

via fax: 011 504 2239 3298 Sr. Presidente Sr. Juan Orlando Hernández President of Honduras	via fax: via fax: 011 504 2221 5667 Sr. Fiscal Óscar Fernando Chinchilla Attorney General of Honduras
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March 7, 2016

Dear Sirs:

It is with heavy sadness in our hearts and soaring indignation that we write to express our profound anger and frustration at the news that indigenous leader and human rights defender **Berta Cáceres** was assassinated March 2 at 11:45 pm in her hometown of La Esperanza in Intibucá Department. At least two individuals shot and killed her after breaking down the door of the house where she was staying for the evening in the Residencial La Libano. Cáceres is survived by her four children, ages 26, 24, 23 and 21 and her mother.

Berta Cáceres was a Co-founder and Coordinator of the Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). She spent her life fighting in defense of indigenous land rights and natural resources. In the last few weeks, violence and repression towards Berta Cáceres, COPINH, and the communities they support, had escalated. On February 20 Berta Cáceres, COPINH, and the community of Rio Blanco faced threats and repression as they carried out a peaceful action to protect the River Gualcarque against the construction of a hydroelectric dam by the internationally-financed Honduran company DESA. On February 25 another Lenca community supported by COPINH in Guise, Intibuca, was violently evicted and destroyed. As a result of COPINH's work supporting the Rio Blanco struggle, Berta Cáceres had received countless threats against her life and was granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights. However, she was not receiving protection on the night of her murder.

In 2015 Berta Cáceres received the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize after she led a peaceful campaign to stop one of the world's largest dam builders from pursuing the Agua Zarca Dam, which threatened to cut off the ethnic Lenca people from water, food and medicine.

According to the international non-governmental organization Global Witness, Honduras has become the deadliest country in the world for environmentalists. Between 2010 and 2014, 101 environmental campaigners were killed. The perpetrators of these crimes operate with total impunity. We are calling for an end to this violence and oppression against human rights and environmental activities. We **strongly urge** that you

- carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the murder of Berta Cáceres, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the employees, members and activists working with COPINH;
- guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Honduras are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai and Christine Stonebraker-Martínez
Co-Coordinators