

Rights Action
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**TOMAS GARCIA SHOT DEAD BY HONDURAN MILITARY
His Son Also Shot, In Serious Condition**



(Photo @ COPINH, July 15, 2013. The back of Allan García. His father, Tomás García, was a member of his community's Indigenous and Auxiliary Council and of COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras).)

BELOW: Interview with Berta Cáceres of COPINH - "A Desperate and Criminal Act" - about murder of COPINH member Tomas Garcia and the wounding of his son, in Rio Blanco. (Translation by PROAH, Proyecto de Acompañamiento internacional en Honduras, <http://hondurasaccompanimentproject.wordpress.com>)

WHAT TO DO / HOW TO DONATE: See below

"A DESPERATE AND CRIMINAL ACT"

Honduran Army Murders COPINH Indigenous Activist Fighting "Agua Zarca" Hydroelectric Dam In Rio Blanco

On Monday, 15 July, the 106th day of peaceful resistance by the Lenca community of Rio Blanco in western Honduras, blocking the entry to the construction site of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam, Honduran soldiers shot indiscriminately at demonstrators, murdering Tomás García, one of the leaders of the resistance, and seriously wounding his son.

The Honduran activist was walking with other members of his community to the site of the Agua Zarca hydro-electric dam "development" project, financed by DESA (Energy Development Company) and Sinohydro (Chinese company), when he was killed and his son was wounded by high-calibre gunshots. His son is now in hospital in a serious condition, Berta Cáceres, COPINH's leader, told Radio Mundo Real (Real World Radio), before traveling to Rio Blanco this Monday.

Berta described the act as a "desperate and criminal reaction" by the companies and Honduran regime that are seeking to dam the Gualcarque River, which would have a terrible impact on the communities there and on the regional environment. The companies have secured the support of the Honduran army and directly pay for the transportation and maintenance costs of the large contingents of troops deployed by the Honduran regime in the Rio Blanco region.

As night fell on the region, COPINH said that fresh contingents of soldiers were being transferred to the region from Zacapa, Santa Bárbara, and there were fears that there would be more shooting incidents, targeted at the civilians conducting a vigil for the murdered indigenous activist.

"The community is outraged. We're suffering a lot of grief but we're also convinced that we need to continue with spirit and hope", said Berta by phone. "As the [November 24, 2013 presidential] elections approach, they want to use COPINH to teach other organizations a lesson", she explained and stated that the community immediately decided to carry on blocking the access roads to the building site.

A few hours before the shooting incident, COPINH had reported that, on Friday 12th, vehicles owned by DESA (Energy Development Company) – which together with the Chinese company Sinohydro is undertaking the project – transported the company's senior staff to meet with known hitmen in the area, responsible for directly threatening several members of the indigenous council, including Tomás García.

Berta said that the soldiers failed to enter into any dialogue before shooting at the civilians who had not reached the turn-off to the site.

Berta Caceres herself (leader of COPINH) was illegally detained and jailed in May and put on trial for alleged illegal possession of firearms which was not proved in court and the charge was ultimately filed away.

The leader stressed that international solidarity was vital to call on the Honduran authorities and the two companies to account, both for this incident and for any new cases of repression against the members of the Rio Blanco community.

"We are aware that we are facing a strategy of impunity in a context in which this type of repressive action is becoming more frequent and severe", said Berta, although she also made it clear that the communities' determination to defend their territory, of great cultural and ancestral value, is only strengthened in the face of this state- and private-sponsored violence.

The Gualcarque River is considered an essential part of Lenca spiritual life and the communities confront megaprojects in tribute to Lempira, the emblematic figure of their culture. "We continue steadfast in the struggle, we won't let ourselves be cornered, we won't let ourselves be imprisoned by fear, and we'll carry on in this peaceful but energetic battle for life – we're going to carry on without flagging", said Berta.

MORE INFORMATION:

web: copinh.org

blog: copinhonduras.blogspot.com

fb: Copinh Intibucá

twitter: @COPINHHONDURAS

WHAT TO DO?

REPRESSION AND VIOLENCE IN HONDURAS DO NOT JUST HAPPEN – THEY ARE POLICY

Please send copies of this information, and your own letters, to your Canadian and American politicians (MPs, Congress members and Senators), to our embassies in Honduras and to your own media. (Some addresses, below. Please look up the local addresses of your own MP, Senator, Congress member, and write them.)

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

CANADIAN Embassy in Costa Rica (responsible for CR, Nicaragua, Honduras)

Ambassador Wendy Drukier, wendy.drukier@international.gc.ca

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U.S. EMBASSY IN HONDURAS

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FUNDS ARE NEEDED

And Are Being Put To Good Use

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS (in Canada and the U.S.) to support grassroots organizations in Honduras and their community development, human rights and environmental defense projects (and – as in this case – to provide emergency humanitarian relief funds to family members of the victims), make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- CANADA: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS can be made (in Canada and U.S.): <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

- be a monthly credit card donor (Canada and U.S.)
- to donate stock, contact: info@rightsaction.org

MORE INFO

info@rightsaction.org

www.rightsaction.org

www.facebook.com/rightsaction.org