/Operacion-Tumbador-toma-el-control-del-Bajo-Aguan>; La Prensa, “Nuevo enfrentamiento deja tres muertos.” Tegucigalpa, July 19, 2010. <http://archivo.laprensa.hn/Apertura/Ediciones/2010/07/19/Noticias/Nuevo-enfrentamiento-en-Tocoa-deja-tres-muertos> La Prensa, “Matan a ejecutivo de Dinant en Bajo Aguan.” June 8, 2011. <http://archivo.laprensa.hn/Ediciones/2011/06/08/Noticias/Matan-a-ejecutivo-de-Dinant-en-Bajo-Aguan>; CONADEH, “Informe de Muerte Violenta de Personas en el Bajo Aguan.” Tegucigalpa, No date. <http://www.conadeh.hn/index.php/component/content/article/7-conadeh/64-informe-muerte-violenta-de-personas-en-el-bajo-aguan> FIDH, APRODEV, CIFCA, FIAN Internacional, La Vía Campesina Internacional and Rel-UITA, “Demandan cese a la violencia en el Bajo Aguán e investigaciones efectivas para sancionar a responsables de asesinatos.” August 19, 2011. <http://www.fidh.org/Demandan-cese-a-la-violencia-en-el> La Prensa, “Granada les exploto dentro de patrulla.” September 20, 2011. [www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/Granada-les-exploto-dentro-de-patrulla#.URwUWWe1tmo](http://www.laprensa.hn/Secciones-Principales/Sucesos/Granada-les-exploto-dentro-de-patrulla#.URwUWWe1tmo); El Heraldo, “Emboscada a Convoy Xatruch deja un muerto.” September 17, 2011. <http://archivo.elheraldo.hn/Sucesos/Ediciones/2011/09/17/Noticias/Emboscada-a-convoy-Xatruch-deja-un-muerto>; CONADEH, “Informe de Muerte Violenta de Personas en el Bajo Aguan.” <http://www.conadeh.hn/index.php/component/content/article/7-conadeh/64-informe-muerte-violenta-de-personas-en-el-bajo-aguan> La Tribuna, “Asesinan dos guardias en el Bajo Aguan.” February 9, 2012.

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