

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

Endorsing Organizations: Witness for Peace Solidarity Collective (WfPSC), Organización Fraternal Negra de Honduras (OFRANEH), Honduras Solidarity Network (HSN), Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) – Global Economy Program, Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN), The Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America (IFCLA), Environmental Justice and Infrastructure Initiative, InterReligious Task Force On Central America (IRTF), Latin America Working Group (LAWG), Cross Border Network for Justice and Solidarity, Portland Central American Solidarity Committee, Rights Action, SHARE Foundation, School of the Americas Watch (SOAW), Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), Massachusetts Peace Action (MAPA), Denver Justice and Peace Committee, Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), Pax Christi-Phoenix, Root Causes Initiative, Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), Stanford Central American Student Association, Promise Institute for Human Rights at UCLA School of Law, Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights at University of Cincinnati College of Law, Nicaragua Center for Community Action, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Justice Team, Fr. Bill O’Donnell Social Justice Committee, Colectivo Voces Ecologicas COVEC, Midnight Books, Peace Circle Salisbury, Alliance for Global Justice

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. Representatives Bush, Omar, García, Schakowsky, and Bowman have 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!