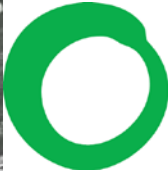




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**Open Letter to Ambassador Mary Elizabeth Flores Flake,  
Permanent Representative of Honduras to the United Nations,  
Condemning the Assassination of Berta Cáceres**

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
International Women's Day

Your Excellency Ambassador Mary Elizabeth Flores Flake;

On the occasion of International Women's Day, we, the undersigned international human rights, environmental, social justice and Indigenous Peoples' organizations, strongly condemn the murder of our colleague, indigenous leader, feminist and human rights defender Berta Cáceres on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 in La Esperanza, Intibucá, Honduras. We are profoundly concerned about how Honduran authorities are handling the investigation and the safety of key leaders within COPINH and other members of civil society directly linked to the case.

The brutal assassination of Berta Cáceres is by no means an isolated event but part of the pattern of systematic flagrant state and corporate violence against women, Indigenous Peoples, peasants, human rights defenders and the people of Honduras, which has escalated dramatically since the coup d'état in 2009. We demand an immediate end to the state and corporate violence and corresponding impunity; in particular, we demand an end to the femicides; gender-based violence; violence against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and trans people and the silent genocide against the Indigenous Peoples of Honduras. We call for a return to the rule of law and real democracy in Honduras.

Together we:

- Emphatically denounce the murder of Berta Cáceres as a politically motivated assassination and urge the Honduran government to desist in suggesting that this is a robbery or "crime of passion."
- Denounce the Honduran government's mishandling of the investigation into Berta's murder
- Denounce the detention of Aureliano Molina Villanueva, member of COPINH and urge the Honduran authorities to take every measure to ensure the safety and security of members of COPINH

- Urge the Honduran authorities to provide safe return to Mexico of Gustavo Castro.

We demand that the Honduran government:

- Initiate a transparent investigation into Berta's death, including the identification of the material and intellectual authors of this crime.
- Agree to and cooperate with an independent investigation into Berta's murder by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and other international experts.
- Release Gustavo Castro and guarantee his safety and his return to Mexico.
- Abide by and enforce the precautionary measures granted to Gustavo Castro, members of COPINH and Berta's family who are currently under threat.
- Suspend all projects in the Rio Gualcarque, in particular, those managed by DESA, and depart Lenca territory, where many innocent lives have been lost or destroyed for opposing these projects.
- Urgently review all cases where Indigenous Peoples and rural communities are rejecting the construction of dams, megaprojects, model cities, agrofuel plantations, carbon offsets like the Clean Development Mechanism and REDD and other large-scale projects and take action to prevent violence and heed the demands of these communities.
- Stop criminalizing and persecuting human rights defenders and social justice activists.
- Implement and protect human rights enshrined in international instruments, including women's and Indigenous Peoples rights in particular.

Berta Cáceres was murdered as a result of her environmental justice and human rights work. The Honduran government is fully aware of the fact that she received constant death threats for her work in defense of the Lenca People up to the days prior to her murder, including many occasions in which the military, police and other government officials were directly involved. Nonetheless, the Honduran government failed to implement the precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on human rights.

We call on Honduras to demonstrate to the international community that you are serious about ending a pattern of impunity and attacks against environmental and human rights defenders by allowing and facilitating an independent and thorough investigation into the assassination of Berta Cáceres. Lastly, we express our unconditional support to the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). The world is watching.

Signed by:

OFRANEH – Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña

Friends of the Earth- US

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Indigenous Environmental Network

Global Justice Ecology Project – GJEP

cc

- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
- United Nations Human Rights Council
- Commission on the Status of Women
- United Nations Expert Mechanism on Indigenous Peoples
- United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
- Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination
- Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples,
- Special Rapporteur on violence against women
- Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights