

## **CAWN Statement on the murder of Berta Cáceres, supported by WIDE+ and others**

Sadness fills our hearts with the news of the loss of a great woman, a fighter, someone who loved her land and her people and did all she could to protect what she thought precious.

Berta Cáceres was a renowned Honduran environmentalist, a Lenca woman, leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH). She was awarded last year's Goldman Environmental Prize for leading the resistance against the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Project in Río Blanco, a World Bank and FMO-Dutch Development Bank funded-project which threatens to cut off a vital water source for hundreds of indigenous Lenca people and could have devastating effects for the community.

Berta Cáceres had experienced constant harassment for her activism, which only grew worse after the 2009 coup d'état. She received threats from thugs and from members of the Honduran security forces; she was the victim of judicial harassment and of false accusations. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights had demanded protection measures for Berta. She was aware of the danger she faced by remaining in Honduras; she knew that she had enemies who would have preferred her dead or in exile, but she stayed to defend her land and her people. She chose not to give up.

In the middle of the night on March 3, those fears became real. Berta Cáceres was assassinated in her home in La Esperanza, Intibucá.

This is not an isolated story. Criminalisation of activists and journalists in Honduras is widespread, and numerous national and international organisations have denounced the difficulties and danger that are faced daily by activists in Honduras. Soon after the news of Berta's murder became widespread, the local police suggested that the incident was the result of a robbery, in what could seem to be an attempt to dismiss the possibility of this being a politically motivated crime.

The signatories of this letter demand the Honduran government to:

- Allow and support an independent investigation into Berta's death. The truth cannot be silenced, and those responsible for the death of Berta Cáceres must be made accountable for their crime;
- Extend protection to all members of COPINH, who have suffered threats and aggression over many years, for their legitimate human rights work;
- Ensure the safety of the Mexican activist Gustavo Castro Soto, director of Otros Mundos AC Chiapas, injured in the attack on Berta Cáceres and witness to the crime.
- Suspend all projects in the Gualcarque River and depart from the Lenca territory, where too many innocent people have been victims of repression and violence for opposing these projects.

We raise our voices to the chorus of voices across the world demanding justice for Berta Cáceres, for COPINH, for the Honduran people. The Honduran government must no longer look away while human rights defenders are killed and threatened, but step up to protect these valiant activists, clamp down on the attacks against them, and punish those who try to silence their voices.

Berta Cáceres was a great woman, and we will carry her memory in our hearts.

**Berta Vive, la lucha sigue!  
Berta Lives, the fight continues!**

