

Lic. Rolando Edgardo Argueta Pérez
 President of the Supreme Court of Justice
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras
presidencia@poderjudicial.gob.hn

June 23, 2021

Dear Supreme Court President Argueta:

We are hopeful that the trial of **David Castillo, charged with the March 2, 2016 assassination of indigenous environmental defender Berta Cáceres**, be free of political influence. Berta Cáceres was the co-founder of COPINH (Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras). The trial of David Castillo is expected to conclude within the next two weeks.

David Castillo is a former military intelligence officer and chief executive officer of DESA (Desarrollos Energéticos S.A.). Prior to this current trial, on Nov. 29, 2018, five paid assassins and two former DESA executives were convicted of murdering Berta Cáceres. Three other ongoing prosecutions are related to fraud and abuse of power in the granting of the permits and contracts for the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Project on the Río Gualcarque, a sacred ancestral waterway of the indigenous Lenca community in Intibucá Department.


Despite lobbying and public relations efforts intended to obscure the facts, the evidence indicating that David Castillo directly participated in the murder of Berta Cáceres is conclusive. Given the emblematic nature of, and international focus on this crime, holding both material and intellectual authors accountable is essential for progress in addressing impunity in Honduras and ensuring the protection of Hondurans who are active in organizing environmental and indigenous defense.

The extensive and detailed evidence submitted in this trial (and related prosecutions) demonstrates that David Castillo was part of a criminal structure that engaged in a range of crimes, including financial crimes and violence. Besides his trial for the murder of Berta Cáceres, David Castillo is also one of six people awaiting trial for corruption charges related to the construction of the Agua Zarca project. COPINH, whose membership includes indigenous Lenca farmers who organized (with the assistance of Berta Cáceres) to stop the hydroelectric project, has been unduly excluded from the legal process as victims.

We strongly urge that you

- ensure that the judges overseeing the trial of David Castillo's be able to make their decision without pressure from powerful actors interested in swaying the verdict and obscuring the truth about the intellectual authors of this crime
- ensure that COPINH be permitted to be included in any future legal proceedings involving David Castillo and DESA, as is their right under Honduran law

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinators


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Blanca Sarai Izaguirre Lozano, National Commissioner for Human Rights (CONADEH) ~ via email
 Lica. Karla Eugenia Cueva Aguilar, Secretary for Human Rights ~ via email
 Oscar Chinchilla Banegas, Attorney General ~ via email
 Luis Suazo Barahona, Ambassador of Honduras to the US ~ via email and US mail
 Joel Hernández, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
 Antonia Urrejola Noguera, Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via email and US mail
 Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
 Coalición Contra La Impunidad Honduras ~ via email
 COPINH: Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Colleen Hoey, Chargé d'Affaires; Nate Rettenmayer, Political Officer ~ via email
 US State Dept: Honduras Desk ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

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The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: