
STAND IN **SOLIDARITY**

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MISSION OF **HONDURAN**
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 Members of Parliament, policy makers and NGOs, discuss with financiers, join national protests at financiers and talk to media and the general public about the 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, call on the German companies Siemens and Voith to give up their plan to sell turbines to 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 leader, was murdered, after leading for several years the struggle against a hydroelectric project along the Gualcarque River. In 2015, Berta won the Goldman Environmental Prize for her fearless work to defend the Gualcarque River, its surrounding environment and local people against the Agua Zarca 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 water resources and livelihoods of the Lenca people. Berta's organisation, COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) was fighting to stop the construction of the project 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 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 agribusiness. 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 former Lenca leader Tomás García, who was fatally shot by an army officer at close range. Other community members have been violently attacked and threatened for opposing the project. 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 new 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), the company that will supply the turbines, generators and automation technology 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 the last few years COPINH has repeatedly contacted FMO insisting that they do not fund the Agua Zarca project, as the project sponsor had not obtained the required free, prior, informed consent of the indigenous Lenca people, and because land titles had not been properly obtained. COPINH also

explained in their letters that the project resulted in continuous repression and threats against them, culminating in the fabricated criminal charges against Berta and the murder of Tomás García.

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 latest '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 García, 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 eventually lead to a permanent withdrawal from the project.

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 that 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 CONSISTS OF:

Bertha Zúñiga Cáceres, daughter of Berta Cáceres, 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 project.

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 project.

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 Cáceres to Rio Blanco for the struggle against the Agua Zarca project.

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 project.

APRIL 19 - MAY 5

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

EUROPE
BRUSSELS: April 20

Contact person: anne.vanschaik@foeeurope.org

Wednesday, 20 April:

- **12.30-13.15:** Manifestation at Honduran embassy.
Location: Honduran embassy, Etterbeek, 1040 Etterbeek
- **15.00-17.00:** Hearing in the European Parliament on the role of EU financiers in relation to landgrabbing companies.
Location: European Parliament
- **18.30-20.00:** Public evening with Brussels based NGO and activists.
Location: Mundo B, Rue D'Edimbourg 26, 1050 Brussels, Belgium

NETHERLANDS: April 22, 25-26

Contact person: Johan Frijns: johan@banktrack.org

Friday, 22 April:

- **14.00:** Demonstration in front of FMO headquarters.
Location: FMO headquarters, Anna van Saksenlaan 71, 2593 HW Den Haag

Monday, 25 April:

- **20.00:** Public debate: Honduras in focus: The struggle of human rights defenders.
Location: Studio/K, Timorplein 62, 1094 CC Amsterdam

Monday / Tuesday April 25, 26:

Contact person: a.vanojik@bothends.org

- Meetings with Ministry, FMO and Parliament

FINLAND: April 27, 29-30 / May 1

Contact person: meri.mononen.matias@gmail.com

Wednesday, 27 April:

- **09.00:** Press conference
Location: Seurakuntialato, Kolmas linja 22, 00530 Helsinki
- **10.00-16.00:** Conference: "Lenca People's Fight for Existence and Finnfund" University Social Forum Dialogue in Cooperation with the World Politics and the Development Studies.
Location: Seurakuntialato, Kolmas linja 22, 00530 Helsinki

- **17.00:** Demonstration for Human Rights defenders Berta Cáceres, Jyri Jaakkola and Bety Cariño murdered in 2010
Location: Mexican Embassy

- **17.30:** Activist meeting
Location: Amnesty Finland, Hietaniemenkatu 7A, 00100 Helsinki

Thursday, 28 April

- **13.00:** Demonstration against Finnfund
Location: 3 Smiths' statue, Kolmen Sepän Patsas, Helsinki
pls check time <https://merimononenmatias.wordpress.com/>

Friday, 29 April

- **16.30:** The Memorial Service for Berta Cáceres
Location: Mäntytie 2, 00270 Helsinki

Saturday, 30 April

- **11.00-13.00:** Meeting with ONGs
Location: Peace Station, Veturitori 3, 00520 Helsinki

GERMANY: May 2-5

Contact person: thilo.papacek@gegenstroemung.org

2 May (Berlin)

- Lunch Talk
Location: Brot für die Welt, Caroline-Michaelis-Straße 1, 10115 Berlin

3 May (Munich)

- **19.00-21.00:** Public evening with NGO and Activists.
Location: Eine Welt Haus, Schwanthalerstraße 80, 80336 Munich

SPAIN: May 3-5

A Spanish leaflet is available which has all the activities listed. If you wish to receive a copy please contact: Alejandro Gonzales from Amigos de la Tierra España at: clima.energia@tierra.org.