

Rights Action
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HONDURAS - Berta Cáceres, And Other COPINH Members, Targets Of Legal-Political Persecution

Criminalization Continues Against Leaders Of COPINH And Lenca Indigenous Communities As They Defend Their Natural Resources And Way Of Life

Judge Lissien Knight, of the First Court of Letters in Honduras, has issued an arrest warrant for Berta Cáceres, general coordinator of COPINH (Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations in Honduras), who is to be held without bail pending trial. Judge Knight also ordered that two other members of COPINH - Tomas Gomez and Aureliano Molina – remain free with restrictive conditions, pending the same trial.

All three are facing trumped up charges laid by the DESA corporation (on behalf of SINOHYDRO, a Chinese company trying to build a hydro-electric dam) and the Honduran Public Ministry, due to COPINH's support for communities of Lenca campesinos who have been peacefully protesting, for over 5 months, the illegal construction of a hydro-electric dam project that will harm their rivers, water sources, flood basin, lands and communities.

At this time, Berta Cáceres is not in custody, but can be jailed at any time. Ominously, Judge Knight has ordered the forced eviction of the communities peaceful roadblock.

Declaration By Berta Cáceres After The Issuing Of The Arrest Warrant For "Preventative Prison"

"I declare myself a politically persecuted (person) as a "prisoner of conscience." (Berta Cáceres)



"Thank you for the gestures of national and international solidarity, of the determined mobilization of COPINH, of sister organizations and progressive social and political forces that have added their weight to the struggle of COPINH. We condemn the decision of the Court, of

Judge Lissien Liseth Knight Reyes who followed the order of the DESA corporation, knowing she was pressured to do so from above, that DESA controlled this resolution.

This is the "justice" we have in Honduras.

We reject the resolution, the charges and the accusations. It is clear that the "crime" is for defending the rivers, the waters, preventing the common goods (of nature) from falling into the hands of private companies. DESA has come in on the basis of an illegal and illegitimate concession issued by the National Congress and implemented by SERNA, concessions issued with complete illegality. We see in this tremendous injustice the hand of the Adjunct Attorney General Rogoberto Cuellar. Despite the decision we retain our dignity, our heads held high. They will not stop the process of emancipatory struggle in defense of the territories, the river and the spirituality of the Lenca people. They are mistaken if they think that through this resolution they will stop the struggle of the Lenca people.

They say it is a crime to shout slogans, extend our banners, that we are agitators of masses, that the poems on our Webpage are an incitement. The (prosecuting) lawyer Cantillana is racist in his accusations. He refers to the indigenous people as ignorant and we condemn his racism.

The resolution was announced to (our) lawyer Victor Fernández who is himself being accused of the same in Atlántida, and by that means they are trying to render us defenseless.

They ordered an eviction and we would like to ask the Judge Knight: What were you thinking to order the eviction? How can a people be evicted from their own territory when the State is obliged to guarantee and respect their territory and life? We are in contact with international institutions that denounce this expulsion (of Lenca people) from their own territory. We also condemn the military presence in the area by means of Operation "Freedom."

We make a call to the national and international community, to the indigenous communities in particular to a great campaign of struggle in defense of the culture and the spirituality, because we will not go back. Where we are we will continue ahead, holding to what was taught to us by Lempira.

I declare myself a "politically persecuted" (person) as a "prisoner of conscience". This is not disconnected from the context. By this means they are encircling us. The judicial struggle is one of the forms of the struggle. Raising our capacity to mobilize is another. We will extend the territorial struggle in these areas, in defense of indigenous autonomy, in Intibuca, Lempira, La Paz, Santa Barbara, we will multiply our efforts because we will not be humiliated and do not feel humiliated!

These judges who exhibit their ignorance and servility we know to be deepening the effort of criminalization, to marginalize COPINH from the social movements, and in face of this we need to stand up strong to this repression being imposed on us.

COPINH has not lost its leadership; it has the dignified and determined capacity to continue forward!

More Information:

- Article by Annie Bird, "A Priest and 22 members of the National Resistance Front arrested in Campas, Lempira, followed by illegal eviction of Lenca communities blocking illegal

construction of Agua Zarca dam", <http://rightsaction.org/action-content/illegal-arrest-priest-and-22-members-honduran-national-resistance-front>

- Article by SOA Watch, "SOA Graduate involved in criminalization of Indigenous leader, Berta Caceres", <http://www.soaw.org/about-us/equipo-sur/263-stories-from-honduras/4121-berta>
- Article by SOA Watch, "The Murder of Tomas Garcia by the Honduran military", <http://www.soaw.org/about-us/equipo-sur/263-stories-from-honduras/4129-tomasgarcia>
- Photo-essay, by Karen Spring, "Struggle In Rio Blanco, Honduras: 142 Days And Counting", <http://rightsaction.org/action-content/struggle-rio-blanco-honduras-142-days-and-counting-%E2%80%A6>

What To Do?

Repression And Violence In Honduras Do Not Just Happen – They Are Policy

The situation of repression and impunity continue unabated in Honduras. Please send copies of this information, and your own letters, to your Canadian and American politicians (MPs, Congress members and Senators) and to your own media.

Since the June 2009 military coup, that ousted the democratically elected government, Honduras has become the 'Murder Capital of the world'. State repression has reached the levels of the worst years of the 1980s. Since the coup, the U.S. and Canadian governments have 'legitimized the illegitimate' post-coup regime. North American companies and investors have increased their business activities in mining, sweatshops, tourism, etc, in Honduras since the coup. In no small part, this repressive regime remains in power due to its political, economic and military relations with the U.S. and Canada.

There are no signs that this repression, violence, corruption and impunity will decrease, even as a majority of Hondurans courageously support the LIBRE political party that will participate in the November 2013 presidential elections ... in a hope of putting an end to their nightmare.

Across Honduras, community based organizations in the pro-democracy movement need considerably more human rights accompaniment, media attention on the harms and violations, education and activism in Canada and the U.S., and funding.

Contact:

- Member Of Parliament: <http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>
- Congress: <http://www.house.gov/> to get info for your member of Congress, and call: 202-224-3121
- Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/> to get contact for your Senator, and call: 202-224-3121

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- CANADA: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

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