

## **COMMUNICATION OF THE HONDURAS SWITZERLAND FORUM DELEGATION**

The Honduras Switzerland Forum is a Swiss NGO which advocates for democratic processes and respect for human rights in Honduras. At the invitation of Honduran human rights organizations, it organized a delegation with the objective of monitoring the general human rights situation in the country. Today, the delegation of 8 Swiss citizens finished its May 4-11 visit to Honduras. The delegation met with representatives of civil society, national and international organizations, CONADEH and communities impacted by the mining industry.

The Honduras Switzerland Forum expresses the following to the national and international community:

We listened to harrowing testimony from victims and human rights defenders. We witnessed a situation of extreme vulnerability, in particular for peasants, those who defend land, journalists, lawyers, members of the LGBTI community, women, children, migrants and even family members of human rights defenders.

We are alarmed by the criminalization and legal persecution of these defenders and the passage of laws that facilitate this criminalization for example, the Law for the Intervention of Private Communications.

We regret that once again, the work of human rights defenders has been delegitimized in declarations on the part of high level government functionaries, including accusations of carrying out a “campaign to discredit” precisely at the same time that the National Congress approved a Law to Protect Human Rights Defenders which does not reflect the recommendations of civil society.

**We disagree with declarations of the Honduran authorities and consider that the human rights situation in Honduras, has not improved.**

We register our deep concern regarding the concentration of power on the part of the Executive branch which permits it to control and manipulate the actions of the Judicial and Legislative powers. We are equally concerned about the militarization of society and the state apparatus, high levels of impunity and corruption and the lack of freedom of expression.

We attest to a state of extreme loss of confidence in the authorities on the part of the population and a growing tendency to resolve problems through violence, in a context permeated by high levels of impunity that exist in the country and lack of utilization of mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution.

In visits to several communities in Valle de Siria and El Transito, Nacaome municipality, Valle, we saw firsthand the devastating consequences of extractive industry on human health and the environment.

We are concerned about the accelerated privatization of natural resources, public services and national territory to private, national power groups and transnational businesses. In particular, the Employment and Economic Development Zones (ZEDES) which require the expropriation of territory without consultation, primarily impacting indigenous communities, in flagrant violation of the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169.

A development model imposed by the powerful, with no benefit for the people, increases inequality, generates conflict and is not sustainable.

We are concerned about declarations by the government in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review which was carried out on May 8th in Geneva, assuring that the majority of the recommendations from the previous UPR had been fulfilled, because during this visit we confirmed the deterioration of the human rights situation. The report presented by the government of Honduras lists achievements which are difficult to substantiate.

We issue a call to the international community with representation in Honduras, especially to our country, to accompany the process initiated by the UPR Platform in the search for full respect for human rights and we demand vigilance in the fulfillment of the UPR recommendations.

Finally, we reiterate our commitment to continue our advocacy actions in order to raise awareness about the human rights situation in Honduras.

The Swiss Honduras Forum will produce a detailed report of this visit in the coming week which will be shared nationally, internationally and with the citizens of Switzerland.

**Honduras Switzerland Forum**

Bernardo Erni, Christina Erni, Gregor F., Nuria Horni, Hans Christoph Jost, Margrit Jost, Max Rechsteiner, Thomas Studer

Contact: [bernardo.suiza@gmail.com](mailto:bernardo.suiza@gmail.com) ; <http://www.honduras-forum.ch/>