



The International Secretariat of the WFFP  
1 Station Road, Mowbray, Cape Town  
PO Box 13012, Mowbray 7705  
South Africa  
[www.worldfishers.org](http://www.worldfishers.org)  
[www.masifundise.org.za](http://www.masifundise.org.za)

---

1<sup>st</sup> of February 2015

To the president of the Republic of Honduras

Abog. Juan Orlando Hernandez  
Presidente República de Honduras  
Casa Presidencial, Boulevard Juan Pablo Segundo.  
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

### **An open letter to President Hernández**

Excellency: Mr. Juan Orlando Hernández, President of the Republic of Honduras.

Honorable Members of National Congress.

Mr. Mauricio Oliva, National Congress President.

The World Forum of Fishers Peoples (WFFP) is honored to send you respectful greetings and a message of solidarity with the country of Honduras, particularly with the artisanal fisher folks and all who are part of the small scale fisheries sector.

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP) is a mass-based social movement of small-scale fisher peoples from 32 countries across the world representing over 10 million fisher people. The WFFP was established in 1997 in response to the increasing pressure being placed on small-scale fisheries, including habitat destruction, anthropogenic pollution, evictions from coastal lands, and encroachment on small-scale fishing territories and overfishing by the large scale fishing fleets. In recent years climate change was added to the list of threats that WFFP addresses in its work.

The WFFP advocates for the rights of fisher people to access and manage fisheries resources for livelihoods, broader human rights needs and for the protection of natural biodiversity. WFFP also represents the interests of its constituencies at regional and international levels.

The Republic of Honduras, as a member of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has participated in the meetings of the FAO Committee on Fisheries from 2011 until the 31st. session held in June, 2014. The Republic of Honduras has contributed to the development and endorsement of the [International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication](#). The WFFP welcomes the adoption of these Guidelines.

We remind the Republic of Honduras that in endorsing these United Nations guidelines, it is obliged to (article 1.1):

- a) enhance the contribution of small-scale fisheries to food security;
- b) contribute to the equitable development of small-scale fishing communities and poverty eradication;
- c) promote the contribution of small-scale fisheries to an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for the Honduran people;

Furthermore, we are aware that the Republic of Honduras has committed to achieving these objectives through the promotion of a human rights-based approach by empowering small-scale fishing communities. This includes the empowerment of both men and women to participate in decision-making processes, and by placing particular emphasis on the needs and rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups (article 1.2).

The WFFP acknowledges that the Republic of Honduras has a unique opportunity to be one of the first countries in the world to implement the guidelines by applying the objectives and principles in the process of developing its fisheries and aquaculture legislation. Article 5A of the Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure is of particular relevance in order to ensure equitable access to fisheries resources for all small-scale fishers. This includes part-time fishers whose livelihoods and food security depend on their rights to coastal land tenure (including mangrove forests) and fisheries tenure.

By applying the guidelines in the development of new national legislation, the Republic of Honduras can ensure equitable tenure of land and fisheries, sustainable resource management, social development, cultural rights, employment generation through value chain development, gender equality and risk mitigation of natural disasters and weather changes.

In the context of tenure in fisheries, we urge the Republic of Honduras, through you as its President, to withdraw the proposal of introducing a transferable fishing quota system. Such systems have led to extreme concentration of fishing quotas, and hence access rights, in the hands of few large scale operators at the expense of the majority of fisher people. For a critical review of such systems the WFFP urge the president to examine [the Global Ocean Grab](#) – a publication by the WFFP and its partners.

The introduction of transferable quota systems in countries such as South Africa, New Zealand, Iceland, Chile, Namibia, Canada, and the UK has resulted in the mass loss of livelihoods. In the context of South Africa, the judge of the Equality High Court ruled that the South African fishing policy – which was based on a transferable quota system – contravened the constitution of the country and the human rights of fisher people. Likewise, in the context of Honduras it is unavoidable that transferable fishing quotas will result in violations of the rights of fisher people as enshrined in the small-scale fisheries guidelines. Indeed the Guidelines promote a shift away from individual transferable quota systems to more community based fishery regimes in the artisanal/small-scale sector.

In this context, the granting of boat licenses also resembles a transferable system, where the owners are free to sell, buy and lease their licenses. Such a system inevitable leads to a steep consolidation of fishing rights in the hands of a minority elite. Furthermore, the granting of aquaculture concessions – in particular in productive coastal areas such as mangrove forests where a vast number of people depends on the natural variety of food for mere survival and livelihoods – is one of biggest threats to fisher people as it leads to mass evictions of the rightful owners of the coastal lands; and it results in ecological massacre by destroying biological diversity; causing chemical pollution; and accelerating greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore the WFFP, congratulate and advise that the honorable Honduran rulers continue to pay considerable and careful attention to the governance of tenure of fisheries and refrain from implementing a system based on transferable quotas and boat licenses, and on industrial aquaculture concessions. Furthermore, the WFFP also remind the honorable Honduran rulers of the rights of fisher people to participate in decision-making processes, and emphasize the fundamental need to work in close cooperation with the Honduran member of the WFFP – the Association of Fisherfolk of the Gulf of Fonseca (APAGOLF); The Committee for the Defense and Development of Flora and Fauna of the Gulf of Fonseca in Honduras (CODEFFAGOLF) – and other groups of fisher people when developing new legislation.

We reiterate that the Republic of Honduras has a unique opportunity to develop new fisheries and aquaculture legislation that will be to the benefit of the masses of fisher peoples and their communities – instead of benefiting a minority elite.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Naseegh Jaffer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Naseegh Jaffer

General Secretary

The World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)

CC. the Association of Fisherfolk of the Gulf of Fonseca (APAGOLF)

CC. The Committee for the Defense and Development of Flora and Fauna of the Gulf of Fonseca in Honduras (CODEFFAGOLF), member of the WFFP

CC. Jorge Varela Márquez / Special Invitee of the WFFP

CC. File