

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ABDUCTED IN HONDURAS

Two international volunteers, who were accompanying a Honduran community whose members are campaigning against a mining project, were recently abducted at gunpoint. Although released, the safety of both the community and the volunteers is at risk.

On 24 July **Orlane Vidal**, a French woman and **Daniel Langmeier**, a Swiss man, both working for the Honduras Accompaniment Project (Proyecto de Acompañamiento en Honduras – PROAH), met with the Nueva Esperanza community in the department of Atlántida to discuss protection issues and international accompaniment. Since 2012 community members campaigning against a local mining project have been threatened and harassed.

The two volunteers were staying with a family which is active in the campaign and has recently been intimidated. The next day, at 9:00am, seven heavily armed men approached the house. The men carried rifles, while some thirty other individuals carrying machetes surrounded the house. The armed men forced their way into the house, and ordered the volunteers to leave at gunpoint. Gunshots were heard in the surrounding area and the activists later learnt that the owner of the house had been followed by unknown individuals nearby. The armed men grew tense and loaded their weapons. They called the volunteers communists and members of the Resistance, and claimed that it was because of them that they could not work in mining.

Orlane Vidal and Daniel Langmeier were forced to leave on foot for the Nueva Esperanza community. Some of the men made threatening comments of a sexual nature towards Orlane Vidal. Once in Nueva Esperanza, their cameras and mobile phones were reviewed and photos of company vehicles deleted. The leader of the armed gang told the volunteers that if they came back they would be “disappeared in the woods”. The volunteers were then forced into a pickup truck, where they continued to be held at gunpoint by two heavily armed men. Those driving warned the volunteers not to talk publicly about what had happened. Eventually Orlane Vidal and Daniel Langmeier were released at a bus stop in Nueva Florida. They subsequently filed complaints to the authorities.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to immediately provide appropriate protection measures, in accordance with their wishes, to members of PROAH as well as to activists in the Nueva Esperanza area that are campaigning against mining.
- Calling on them to order a prompt, independent and thorough investigation into the abduction of and threats against Orlane Vidal and Daniel Langmeier and the family that hosted them, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 SEPTEMBER 2013 TO:

Public Prosecutor's Office

Ministerio Público, Lomas del Guijarro
Avenida República Dominicana,
Edificio Lomas Plaza II
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: +504 2221 5662 (say “tono de fax
por favor”) Twitter: @MP_Honduras

**Salutation: Dear Members of the
Intervening Committee**

Minister of Interior

Sr. Arturo Corrales
Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de
Seguridad, Plantel Casamata, subida al
Picacho,
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Fax: +504 2220 1756
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The two volunteers alerted the relevant local authorities of their visit as they arrived in Nueva Esperanza. During the abduction, however, there was no official intervention by the police.

PROAH is a project managed by the Friendship Office of the Americas, a US non-profit organization. PROAH has provided protective accompaniment for Honduran human rights defenders since 2010; volunteer delegates from Europe and North America accompany individuals and organizations believed to be at risk of attack in order to dissuade violence and increase respect for human rights.

In April 2012, two PROAH members were threatened by text message. See UA 136/12 (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR37/008/2012/en>)

Many communities – such as Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant and campesino (peasant farmer) communities – consider land, territory and natural resources as fundamental to their identity, culture and way of life. However, the expansion of mega-projects - such as the extractive industries - in Latin America has brought increased conflict over control of land and natural resources. Several recent cases of abuses and attacks against human rights defenders have taken place in these contexts. For more information, see Transforming Pain Into Hope: Human Rights Defenders in the Americas: AMR 01/006/2012, (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AMR01/006/2012/en>)

In Honduras, Amnesty International has documented an increase in the number of death threats and attacks against community leaders, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers, as affirmed in the above report. For further information, please see Public Statement AMR 37/007/2013 “Amnistía Internacional condena los recientes asesinatos de personas que defienden la justicia, la igualdad y los derechos humanos”, (<http://www.amnesty.org/es/library/info/AMR37/007/2013/es>).

Name: Orlane Vidal, Daniel Langmeier
Gender m/f: f, m

Further information on UA: 200/13 Index: AMR 37/008/2013 Issue Date: 30 July 2013