

A Resolution Affirming the Rights of the Garífuna People Reps. Bush, Omar, García, Schakowsky & Bowman

Endorsing Organizations: Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH), Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective (WfP-SC), Institute for Policy Studies - Global Economy Program, School of the Americas Watch (SOAW), Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), Honduras Solidarity Network (HSN)

The Afro-Indigenous Garífuna people are one of nine Indigenous peoples of Honduras. The territory that stretches along the Caribbean coast of Honduras is the ancestral home of the majority of the world's Garífuna. The presence of vibrant Garífuna immigrant communities in the United States has been recorded by oral history and scholarly research since the early 20th century. In 2001, UNESCO issued a proclamation declaring the Garífuna language and culture a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

Unfortunately, in recent years the Garífuna community has experienced significant violence, appropriation, and other human rights abuses. To name just a few examples:

- In 1997, the Honduran government arrested Garífuna leader Alfredo López Álvarez on drug possession and trafficking charges; he was wrongly detained for six years and acquitted of the charges in 2003.
- The International Finance Corporation has provided financing to the Dinant Corporation, which is implicated in violent land disputes and illegal appropriation of Garífuna land.
- The Honduran government has attempted to characterize certain Garífuna territory as unpopulated and cede its governance to foreign governments or private corporations.
- Garífuna leaders have been threatened, arrested, abducted and murdered, often by Honduran security forces. At least 16 Garífuna land defenders were murdered in 2019. In July 2020, four Garífuna men were abducted at gunpoint by men wearing uniforms bearing the logo of a Honduran security forces unit; instead of investigating and prosecuting those responsible, the Honduran Attorney General called for criminal proceedings against OFRANEH leaders. And in November 2022, Honduran security forces carried out a violent eviction of the Garífuna community of Punta Gorda on Roatán Island.

The plight of the Garífuna people has not gone unnoticed. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have repeatedly determined that the Honduran government has violated their rights. Yet little has changed regarding the treatment of the Garífuna people. Following a March 2021 Congressional Delegation trip to Honduras, Representatives Bush, Omar, García, Schakowsky, and Bowman worked closely with partner organizations and the Garífuna community to author a resolution that affirms the rights of the Garífuna people. This resolution:

- Condemns violence against Garífuna people and the illegal separation from their legitimate land rights, and calls for the implementation of a 2015 Inter-American Court ruling restoring those land rights;
- Calls for the full participation of an independent commission created by Garífuna communities in the investigation of the four Garífuna men abducted in July 2020;
- Calls for a Special Prosecutor for Enforced Disappearances in Honduras;
- Calls on the World Bank Group and Inter-American Development Bank to review past projects that may have contributed to violating the human rights of the Garífuna people, and ensure compliance with the provisions of ILO Convention 169 regarding prior consultation before the approval of projects that affect Garífuna communities; and
- Calls on the U.S. government to engage with the Honduran government and international allies and organizations to promote compliance with the 2015 Court judgment, and use its influence within multilateral development banks to oppose projects that may threaten the rights of Garífuna communities and advocate for reparations for affected communities.

Join this Resolution and express your support for the Garífuna people and their rights!