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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. _____

Honoring Juan López, a Honduran Catholic leader and human rights advocate murdered in the Tocoa municipality of the Bajo Aguán region of Honduras and commemorating one year since his assassination.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs. RAMIREZ submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Honoring Juan López, a Honduran Catholic leader and human rights advocate murdered in the Tocoa municipality of the Bajo Aguán region of Honduras and commemorating one year since his assassination.

Whereas Juan López was a courageous defender of human rights, a community leader in the department of Colón and Honduras, and an environmental activist;

Whereas López was a spiritual leader to many, a well respected individual within the Catholic Church, and an aide to the bishop of the local Catholic diocese;

Whereas in 2019, López won the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award;

Whereas López was recognized as “a well-known and respected environmental defender” in the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2024 published by the State Department;

Whereas, as a leader of the Comité Municipal de Defensa de los Bienes Comunes y Públicos, López opposed corruption and impunity and defended the land, and the land rights, of the people of the Bajo Aguán region;

Whereas López was a victim of wrongful imprisonment and false prosecution, having spoken out against corrupt government officials of the Tocoa municipality of such region;

Whereas on September 14, 2024, López was brutally assassinated by two men on a motorcycle, who shot López multiple times as he was leaving a chapel immediately after leading a prayer service;

Whereas Juan López was assassinated days after publicly calling for the resignation of Adán Fúnez, the mayor of Tocoa, following the publication of a video in which Fúnez and the brother-in-law of the President of Honduras discussed bribes with Honduran drug traffickers, some of whom have since been extradited and tried in the United States;

Whereas, although three individuals have been charged in connection with the killing of López, no charges have been levied against the masterminds behind the crime;

Whereas preliminary hearings relating to the assassination of Juan López have been postponed multiple times, and the investigation of additional conspirators continues;

Whereas land defenders and environmental activists within the communities of the Guapinol, Tocoa, and other mu-

municipalities in the Bajo Aguán region of Honduras, the majority of whom are women, endure recurring threats, attacks, arbitrary arrests, and assassinations;

Whereas, among such defenders and activists, the defenders of the Botaderos Mountain, Carlos Escaleras Mejía National Park in Honduras have been subjected to persistent harassment, criminalization, and assassination;

Whereas 6 other members of the Guapinol water defenders have been assassinated;

Whereas such assassinations and other crimes are intended to intimidate and silence those who oppose the operation of an open-pit iron oxide mine in the Botaderos Mountain and the project commonly referred to as the “Ecotek Thermoelectric Project”, which threaten the livelihoods of local communities and the environment of such region;

Whereas despite Honduran prosecutors formally accusing company leaders and local government officials connected to such open-pit iron oxide mine of illegally exploiting resources, abusing authority, and committing “environmental crimes” by mining in the national reserve, individuals residing in the area allege the mining has continued;

Whereas, in October 2023, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued precautionary measures for Juan López and others, to insist that the Government of Honduras protect individuals who are at severe and urgent risk of irreparable harm to their rights to life and safety;

Whereas the Government of Honduras made insufficient progress in implementing effective protective measures to save the life of Juan López and to protect communities and advocates in the Bajo Aguán region of Honduras;

Whereas the people of such region should not have to live in fear of powerful companies and corrupt government officials stealing their land, polluting their rivers, and murdering courageous leaders, such as Juan López and Berta Cáceres, for peacefully defending the natural resources that are rightfully theirs: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) honors the life and legacy of Juan López;

3 (2) grieves with his family and all those who
4 loved him;

5 (3) affirms its support for the establishment
6 of—

7 (A) a new commission against corruption
8 and impunity within the Government of Hon-
9 duras; and

10 (B) an international commission to provide
11 technical assistance (including scientific assist-
12 ance) for the investigation into the criminal
13 masterminds behind the murder of Juan López
14 and related judicial proceedings;

15 (4) commends the efforts of the Guapinol water
16 defenders and all those who struggle to protect the
17 land, environment, and communities in the Bajo
18 Aguán region threatened by corrupt interests;

19 (5) affirms its commitment to remembering the
20 enduring legacy of Juan López and ensuring the
21 Honduran people can live without fear of powerful

1 companies and corrupt government officials stealing
2 their land, polluting their rivers, and murdering cou-
3 rageous leaders for peacefully defending natural re-
4 sources; and

5 (6) calls on the United States Government to—

6 (A) work in solidarity with the people of
7 Honduras to build a more secure, democratic,
8 and prosperous country and expand opportuni-
9 ties for all Hondurans to live safe and fulfilling
10 lives; and

11 (B) increase engagement with, and support
12 for, communities in Honduras on the front lines
13 of defending human rights and democracy for
14 all, to ensure their voices and recommendations
15 inform any United States decision or action re-
16 lated to Honduras.