

March 3, 2016

Assassination of Berta Cáceres sparks outrage

We condemn the assassination of Berta Cáceres, general coordinator and co-founder of the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras. Berta was assassinated in La Esperanza, Intibuca after several individuals broke into the house where she was staying and shot and killed her.

An Indigenous Lenca women and community leader, Berta waged a grassroots campaign that successfully pressured the world's largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam. Just last month, COPINH issued an alert noting that repression and violence against the Rio Blanco community, including Berta Cáceres had escalated as they carried out peaceful actions to protect the River Gualcarque against the construction of a hydroelectric dam by the internationally-financed Honduran company DESA. Due to the violence against her she was granted precautionary measures by the InterAmerican Commission for Human Rights.

Berta Cáceres was recognized nationally and internationally as an environmentalist who fought for Indigenous rights. In 2015 she was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize, the highest international recognition for environmental activists. As part of her recognition speech she spoke of the repression she faced, "they follow me, they threaten to kill me and kidnap my family, this is what we face".

Berta was also instrumental in leading protests against the 2009 coup that overthrew the democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya. Since the coup the human rights situation in Honduras has deteriorated as human rights defenders and social movement leaders are routinely killed and systematically criminalized.

On October 1, 2014, Canada implemented a Free Trade Agreement with Honduras despite opposition from civil society and labour organizations. The deal provided diplomatic and economic backing to an undemocratic government responsible for widespread human rights abuses, political violence that has generated massive inequality.

We call on the government of Canada to condemn the murder, and to call on the Honduran government to support an independent, international investigation into the murder.

Alternatives

ALBA capitulo Canada

Amnesty International Canada

Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network

British Columbia Government and Service Employees' Union

British Columbia Teachers' Federation

Bolivarian Circle Louis Riel

Canada-El Salvador Cooperation for Development

Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Canadian Union of Public Employees

CoDevelopment Canada

Colombia Action Solidarity Alliance
Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine
Common Frontiers
Confédération des syndicats nationaux
Confederation of Canadian Unions
Council of Canadians
Idle No More
Inter Pares
Kairos: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
Latin American and Caribbean Solidarity Network
Latin American Canadian Solidarity Association
Maquila Solidarity Network
Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network
MiningWatch Canada
Mining Injustice Solidarity Network
Movimiento Farabundista
Peace and Justice Center of Eastern Maine
Public Service Alliance of Canada
Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation
Ontario Public Service Employees Union
Rights Action
Sierra Club Canada Foundation
United Church of Canada
United for Mining Justice
United Steelworkers
Unifor

For more information or to sign on contact:

Raul Burbano - Common Frontiers, 416 522 8615, burbano@rogers.com
Amelia Orellana - CDHAL - 514 257 8710 poste 334, solidared@cdhal.org