

Canadian Economic & Political Interests Take Priority Over Human Rights In Honduras

(<http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=f56a66bdd3>)

Below:

- “Indigenous Rights Under Attack: Canadian Economic And Political Interests Over Human Rights In Honduras”, by Jackie McVicar
- “Words from Gustavo Castro for the people of Honduras”, by Gustavo Castro

Read also:

- “Blood Flows Where Canadian Capital Goes”, by Tyler Shipley, (<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/blood-flows-where-canadian-capital-goes-371189471.html>)

Indigenous Rights Under Attack: Canadian Economic And Political Interests Over Human Rights In Honduras

by Jackie McVicar

(<https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/indigenous-rights-under-attack-canadian-economic-and-political-interests-ov>)

No one defending their land and territory in Honduras is safe. That was the message that rang loud and clear after Berta Cáceres was murdered in her home on March 3. Cáceres, an Indigenous Lenca woman, mother and grandmother was founder of the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), and worked tirelessly to protect communities at risk of eviction and relocation because of large scale projects that put their lives and livelihoods at risk.

Despite being internationally recognized, most recently after winning the [2015 Goldman Prize](#), Berta was killed in her home by unknown gunmen. Her Mexican friend and colleague, [Gustavo Castro](#), founder and director of Chiapas-based Otros Mundos (Other Worlds/Friends of the Earth Mexico), was also wounded in the attack. At the time of her murder, Berta was the beneficiary of precautionary measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights - an order with which the Honduran State did not comply.

Berta and her colleagues have [repeatedly denounced](#) the criminalization, threats and violent repression that Indigenous communities have faced for defending their homes against the transnational extractive industry.

[Even before the 2009 coup d'état](#), communities had spoken out against the Agua Zarca Dam along the Gualcarque River in Intibucá, Western Honduras, sacred to the Lenca People who depend on it for their subsistence. Later, communities found out that another hydropower project along the nearby Canjel River was also being built and began a series of protests to denounce the project.

Hydrosys Consultants, with Canadian offices in Montreal, Sherbrooke and Vancouver is a key player in the Canjel Hydropower Project. According to its website, Hydrosys currently has [four projects in Honduras](#) and four others in the region. In terms of the Canjel project, the company is responsible for “Detailed engineering, regulatory authorizations and permits approval process, plans and specifications for the construction, supervision and management of the construction and commissioning.”

The problem with the Canjel project and the permit approval process, for which Hydrosys is responsible, is that the Indigenous Lenca People have not been meaningfully consulted about the project, putting the Honduran state in violation of International Labour Organization Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous People, of which it is signatory. In addition, Berta and other Indigenous community members have consistently denounced the Honduran State and the companies involved, including Hydrosys, for moving forward with the licenses for this project without the free, prior and informed consent of the Indigenous community.

This was reiterated by Marilyn Baptiste, a councillor with the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation, who also won the Goldman Prize in 2015. In an open letter to Prime Minister Trudeau she writes, “COPINH and the Lenca did not give their free, prior informed consent as they share a spiritual bond with the Gualcarque River. We share the responsibility to oppose violence against women and girls at the community, national and international levels. Is it right to murder an Indigenous woman who spoke out for protection of a people, a land, water and all of life for her children and grandchildren?”

After Berta was killed, over a hundred and twenty national and regional organizations and institutions called on the Canadian government to condemn the murder and to call on the Honduran government to support an independent, international investigation into the crime as requested by Berta's family and COPINH.

A four sentence press release from the Canadian Embassy to Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua was issued the day that Berta was murdered. In it, it vows to give “support to projects and Honduran organizations” in order to promote the protection of human rights in the country - a problematic strategy given growing opposition to Canadian projects that have no community consent. Continue reading [here](#).

Words from Gustavo Castro for the people of Honduras

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

March 15, 2016

I don't know if these lines will reach you one day.

I arrived in Honduras full of enthusiasm. It had been many years since I had visited. But I thank Berta for having invited me. My dear friend of many years, both her and her family. Despite everything that has happened, I don't regret having come nor having been chosen by fate to say goodbye to my dear friend.

My wounds hurt a lot, although they are healing. What hurts more is the pain of the dear Honduran people who do not deserve this, no one deserves this. We have always admired this noble people, full of bravery and struggle for a life with dignity for all, where everyone is included, without distinction and with justice. This was Berta's struggle.

In the same way that I feel the love of the Honduran people for Mexico, I love this beautiful country, its landscapes, its nature and especially its people, for their pride at being Honduran or catrachos. We cannot let the assassinations nor the parasites who live off the people cloud our hope or the landscape.

When I meet migrants from here in Mexico, I can't resist shaking their hand and acknowledging their bravery because I know the tough road they have come and the hardship they face as a result of what they have left behind in order to find life, hope and something better. And I say to myself and I say to them, "Don't go, go back. The road is tough and our people, our land needs us." And I say goodbye with the word that Berta always said to me: "Cheke!" or "Ok, very good!"

Our land is generous, our blood too. Those same Mesoamerican ties that have always united us and that call us to struggle - the same as Berta - for life, for more dignity and for a better life for all.

In these days of waiting to return to my own people, many Hondurans have shared with me their solidarity and greetings of affection. I thank you all, very much. Berta meant a lot to me, as she did for all of you. Berta was an exceptional woman who struggled for a better Honduras, with more dignity and justice. She fought for a country for all. Her spirit grows in the heart of the Honduran people because we did not bury her, rather we planted her so that from the community of La Esperanza*, our hope will be nourished.

Do not doubt for a moment that I have cooperated with all of the procedures that the authorities have asked of me and at the hour that they have made these requests, more than ten times. I will continue to do so in order that there be justice. The authorities have also told me, on various occasions, that I could go. They even made a helicopter available for me to leave La Esperanza for Tegucigalpa. But at the last minute, they asked me to stay to participate in new procedures, which I have always accepted. From Mexico, I will never refuse and will always be available to help you find out the truth. For this purpose, we have a Treaty for Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters between Mexico and Honduras.

From Mexico, I will continue to bear a historic responsibility to the Honduran people, to Berta, her family, and COPINH. My body is tattooed for life with the wounds that will never let me forget this commitment.

I thank COPINH for having welcomed me. They are a beautiful, simple people who act with dignity toward their ancestors and these marvellous lands. They are a people with a spirit of tireless struggle to maintain their identity and their place of origin, who are admirable for their

respect of nature and their love of Honduras. I admire them and thank them very much for this. They are also known this way by people around the world who know and respect Honduras. They are hope and they are the seed from which the strength and spirit of Lempira** will grow, from the ancestral peoples, from the Honduran people. They have been an example and inspiration for many in the world and in Honduras. In the same way, they are an example of dignity for all civil society, campesino, Indigenous and Garífuna organizations that are struggling for a better country. I thank them all for all their solidarity.

I thank my Embassy and the Consulate for their invaluable help and for receiving me with safe and open arms to enable me to confront this very adverse situation. I appreciate all of the Honduran and international solidarity out of love for Berta and your generous gestures of concern. I don't have any way to repay the thousands of letters, signatures and messages. There will be justice soon.

Gustavo Castro Soto

*'La Esperanza' means 'hope' in Spanish

**Lempira was a great leader and warrior of the Lenca Indigenous people.

(Translated from the original in Spanish:

<http://www.otrosmundoschiapas.org/index.php/component/content/article/36-otros-temas/36-derechos/2278-palabras-de-gustavo-castro-al-pueblo-de-honduras>)

What to do

- Additional organizational or network endorsements are welcome on a statement sent to the Canadian government on Friday: <http://miningwatch.ca/blog/2016/3/18/another-indigenous-leader-killed-honduras-canadian-organizations-say-enough-enough>
- Please respond to an online urgent action to Canadian and Honduran authorities in English/Spanish (<http://www.codev.org/2016/03/urgent-action-rights-defenders-threatened-2-2/>) and French/Spanish (<http://www.codev.org/2016/03/urgent-action-rights-defenders-threatened-2-2-2/>)
- Urge the safe and immediate return of Gustavo Castro to Mexico using this online action in Spanish (<http://movimientom4.org/2016/03/firma-para-solicitar-el-regreso-de-gustavo-castro-soto-a-mexico/>)

Funds Needed for Family of Berta Caceres and COPINH

Since 1998, Rights Action has funded and worked with COPINH, co-founded and directed by Berta Caceres. Since her assassination on March 3, 2016, Rights Action is channeling emergency funds to her family and to COPINH, as they are in emergency response mode trying to ensure that justice is done. To Make Tax Deductible Donations in the U.S. or Canada, make checks to "Rights Action" (write Berta/COPINH on memo line) and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

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

Credit-Card Donations:

- Canada: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/rights-action/>
- U.S.: <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations> (click on NetworkForGood)

Articles

- Berta Caceres' Acceptance Speech, 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize. To view: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR1kwx8b0ms>
- Murdered for Activism in Honduras, by Silvio Carrillo (Berta's nephew), March 11, 2016, New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/12/opinion/international/murdered-for-activism-in-honduras.html?emc=edit_tnt_20160311&nlid=45556342&tntemail0=y
- Berta Caceres: Who She Is & What She Lived For, by Grahame Russell, March 3, 2016: <http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=026d1728a3>
- Fight With Joy: Remembering Bertha Cáceres, by Sandra Cuffe, March 7, 2016: <https://intercontinentalcry.org/fight-joy-remembering-bertha-caceres/>
- Eulogy For Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores, by Bev Bell, March 9, 2016: <http://otherworldsarepossible.org/bertha-lives-life-and-legacy-bertha-caceres>
- Blood Flows Where Canadian Capital Goes, by Tyler Shipley, 03/6/2016: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/blood-flows-where-canadian-capital-goes-371189471.html>

More Information

- www.BertaCaceres.org (established by Berta's family)
- Honduras Solidarity Network: <http://www.hondurassolidarity.org/>
- Other Worlds: <http://otherworldsarepossible.org/>
- Common Frontiers: <http://www.commonfrontiers.ca/>
- School of the Americas Watch: <http://www.soaw.org/about-the-soawhinsec/what-is-the-soawhinsec>
- Witness For Peace: <http://www.witnessforpeace.org/>

Thank-you. Please share this information far'n'wide.

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