

## 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of assassination of Berta Cáceres Who She Is & What She Lived For

By Grahame Russell, March 2, 2020

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/4th-anniversary-of-the-assassination-of-berta-caceres>

March 2, 2020 marks the 4th anniversary of the assassination of Berta Cáceres and attempted assassination of Gustavo Castro, who was shot and left for dead that same night.



- COPINH (Berta's organization) invites folks to 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "sowing" of Berta Cáceres, March 2, in La Esperanza, Honduras: <https://copinh.org/2020/02/accion-global-justicia-para-berta/>

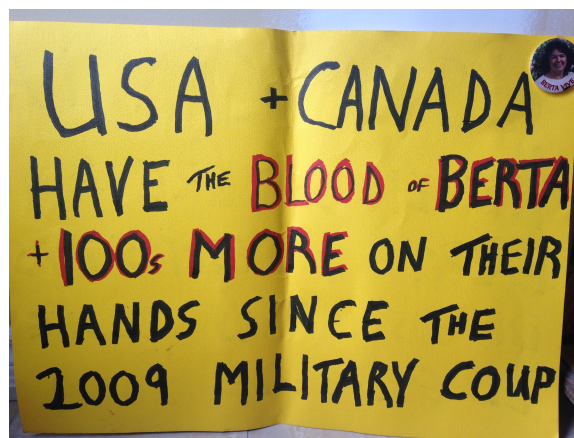
In 2016, Berta had recently moved into her own house in La Esperanza, Honduras, near where she and her children had lived with her mother. Late on March 2, 2016, into the morning of March 3, a team of assassins broke into her home and shot her dead.

Unbeknownst to the killers, who had been long planning Berta's death, Gustavo, a Mexican friend and human rights and environmental defender, was staying with her. After shooting Berta, when the killers found him in the guest room, they shot him twice. Gustavo "played dead", lying in his own blood, as the killers fled into the night.

Four years later, no justice has been done for the "intellectual authors" of Berta's assassination – the elite economic and political sectors who decided she needed to be killed, and paid for it.

In 2018, under huge pressure from Berta's family, her organization COPINH, supporters and allies, eight men were found guilty of being the "material authors" - members of the assassination team put together and paid to kill her.

Securing justice against the intellectual elites is spectacularly difficult in large part because Honduras' military-backed government and political and economic elites maintain full and beneficial economic, political and military relations with the governments of the U.S., Canada, Spain and the E.U., with the World Bank and IMF, and with numerous global corporations.



Since the U.S. and Canadian backed military coup on June 28, 2009, hundreds of Hondurans have been killed for political reasons. But for the jailing of eight "material authors" of Berta's assassination, no justice has been done for any of the political killings and repression (torture, illegal jailings, beatings and maimings) over the course of 11 long years since the coup.

### **Companera**

Berta was a mother of four, grandmother, daughter, sister and - to all who knew her, learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her - a companera. She was singled out, targeted and killed because of who she is, what she lived for, and what she worked and fought for her whole life.



Berta's mother (Maria Austra) and children (Olivia, Laura, Bertita, Salvador) in front.  
Brother Roberto and others in behind

### **Who Killed Berta?**

Since her early teens, following the path of her mother and some of her siblings, Berta lived and worked against all injustices, all inequalities, all discriminations, all Mother Earth destroying activities.

Berta was killed by a team of paid assassins –sicarios– working for the elite economic, military and political sectors of Honduras, and by all those people, countries and institutions whose greed and violence she lived, stood and fought against.

She worked against, and was killed by ...

- 500 years of racist, violent, dispossessing European imperialism and colonialism
- 200 years of U.S. military interventions, exploitation, corruption and impunity
- generations of violent and exploitative, racist and sexist governments of Honduras propped up by the “international community” (U.S., Canada, global corporations, IMF, World Bank, etc)
- eons of patriarchy and violence against women and girls
- centuries of racism against the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples of the Americas
- the greed of corporations and investors - particularly from powerful, rich nations - who conceive of forests and earth, rivers and water, and the people of Honduras, as exploitable, discardable objects, and who steal, kill and destroy to produce ‘for export’ products and profits
- the IMF, World Bank, IDB, etc., institutions created and dominated by these same rich, powerful nations

Berta was killed by ...

- the banana monopolies (United Fruit Company, Standard Fruit, Dole Bananas, Chiquita Bananas, etc.) of the last 200 years
- the producers of African palm (including the World Bank-funded Dinant corporation) and sugarcane ‘for export’ to global consumers of “green energies” (ethanol and bio-diesel fuels)
- maquiladora garment factory exploiters of cheap labour (Gildan Activewear, Hanesbrand Inc., etc.)
- hydro-electric dam companies (like DESA's Agua Zarca project being violently forced Indigenous Lenca territories that COPINH was defending) profiting from privatized rivers and water sources
- tourism enclaves (operated by the Canadian Randy “porn king” Jorgensen, and his ilk) illegally and violently evicting Garifuna peoples from communal lands
- mining companies (Goldcorp Inc. {now part of Newmont Corp.}, Aura Minerals) ripping the earth for gold, poisoning the waters of the Siria Valley and blood of local residents, evicting entire communities and illegally digging up the dead from the 200 year old Azacualpa cemetery

Most recently, Berta was killed by ...

- the U.S. and Canadian backed military coup of June 28, 2009, that ousted Honduras' last democratically elected government, and brought back to power the same elites that for so long have dominated and abused Honduras, who - once back in power – announced that “Honduras is open for global business”, used repression as a tool of societal control, opened Honduras' borders and government institutions to drug-trafficking, and hired sicarios to target and kill hundreds of people, ... people like Berta.

Eleven years after the coup, Honduras has one of the highest per capita murder rate in the world, amongst the highest rates of poverty and destitution in the Americas, amongst the highest rates of repression, femicide, journalist killings, corruption and impunity in the Americas.

Every year, tens of thousands of Hondurans are forced to flee their homes and countries and try desperately to get refugee status in Mexico or the U.S. ...

Berta was killed by all these powerful sectors inside and outside Honduras because, as anyone who knew her will tell you, as anyone who learned from her, got strength, courage and wisdom from her will tell you, these are the things she lived, organized, marched and struggled against.

### **What Did She Live, Stand and Struggle For?**

For your rights and mine. For the human rights - collective and individual - of all people, in all countries. For Mother Earth herself – the fields and forests, air and water. For all life forms on this most precious and unique planet.

Berta lived, stood and struggled for another world is necessary and possible.

We remain completely sad and enraged for this great crime and loss, for Berta's children, mother, sisters and brothers, for her family and friends in La Esperanza, Honduras, and across the Americas.

Yet as a part of her family members, loved ones and many more died with Berta, a part of Berta lives on in many.

### **What To Do?**

Do what Berta would do, as she always did. Live, organize, work and struggle together. Hold hands. Reach out and support the so many victims of this global human order. Live, organize, work and struggle against all injustices and inequalities, all discriminations, all Mother Earth destroying activities, and for another world is necessary and possible.

Thank-you Berta

You are missed, loved, forever respected

Grahame Russell

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(I met Berta in 1998, as part of our work with Rights Action. Berta and her family are dear friends. Rights Action supported COPINH and Berta's family, and Berta's work and struggle since that time. This reflection is an updated version of one published after Berta's assassination, March 2, 2016)

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**To support efforts for justice in this case, and for all that Berta was working for in Honduras:  
COPINH**

[www.copinhhonduras.org](http://www.copinhhonduras.org) / <https://bertavivecopinhsigue.copinhhonduras.org/> / [copinhonduras.blogspot.com](http://copinhonduras.blogspot.com) / <http://copinhhonduras.blogspot.com/> / FB: Copinh Intibucá / Tw: @COPINHHONDURAS

### **Tax Deductible Donations in the U.S. & Canada**

Rights Action continues to support Berta's family as they, along with COPINH and Gustavo Castro, demand truth and justice in her and Gustavo's case. Make checks to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

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