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[New report reveals the murder of Berta Cáceres was not an isolated incident. Join the petition for justice!!](#)

*(Disponible seulement en anglais et en [espagnol](#)). A research about Berta Cáceres case, done by International Advisory Group of Experts (GAIPE) has been launched on October 31st in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Berta was Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (COPINH) coordinator. She was killed on March 2nd 2016 due to her and COPINH's struggle in defense of water and life and against the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project. The research "Dam Violence. The plan that killed Berta Cáceres" concludes that Berta Cáceres murder is not an isolated incident but it is part of a wider plan that involves DESA Company, security companies working for DESA and some sectors inside Honduras State. **COPINH launched a petition to demand justice to the Honduran authorities** (Clic [here](#) to join the petition).*

### **Executive summary**

On March 2, 2016, armed men murdered human rights defender Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores, and shot Mexican environmental activist Gustavo Castro Soto in the town of La Esperanza, Department of Intibucá, Honduras. Their relatives and the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) immediately requested an independent investigation due to concerns that Honduran authorities would not identify the intellectual authors of the crime.

The relatives of Berta Cáceres and COPINH made this request before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the United Nations and many other national and international actors. Nevertheless, they were disregarded by the Honduran State.

In light of this inaction, the family and COPINH together with the Wide Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ), the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) and other national and international organizations, insisted on an investigation by a group of independent experts. As a result, in november 2016, the [International Advisory Group of Experts](#) (GAIPE) was created and its members are Dan Saxon, Roxanna Altholz, Miguel Ángel Urbina, Jorge Molano and Liliana Uribe-Tirado.

GAIPE has conducted four on-site visits to Honduras; interviewed more than thirty individuals, analyzed different reports by international human rights organizations; and reviewed ten criminal cases resulting from COPINH complaints as well as legal actions filed due to a lack of prior, free and informed consultation related to the Agua Zarca Project. Furthermore, GAIPE has had partial access to the evidence of the criminal investigation of Berta Isabel Cáceres' murder and the attempted assassination of Gustavo Castro.

Read [here](#) the full report.

Read [here](#) the **petition for justice**. Join the petition! Justice for Berta!!!

## The main findings

—Based on its analysis of the evidence, GAIPE has concluded that Berta Isabel Cáceres' murder is not an isolated incident.

—This report demonstrates that shareholders, executives, managers, and employees of Desarrollos Energéticos Sociedad Anónima (DESA), private security companies working for DESA; and public officials and State security agencies implemented different strategies to violate the right to prior, free and informed consultations of the Lenca indigenous people. The strategy was to control, neutralize and eliminate any opposition. These actions included:

—The instrumentalization of communities to rupture their social fabric; smear campaigns, infiltrations, surveillance, threats, contract killing, sabotage of COPINH's communication equipment; cooptation of justice officials and security forces, and strengthening of parallel structures to State security forces.

—The Secretariat of Security of Honduras fulfilled two roles. On one hand, it deployed personnel and resources for the protection of the Agua Zarca Project facilities, influenced by its relations with DESA's shareholders and executives. On the other hand, it failed to protect Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores, despite the serious and imminent threat to her life and integrity.

—The information reviewed by GAIPE also demonstrates that DESA lacked sufficient capital to build the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Project. The company appears to have used funds originating from the financial system to increase the levels of violence in the zone influence of the company and to systematically attack members of COPINH and Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores, among others.

—Based on its analysis, GAIPE has established the willful negligence by financial institutions such as the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), the Netherlands Development Finance Institution (FMO) and the Finnfund. These entities, through repeated complaints and reports by international consultants, had prior knowledge of the strategies undertaken by DESA. Nevertheless, they failed to implement appropriate, effective and timely measures to guarantee respect for the human rights of indigenous communities affected by the Agua Zarca dam, much less to protect the life and integrity of Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores. Nor did they make sufficient efforts to ensure the appropriate criminal investigations.

—With respect to the specific event on March 2, GAIPE established, with evidence that has been in the possession of the Public Prosecutor's Office since May 2, 2016, that the planning, execution and cover-up of Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores' murder started in November 2015. That period coincides with the mobilization of indigenous communities and COPINH in opposition to the Agua Zarca Project.

—During the months of January and February of 2016, several of the accused, together with unidentified individuals, carried out surveillance in the city of La Esperanza, Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores' place of residence and the location of COPINH's offices and headquarters. According to the evidence, on February 5 and February 6, 2016, there was an operation to commit the crime, in which several of the accused participated. However, for logistical reasons, the operation was "aborted."

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—According to the information analyzed by GAIPE, during the morning of March 2, 2016, at least four of the alleged perpetrators met in La Ceiba and travelled to the city of La Esperanza, Intibucá. Upon their arrival to La Esperanza, they carried out surveillance before committing the murder.

—Through analysis of the telephone call traffic between the accused, GAIPE concluded that other persons participated in the execution of the murder, but they have not yet been identified by the Public Prosecutor's Office.

—State officials in charge of the investigation constructed hypotheses lacking any foundation. They attributed Berta Cáceres' murder to a former partner, creating the connotation of a crime of passion. They also maintained that the attack arose from conflicts of interest from within COPINH.

—Moreover, by denying access to the criminal file, the Public Prosecutor's Office has prevented the timely and diligent participation of victims through their legal representative. This decision has limited access to documents, investigative actions and evidence related to the identification, prosecution and trial of other intellectual and material authors of Berta Cáceres' murder and Gustavo Castro's attempted murder.

—The failure to provide access to this information has also promoted impunity for criminal attacks against members of COPINH and Lenca communities that oppose the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Project.

—Despite the secrecy of the Public Prosecutor's investigation, GAIPE has been able to establish the participation of executives, managers and employees of DESA, of private security personnel hired by the company, of state agents and parallel structures to State security forces in crimes committed before, during and after March 2, 2016, the day of the assassination. Those crimes remain unpunished.

—In addition, based on telephone data analysis, it is possible to deduce that shareholders and executives of DESA maintained contact with authorities from the Secretariat of Security and the Preventive Police to ascertain details of the initial judicial proceedings related to the murder, even before the family of Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores or her legal representatives were informed. At the same time, it demonstrates that these actors exerted influence so that the initial proceedings targeted members of COPINH or persons who were close to Berta.