

March 8, 2016



To the government of Honduras,

We, the participants and organizers of the World Indigenous Summit on Environment and Rivers (WISER), are devastated about the death of Berta Cáceres Flores, co-founder of the grassroots organization Copinh, and defender of the rivers, lands, and culture of the Lenca people. Berta was assassinated in her hometown of La Esperanza following a sustained campaign of harassment and threats attempting to stop her involvement in protecting indigenous and environmental rights in Honduras.

In 2015 Berta Cáceres won the Goldman Environmental Prize, the world's leading environmental award, for her leadership in a grassroots campaign that successfully pressured the world's largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam. In her award speech Berta said, "The Gualcarque River has called upon us, as have gravely threatened rivers around the world. We must answer their call. Our Mother Earth - militarized, fenced in, poisoned, a place where basic rights are systematically violated - demands that we take action." Her death comes at a time when Lenca communities are being violently forced from their land and the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project, defeated in 2013, has resurfaced, threatening to destroy the livelihoods and territories of the Lenca people.

We, the signatories, had the honor to meet and work with Berta in October 2015 for the World Indigenous Summit on Environment and Rivers (WISER), where international indigenous leaders opposing dams gathered in Sarawak, Malaysia to build solidarity and community. Berta told WISER delegates that the military, paramilitaries, police, and hitmen were regularly sent into Lenca territory: "Ten members of our organization have been murdered; four of them for defending the Gualcarque River". During the week-long summit the exchange between participants revealed the same threats and enemies to indigenous territories around the world. Traditional practices and territories are threatened by dams, extractive mining, logging concessions, monocultural expansion, and faulty carbon credit projects that result in so-called "development" for the already wealthy elite.

We join human rights organizations from around the world to demand an investigation into the circumstances surrounding her assassination. We demand that the Honduran government:

- Conduct a prompt and thorough investigation into the murder of Berta Cáceres, as well as the murders of other social and environmental justice activists, and bring those responsible for her death to justice.
- Stop all projects that have been denounced by human rights defenders, specifically the Agua Zarca hydropower dam on Rio Blanco, and the Blue Energy project on Rio Cangel.
- Immediately release Gustavo Castro Soto and guarantee his safe return to Mexico.

- End its campaign of persecution and criminalization against human rights defenders, and guarantee protection for Berta's family, all members of Copinh, and

We deeply admire Berta for her great courage and strength. She knew that her life was in danger, and continued to fight for the rights of indigenous people and to protect the land and rivers. We stand in solidarity with the people of Honduras who bravely continue the fight to which she devoted her life.

Signed,

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