

A Resolution Affirming the Rights of the Garífuna People

Sponsored by Representative Bush

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 recent decades, the Garífuna people of Honduras have faced significant violence and dispossession from their ancestral territories which have driven significant outward migration. Some examples are:

- 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 special economic zone ZEDE “Prospera” on Roatan island was established without community consent and its unrestrained expansion threatens the local Garífuna population with dispossession.
- Garífuna leaders have been threatened, arrested, abducted and murdered, often by Honduran security forces. Since 2018, at least 150 Garífuna people have been killed and 37 have been criminalized. In July 2020, four Garífuna men were abducted at gunpoint by men wearing uniforms bearing the logo of a Honduran security forces unit and have not been seen since. And on September 19, 2023, an unknown armed group of men entered the home of Garífuna leader Miriam Miranda as part of an ongoing pattern of intimidation.

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. Following a March 2021 Congressional Delegation trip to Honduras, Rep. Bush partnered with organizations like the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH in Spanish) 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.

For questions, please contact: Honduras Team, Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective at honduras@solidaritycollective.org.

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