
[International condemnation of the murder of indigenous leader Bertha Cáceres in Honduras](#)

PRESS RELEASE.

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4th March 2016, Planet Earth

Berta Cáceres, indigenous leader and spokesperson for more than 20 years of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras - Copinh), was murdered on 3rd March while she was resting in her home in La Esperanza, Intibucá, about 188 km from Tegucigalpa, by "unknown" gunmen.

Bertha Cáceres was a firm defender of small farmers and indigenous peoples' rights and an inspiring social activist, both at regional and continental level, in defense of social and environmental justice, particularly against mining megaprojects and hydropower plants.

She had warned many times about Free Trade Agreements as part of the machinery of impunity of transnational corporations. Bertha committed her life to health, land, against patriarchy and violence. She opposed the political golpe of 28th June 2009; COPINH denounced the golpe as an instrument of violence serving transnational corporations to exploit resources and to repress the dissent of social movements. Bertha also opposed US military bases on Lenca territory.

In April 2015, Bertha Cáceres was awarded with Goldman price, one of the most prestigious awards for environmental defenders. She was awarded for her hard work in defense of the Lenca territory against the Agua Zarca Hydropower Project of the Chinese transnational SINOHYDRO and national company Desarrollo Energético Sociedad Anónima (DESA).

Lenca people had been denouncing for years the violation of human right to water as source of life and culture by corporates, military and governmental actors.

Berta Cáceres was mother of four and was assigned precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) which were not accomplished by the state. Bertha has been assassinated by a state who protect the interests of local capital, transnational corporations who have spoiled the territory. Bertha's commitment in favour of life, of those most in need, was reason of several trials, investigations and threats against her.

The indigenous leader denounced many times death threats against her, and this was happening among a general violent context; 111 environmental activists in Honduras have been killed between 2002 and 2014, according to the 2014 report "**¿Cuántos más?**" of the ONG Global Witness. This makes Honduras the country with the highest rate of violence among the 17 countries analysed in the report. It also shows the architecture of impunity and violence of the large scale mining, of the hydroelectric business, among other activities in favour of private capital and complicit governments.

According to the Honduras-based organization ACI-PARTICIPA (Asociación para la participación ciudadana en Honduras) more than 90% of assassinations and abuses in the country remain unpunished.

We firmly demands to the government of Honduras:

- To put an end to impunity and proper investigation on the murder of Bertha Cáceres, as well as of all other social and environmental justice activists.
- To ensure the integrity, freedom and to respect Human Rights of Gustavo Castro de Soto and of Aureliano Molina.
- To suspend all projects that have been denounced by Human Rights defenders, among which the Hydropower plant Agua Zarca on Rio Blanco and the Blue Energy project on Rio Cangel.
- That corporations and finance institutions withdraw their support and investments from projects that have violated HHRR or where there has been no free prior and informed consultation, according to ILO Convention 169.
- To put an end to persecution and criminalization of Human Rights defenders and to accomplish with all precautionary measures for the integrity and safety of people.

We express our solidarity and extend our condolences to the family and close friends of Bertha Cáceres, to the Lenca people, and to the people of Honduras who suffer her irreparable loss.

Finally, we call for an international peoples' mobilization and immediate denounce of Bertha's assassination to the embassies and consulates of Honduras in our respective countries, to express our repudiation of such crimes and our firm demand of justice.

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(*) All signatures collected in the coming days will be used in all mobilizations at embassies and consulates of Honduras, as well as at the upcoming session of the UN Council of Human Rights next week in Geneva.

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