
STAND IN **SOLIDARITY**

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ACTIVISTS TO EUROPE

SOLIDARITY MISSION | Factsheet 2016



APRIL 19
- MAY 5

EUROPE

BERTA CÁCERES
1971 - 2016
(ASSASSINATED)



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Berta Cáceres.
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From April 19 to May 5 a delegation of four Indigenous Lenca activists from Honduras will be visiting five European countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Finland, Germany and Spain) to engage with policy makers and NGOs, join national protests at financiers and talk to the media and general public about repression and impunity in their country. They will be coming to Europe in order to denounce the murder of Indigenous and human rights leader Berta Cáceres, call on Dutch development bank FMO and Finland-based FinnFund to withdraw from the Agua Zarca project, and call on the EU to suspend funding to Honduras, given the ongoing persecution and murders of members of environmental and human rights organisations.

MURDER OF BERTA CÁCERES

On March 2, 2016, Berta Cáceres, the internationally-renowned Honduran human rights and environment defender and Lenca indigenous people's leader, was murdered, after leading struggle for several years against a hydroelectric project along the Gualcarque River. In 2015, Berta had won the Goldman Environmental Prize for her fearless work to defend the Gualcarque River, its surrounding environment and local people against the Agua Zarca Dam hydropower project. The Gualcarque River is sacred to the Lenca people, and the dam's construction threatens to partly divert three kilometres of the river, endangering the Lenca's water resources and livelihood. Berta's organisation, COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) was fighting to stop the dam's construction at the time of her assassination. Prior to her murder, Berta had been given a prison sentence by the Honduran government for opposing the Agua Zarca project and had been repeatedly threatened, placed under surveillance, and persecuted for her opposition to the project.

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INTIMIDATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

According to research carried out by Global Witness,¹ at least two people are killed every week globally for taking a stand against environmental destruction. At least 116 environmental activists were murdered in 2014, of whom an astonishing 40 percent were indigenous people. The actual number is likely to be much higher. Most of the activists were killed in disputes over hydropower, mining and agri-business. Of these known murders, three quarters had taken place in Central and South America.

Since the 2009 military coup in Honduras, death threats, assassination and systematic targeting of environmental and human rights activists in Honduras has become widespread. Over one hundred known land and environmental defenders were murdered in Honduras between 2002 and 2014, making it the most dangerous country in the world for environmental activists.

Since 2013, three other Indigenous Lenca people have been killed during the struggle against the Agua Zarca project, including Tomás Garcia, who was fatally shot by an army officer at close range. Other community members have been violently attacked and threatened for opposing the dam. The murders of Berta Cáceres and the other COPINH members are not isolated incidents. They fit seamlessly into a larger pattern of financial and commercial interests being prioritised above the interests of people and the environment.

THE AGUA ZARCA HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT

On April 1, 2013, the COPINH community of Rio Blanco began a blockade, preventing the dam company from reaching the Gualcarque River and blocking construction of the dam. The continued protest and serious conflicts that took place between the developer and local communities caused Chinese firm Sinohydro, the world's largest dam builder, to cancel its contract agreement with the project in 2013. However, Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA), the Honduran company and promoter of the project, continued its involvement and sought out financiers and participating companies, including the Dutch development bank FMO, the Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation (Finnfund), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI), and Voith Hydro (Siemens/Voith), who will supply turbines to the project.

There was no free, prior, and informed consultation of the Lenca people regarding the project or its revisions, as is required by international law on projects affecting Indigenous land and resources. Over time, COPINH has repeatedly contacted FMO requesting that they do not fund the Agua Zarca Project: sending letters explaining that the project sponsor had not obtained the required free, prior, and informed consent of the indigenous Lenca people affected by the project and stating that there are problems with the land titles obtained. COPINH specifically explained in the letters that the project had resulted in repression and threats against them, culminating in the fabricated criminal charges against Berta and the murder of Tomás Garcia.

The letters also drew specific attention to the increasing number of human rights violations and militarisation resulting from the Agua Zarca project. Despite this, out of the three letters sent between October 2013 and April 2014, FMO responded to only one, and failed to respond adequately to the concerns raised. During their 'due diligence' visit to Honduras in October 2013, FMO did not meet with the communities opposed to the project in Rio Blanco, but met with individuals invited by DESA at meetings set up by DESA. This clearly does not constitute proper consultation of affected people.

On March 16, 2016, following the news that Nelson Garcia, another member of COPINH, had been assassinated (despite the international spotlight being on Honduras following Berta's murder), both FMO and Finnfund (and subsequently CABEI, the third financier) announced that they would temporarily suspend all disbursements towards the Agua Zarca project. It is however unclear whether this suspension will, or even can, lead to a permanent withdrawal from contractual obligations.

DEMANDS

COPINH, together with EU based NGOs, demands that following the murder of Berta Cáceres after years of violence and intimidation in relation to the Agua Zarca project, international companies and financiers, specifically FMO, Finnfund, CABEI and Voith Hydro (Siemens/Voith), immediately withdraw all support and funding from the Agua Zarca project, and end any ongoing or prospective involvement in any other project impacting the indigenous Lenca in Honduras.

We further demand an independent investigation, led by a commission of experts from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, into Berta's murder, that takes into account the death threats Berta received for her defence of Lenca territory and rivers and includes the investigation of possible links with the 'Agua Zarca' hydroelectric project and companies involved in it.

Given Berta's murder and the widespread persecution and repression against Indigenous, environmental, and human rights organisations in Honduras, we also call on the European Union to review the human rights clauses in its aid to Honduras and take action to suspend security aid to Honduras.

Finally, we call on all governments and the international community to monitor, investigate and punish these crimes, and for Honduras to be held accountable for abuses in the upcoming review of its human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council.

FOOTNOTE:

1 www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/how-many-more/


THE HONDURAN DELEGATION IS MADE UP OF:

Bertha Zúñiga Caceres, daughter of Berta Caceres, and COPINH member. Bertha has been working tirelessly to demand justice for her mother's assassination and continue her mother's struggle.

Francisco Javier Sanchez, President of the Indigenous Council of Rio Blanco and COPINH leader in Rio Blanco, directly affected by the Agua Zarca Project. Francisco has received numerous death threats and been subject to surveillance for his leadership opposing the dam.

Rosalina Dominguez, Indigenous Council of Rio Blanco and COPINH leader in Rio Blanco. Rosalina is directly affected by the Agua Zarca Project as her family's crops were destroyed on land wanted for the project. Rosalina is also the sister-in-law of Tomas Garcia who was murdered by the Honduran military during a protest against the dam.

Jose Asencion Martinez, COPINH leader elected to the General Coordination of COPINH. Jose has been a part of COPINH for 20 years and dedicates himself to advancing the rights of the Lenca people. Jose Asencion frequently traveled with Berta Caceres to Rio Blanco for the struggle against the Agua Zarca Dam.

Brigitte Gynther, School of Americas Watch. Brigitte documents human rights violations and militarization in Honduras and has extensively documented the human rights violations, death threats, and militarization surrounding the Agua Zarca Dam.

APRIL 19 - MAY 5

SCHEDULE (please note that the delegation might split, so can be in 2 countries at the same date)

EUROPE
BRUSSELS: April 18-21

Contact person: anne.vanschaik@foeeurope.org
Program **Wednesday, April 20th, 12.30-1.15 PM**

- Manifestation at Honduran embassy, Etterbeek, 1040 Etterbeek
- Hearing in the European Parliament on the role of EU financiers in relation to landgrabbing companies: 3-5 PM, Location: European Parliament, (please note you need to register to attend, contact Anne.vanschaik@foeeurope.org)
- Public evening with Brussels based NGO and activists: 6.30-8 PM, Location: Mundo B, Rue D'Edimbourg 26, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

NETHERLANDS: April 20-25

Contact person: Johan Frijns: johan@banktrack.org
Program: **Friday April 22nd, 2 PM**

- Demonstration outside FMO ; Friday April 22nd. In front of FMO headquarters, Anna van Saksenlaan 71, 2593 HW Den Haag

Monday April 25th: Public debate: Honduras in focus: The struggle of human rights defenders.

Mon 25 April 8 PM:

- Studio/K, Timorplein 62, 1094 CC Amsterdam, Netherlands

FINLAND: April 26th, May 1st

Contact person: meri.mononen.matias@gmail.com
Program: **Wednesday, 27th of April, 9-10 AM:**

- Press conference at Seurakuntientalo, Kolmas linja 22, 00530 Helsinki
- 10-1 PM: Helsinki University Social Forum Dialogue in Cooperation with the World Politics and the Development Studies at Seurakuntientalo, Kolmas linja 22, 00530 Helsinki

Day 2: **28th of April Thursday**

- demonstrations, meetings and memorial service for Berta

- 10.00-12.00 Meeting with parliamentarians and Foreign ministry, academics at the Faculty of Political Science hall - open to media.
- Meetings with minister Toivakka? - eg. Foreign ministry joint department meeting, responsible for owner governance Janne Sykkö coordinates
- 16.00 The Thee Smith -statue in central Helsinki - demonstrations and info leaflets to public. Photos to international actors in this well recognizable spot
- 17.00 The Memorial Service for Berta Cáceres and other defenders? hosted by her excellency the Ambassador of Venezuela including a get together in the congregation space in order to share

GERMANY: May 2nd-5th

Contact person: thilo.papacek@gegenstroemung.org
Program: **Berlin May 2nd**

- Lunch Talk, Where?

Munich May 3rd, 7-9 PM

- Public evening with NGO and Activists, Location: Eine Welt Haus Where?

SPAIN: May 2-May 6

Contact person: Aljendro Gonzales:clima.energia@tierra.org
Program: **Tuesday, 3rd of March 18.30-20.30**

Wednesday, May 4th

- Action in front of Siemens, Valencia

Thursday, May 5th

- Presentation of a prize, awarded posthumously to Berta Cáceres Flores, will be accepted by Bertha's daughter at the movie festival in Zaragoza <http://festivalecozine.es/>