

## Family of Berta Cáceres Rejects “Condolences” From Canadian Government

(<http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=6d164b23a0>)

**On March 17, 2016, the Canadian government released this statement:**

Canada Condemns Killing Of COPINH Member Nelson García  
Tegucigalpa, March 17, 2016

[http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa\\_rica/highlights-faits/2016/03-17\\_Statement-Declaration.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa_rica/highlights-faits/2016/2016-03-17_Statement-Declaration.aspx?lang=eng)

Ambassador Michael Gort today issued the following statement: “We are deeply troubled by the killing of Nelson García, colleague of recently murdered Berta Cáceres in Honduras. Canada condemns these cowardly crimes and offers condolences to the family and colleagues of Mr. García and of Ms. Cáceres.”

Canada acknowledges the ongoing efforts of the Honduran government to investigate the recent murder of Ms. Cáceres. We call on the government to continue its efforts and to prevent any further violence against members of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), or any other activists and human rights defenders.

Bilaterally and multilaterally Canada maintains an open dialogue with the Honduran government and raises its concerns about the situation of security, rule of law and human rights, including indigenous rights, in the country on a regular basis and at the highest levels.

Canada will continue to promote the protection of human rights in Honduras through support to projects and organizations in the country.

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### **Canadian Dishonesty and Complicity**

Canada can't be “deeply troubled by the killing of Nelson García [and other] cowardly crimes” on the one hand, and continue to maintain full political and economic relations, on the other hand, with the Honduran regime that is responsible for hundreds of killings since the 2009 U.S. and Canadian-backed military coup.

“Canada acknowledges the ongoing efforts of the Honduran government to investigate the recent murder of Ms. Cáceres.” This statement is false. The regime in power – characterized by

deeply entrenched impunity and corruption – is doing everything but ensure a full and impartial investigation.

The Canadian government claims it will “continue to promote the protection of human rights in Honduras”. This statement is deeply misleading. Since supporting the coup in 2009, the Canadian government has maintained full political relations with the post-coup regimes, turning a blind eye to widely documented State repression, corruption and impunity, while working actively (including the signing of a “Free Trade” Agreement with the regime) to expand Canadian investments in Honduras in the areas of mining, hydro-electric dam construction, tourism, maquiladora sweatshops, etc.

**Below: Letter to Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of International Development, Minister of International Trade, Ambassador of Canada to Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua**

Over 50 organizations signed this letter. If you have not signed it, do so and put it to use; if you have signed it, put it to use again. Write again and again to your Member of Parliament asking that they endorse this letter, particularly the key demands:

- to pressure the Honduran authorities to let Gustavo Castro (shot twice himself, during the March 3, 2016 assassination of Berta Cáceres) go home to Mexico;
- to establish the independent international judicial commission to directly join the criminal investigation in Honduras (Short of this, corruption and impunity will prevail again in Honduras);
- to call for a Parliamentary Inquiry into the role Canada played in supporting the 2009 military coup and legitimizing and doing business with the post-coup regimes since then.

**Letter:**

Honourable Stéphane Dion, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs

Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P., Minister of International Development

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P., Minister of International Trade

Mr. Michael Gort, Ambassador of Canada to Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua

CC: Her Excellency Sofía Lastenia Cerrato Rodríguez, Ambassador of Honduras to Canada

CC: His Excellency Agustín García-López Loaeza, Ambassador of Mexico to Canada

The undersigned organizations write to express their horror to learn that Nelson Garcia, another leader of Berta Cáceres' organization, the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) was murdered on March 14.

In the wake of Berta's murder, which generated shock and dismay around the world, it is deeply distressing that the people behind these murders feel so unencumbered and so empowered as to continue killing COPINH leadership and terrorizing members of Berta's organization.

Over one hundred and twenty national and regional organizations and institutions from Canada [i] have called on the Canadian government to condemn the murder of Berta Cáceres and to urge the Honduran government to support an independent, international investigation of the killing. Goldman prize-winner Marilyn Baptiste from the Xeni Gwet'in First Nations in British Columbia also sent a message [ii] calling for a full and independent investigation, noting that the Lenca people have not given their free, prior and informed consent for the dam projects, including the Agua Zarca dam project, on the Gualcarque River with which they share a spiritual bond. We note with concern that one of the companies that promotes having a project along this river is the Canadian firm Hydrosys.[iii]

In response to the assassinations of Berta Cáceres and Nelson García, the Netherlands Development Finance Company (FMO) [iv] and the Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation Ltd. [v] have suspended funding assistance in Honduras, including to the Agua Zarca project.

Late Tuesday, the Honduras Solidarity Network reported that COPINH leader Nelson Garcia was murdered by two unknown individuals in the community of Río Chiquito, department of Cortés. Nelson was on his way to his mother-in-law's house to eat after helping a group of families who were evicted from the area known as Río Lindo in the community of Río Chiquito by police, military police, soldiers and a special investigative unit (DGIC). Though these families built houses on this land two years ago, their homes and crops were destroyed using tractors and heavy machinery during the eviction. Immediately following Nelson's murder, police reportedly called it a common crime, similar to how Honduran authorities tried to dismiss Berta's murder as a crime of passion or a failed robbery immediately following her assassination.

It is shocking that Nelson was murdered less than two weeks after Berta was killed, despite condemnation of her murder by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), [vi] which has also issued precautionary measures to ensure the physical integrity and well-being of the members of COPINH and Berta's family.

The IACHR has also issued precautionary measures for Gustavo Castro, the principal witness to Berta's murder who continues to be prevented from returning home to Mexico, despite the Mexican Embassy having formally requested that his migratory alert be lifted on March 10th. Mexico and Honduras have a treaty for mutual cooperation in criminal investigations that would allow Gustavo to continue participating in the ongoing investigation into Berta's murder from Mexico. There is no reason for him to remain in Honduras away from his family and his important work as a human rights defender.

We recognize that the Canadian Embassy to Honduras issued a statement on March 3rd condemning Berta's murder, calling for a full and expedited investigation and the protection of human rights defenders. [vii] However, it is imperative that the Canadian government continue pressing publicly, and using every other means available, for Honduran authorities to:

- Guarantee the security of all of the members of COPINH, Berta's family and Gustavo Castro through full implementation of the IACHR precautionary measures;
- Incorporate a group of independent international investigators who have the trust of Berta's family and COPINH into the ongoing investigation into Berta's assassination through an agreement with the IACHR. This should also be expanded to include the threats, criminalization and murder of other members of COPINH including Nelson Garcia;
- Lift the measure that currently impedes Gustavo Castro's safe and immediate return to Mexico;
- Immediately and definitively revoke the Energy Development Company's (DESA) concession for the Agua Zarca project, granted without the Lenca peoples' free, prior and informed consent; suspend, review and annul all other hydroelectric and mining concessions on Lenca territory granted without the Lenca people's free, prior and informed consent; demilitarize Lenca territory; and respect the Lenca people's autonomy.

Furthermore, given the Canadian government's legal obligations to respect and promote human rights around the world, we urge you to reverse the egregious policy that the government has taken toward Honduras to date. [viii] Following the military-backed coup in June 2009, the Canadian government helped undermine efforts for the return of a democratically-elected government in Honduras and was quick to support and do business with repressive post-coup administrations. As Honduras became the most dangerous country for communities defending their land and water, Canada pushed for a new mining law [ix, x] and passed a free trade agreement with Honduras that favours Canadian investments, despite the serious implications for human rights and the environment. [xi]

Since the coup, over 100 environment defenders have been murdered with Berta's assassination becoming the most widely known. [xii] Many journalists and others engaged in important social struggles have also been killed.

In light of this, we call on the Canadian government to:

- Cut off Canadian public funding to the Honduran government and security forces through the Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program (ACCBP) and the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START);
- Given the lack of free, prior and informed consent of the Lenca Indigenous people, suspend all Canadian government and public support – including funding, investment insurance, government and embassy services of any kind – that HydroSys and any other related investors in projects along the Gualcarque River might be receiving;
- Ensure that no Canadian overseas development aid, other financing or services are used to support infrastructure or mega-projects that do not have the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples whose lands and rights will be affected, in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO Convention 169 as minimum standards. While violence is used to silence Indigenous people who exercise

their right to oppose projects that will affect their lands and rights, conditions do not exist to guarantee free, prior and informed consent.

- Investigate the Canadian government's role in Honduras during and since the 2009 military-backed coup by expanding the parliamentary committee study on Honduras, ensuring broad public participation.

We urge the Canadian government to act on its commitment to advance human rights, justice and security while protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

SIGNED BY:

Above Ground

Alliance internationale des femmes/International Women's Alliance (IWA)

Alternatives

Americas Policy Group (Canadian Council for International Co-operation)

Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI)

Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network (ARSN)

BC CASA/Cafe Justicia

BC Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU)

BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF)

Canadian Union of Postal Workers/Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des postes (CUPW-STTP)

Cercle des Premières Nations de l'UQAM

Clayoquot Action

CoDevelopment Canada

Comité de Apoyo al Pueblo Mapuche de Montréal

Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine (CDHAL)

Comité 8 mars des Femmes de diverses origines/ March 8 Committee Women of Diverse Origins

Common Frontiers

Confédération des syndicats nationaux - CSN

Coordination du Québec de la Marche mondiale des femmes

Council of Canadians

Education In Action, Ottawa

L'Entraide missionnaire

Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)

Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ)

Friends of the Earth Canada

Groupe de recherche sur les espaces publics et les innovations politiques de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (GREPIP-UQÀM)

Horizons of Friendship

Inter Pares

Ligue internationale de lutte des peuples/International League of People's Struggle (ILPS) in Canada

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

KAIROS Halifax  
Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN)  
Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network  
Mining Injustice Solidarity Network, Toronto  
Mining Justice Action Committee, Victoria  
Mining Justice Alliance, Vancouver  
MiningWatch Canada  
People's Health Movement Canada/Mouvement populaire pour la santé au Canada  
Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)  
Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale (RQIC)  
Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie (PASC)  
Rights Action  
Sierra Club BC  
Solidarité Laurentides Amériques centrale (SLAM)  
Stop The Institute, Vancouver  
Union Paysanne  
The United Church of Canada  
United for Mining Justice  
United Steelworkers  
Victoria Central America Support Committee

1 <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/comfront/2016/03/assassination-berta-c%C3%A1ceres-sparks-outrage>

1 <http://www.nationalobserver.com/2016/03/15/news/canadian-winner-goldman-prize-demands-investigation-murder-berta-c%C3%A1ceres>

1 <https://www.google.ca/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=Hydrosys+Honduras>

1 <https://www.fmo.nl/k/n1771/news/view/28133/20819/fmo-suspends-all-activities-in-honduras-effective-immediately.html>

1 [http://www.development-today.com/magazine/Frontpage/finnfund\\_suspends\\_disbursements\\_to\\_honduran\\_dam\\_project](http://www.development-today.com/magazine/Frontpage/finnfund_suspends_disbursements_to_honduran_dam_project)

1 [http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media\\_center/PReleases/2016/024.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/media_center/PReleases/2016/024.asp)

1 [http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa\\_rica/highlights-faits/2016/2016-03-03a.aspx?lang=eng](http://www.canadainternational.gc.ca/costa_rica/highlights-faits/2016/2016-03-03a.aspx?lang=eng)

1 <http://www.coha.org/canadas-controversial-engagement-in-honduras/>

1 [http://miningwatch.ca/sites/default/files/Canada\\_and\\_Honduras\\_mining\\_law-June%202012.pdf](http://miningwatch.ca/sites/default/files/Canada_and_Honduras_mining_law-June%202012.pdf)

1 [https://www.devp.org/files/IMCE/files/blogue/honduras\\_ndp\\_letter.pdf](https://www.devp.org/files/IMCE/files/blogue/honduras_ndp_letter.pdf)

1 [http://www.ccic.ca/\\_files/en/working\\_groups/Canada\\_Honduras\\_FTA\\_HR\\_Report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/working_groups/Canada_Honduras_FTA_HR_Report_2014.pdf)

1 <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/how-many-more/>

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## **Funds Needed for Family of Berta Cáceres and COPINH**

Since the assassination of Berta Cáceres on March 3, 2016, Rights Action has channeled over \$15,000 to her family and to COPINH, that are at the forefront of efforts to ensure that justice is done, even as family and COPINH members are receiving threats, even as the corrupted regime is trying to 'criminalize' members of COPINH for the killing of Berta.

### **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)

(Full proposal: <http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=e35ee8560f>)

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## **Articles**

- Berta Cáceres' 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](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/12/opinion/international/murdered-for-activism-in-honduras.html?emc=edit_tnt_20160311&nlid=45556342&tntemail0=y)
- Berta Cáceres: 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>
- Berta Cáceres, the Murdered Honduran Activist, Did Not Die. She Multiplied, by Karen Spring, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/karen-spring/bertha-caceres-murder\\_b\\_9500088.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/karen-spring/bertha-caceres-murder_b_9500088.html)

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## **More Information**

- [www.BertaCaceres.org](http://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/>

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Berta Caceres did not die, she multiplied. Thank-you for your multiplying commitment, support and activism. Please share this information far'n'wide.

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grahame@rightsaction.org

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Join listserv: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)  
FB: [www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org](http://www.facebook.com/RightsAction.org)  
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RightsAction>, @RightsAction

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