

# Rights Action

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July–August 2016

## This Will Not Stop

It has been a sad and hard spring and summer since the March 2<sup>nd</sup> assassination of Berta Caceres.



“Berta Caceres Lives” Gathering, Honduras, April 15, 2016

In most ways, Berta’s killing was like all such killings in Honduras, Guatemala and beyond. However, her assassination impacted Rights Action folks – past and present – all the more so. Since 1998, Berta has been a major friend and *companera* of ours. Rights Action’s vision of work and struggle is one we discussed, debated and learned from Berta over 18 years. So much we learned from her! COPINH – the group she co-founded in the early 90s – has been a major partner group since 1998.

- **Funding Summary:** Rights Action grants made to date in 2016 to partner groups and individuals: <http://www.rightsaction.org/>, July 26, 2016
- **Matching Donor:** Until August 29, 2016, an anonymous supporter will match (up to \$30,000) tax-deductible donations in the U.S. and Canada. To donate, see below.

Her assassination reminds us again that there will be no end in the foreseeable future to racism and exploitation, repression, corruption and impunity in Honduras and Guatemala. This is neither fatalistic nor pessimistic; it is realistic.

Over the years, some friends and colleagues have asked: ‘When reporting on human rights violations in Guatemala, when will Rights Action stop talking about the 1954 military coup? That was decades ago ...’ More recently, some ask: ‘When will you stop talking about the military coup in Honduras, that was back in 2009 ...’

- Read: *1954 CIA Coup in Guatemala Effects Still Being Felt Today*, by Grahame Russell, 27 June 2016, <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/>

(continued)

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Make checks payable to “Rights Action” and mail to the appropriate US or Canadian office.

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## GET INFORMED/ GET INVOLVED

**Speakers:** Invite us to give presentations in your community about these issues

**Educational Delegations:** Form your own group or join one of our educational-solidarity delegation seminars to Guatemala and Honduras to learn more about these issues and struggles

### Daily News:

- [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)
- [www.upsidedownworld.org](http://www.upsidedownworld.org)
- [www.dominionpaper.ca](http://www.dominionpaper.ca)
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This is like asking when will African-Americans stop talking about hundreds of years of slavery as part of the foundation on which the North American economy was built, and of on-going racism, exploitation and disparity deriving from that history? When will Indigenous and First Nations peoples in the Americas – from Argentina de Canada – stop talking about the historical and on-going impacts of colonialism, genocide and ethnocide? When will people across Africa stop talking about centuries of European colonialism and economic exploitation, followed by decades of western support for brutal African regimes favoring European and North American corporations and investors in the post-colonial period?

Every case of forced community eviction, environmental destruction and repression we work on in Honduras and Guatemala reminds us that racism and exploitation, repression, impunity and corruption are systemic and historical, and the root causes go from the local to global levels. The U.S. and Canada, a host of global corporations and investors, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, are – through policies and actions – part of Guatemala and Honduras' deep-seeded repression, exploitation, impunity and corruption.

## This Will Not Stop. Neither Will Resistance & Struggle

Knowing this, we support each community based struggle because:

- It is right to support people who are literally struggling for their lives and environmental well-being;
- Real and lasting change comes principally 'from below' – from the people and communities suffering the repression, violations and environmental harms, from the people and communities struggling for their lives and Mother Earth. While it is crucial to focus attention and pressure on those countries, people and communities 'from above' benefitting from the repression, violations and environmental harms, it is always priority to support struggle from below;
- Each struggle (whether justice and reparations for the harms and violations are achieved or not) takes us collectively towards 'another world is necessary and possible'.

In supporting struggles 'from below' in Honduras and Guatemala, we are in effect working to transform systemic and historic inequalities and injustices from the local to global levels. In supporting our partner groups working to end inequality, repression and injustice, we are working to stop the U.S. and Canada (governments and private sector companies and investors) from contributing to and benefiting from the inequality, repression and injustice.

Thank-you for your commitment to and support for 'another world is necessary and possible.'

Grahame Russell, director

P.S. Feel free to email me and ask me to send you any of the articles referred to in this newsletter.

# Justice for Berta Caceres and Gustavo Castro

On March 2, 2016, assassins broke into the home of Berta Caceres in La Esperanza, Honduras, and shot her dead; they also shot and thought they killed her colleague Gustavo Castro. Incredibly, thankfully, he survived. The targeted killing of Berta – a globally respected Indigenous rights, anti-imperialism activist and Mother Earth defender – was denounced around the world, received massive attention and, five months later, no justice has been done.

No justice will be done in this case, as in the cases of hundreds of political killings and disappearances in Honduras since the 2009 military coup, until the “international community” (primarily the U.S. and Canadian governments, the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank) end military, economic and political business-as-usual with the Honduran regime, turning a blind eye to and enabling the repression, corruption and impunity.

- Read: *The Legacy of Berta Cáceres: What Environmentalists Can Learn From Human Rights Groups*, by Frank Smyth: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org), July 23, 2016

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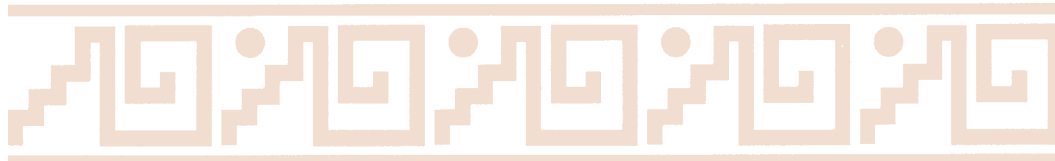
# Justice for Crimes Against Humanity in Guatemala

With attention on how the assassination of Berta Caceres exposes the on-going repression, impunity and corruption of the Honduran regime in Honduras, it has gone less noticed that precedent-setting war crimes trials continue in Guatemala despite the very same corruption, impunity and repression.

*Eight Military Officers to Stand Trial in CREOMPAZ Grave Crimes Case*, by Jo-Marie Burt, June 17, 2016

*“In the CREOMPAZ case of alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during Guatemala’s 36-year armed conflict, a court has found sufficient evidence to proceed to trial against eight of ten military officers, including retired general and former army Chief of Staff Benedicto Lucas García. The case will be heard by High Risk Tribunal “A,” comprised of judges Herbie Sical, Yassmín Barrios, and Patricia Bustamante. This is the same tribunal that emitted the February conviction in the Sepur Zarco case. Barrios and Bustamante were judges in the Ríos Montt genocide trial.”*

- Read: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org), July 19, 2016



A mass grave dug up by the FAFG – Guatemalan Foundation of Forensic Anthropology – at the CREOMPAZ military base. Unearthed from this pit were victims of the ‘Chixoy Dam/Rio Negro’ massacres committed to make way for the Chixoy Dam project of the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and the Guatemalan military regime, 1975-1985.



All respect for the tireless and courageous Guatemalan victims’ groups, human rights organizations, lawyers and activists. As these precedent-setting trials continue against a few of the intellectual authors of the genocides and war crimes, the “international community” does business-as-usual (mining, dams, sweatshops, African palm production, bananas, pineapples, etc.) with the current regimes in power dominated by the same economic, political and military elites who were in power in the 1970s and 80s.

## Rio Negro “Tragedy”

In our global order of deep-seeded inequality and injustice, “tragedies” are more likely to hit vulnerable people who have already suffered injustices and inequalities that have left them vulnerable and exposed to --- “tragedies”.



**Isabel Osorio, Rio Negro genocide survivor, killed in a fire, July 1, 2016. Photo: James Rodriguez**

On July 1, a fire killed 9 year-old Alma Yesenia Uscap Osorio and her mother, Isabel Osorio Tum, in the remote village of Rio Negro, Baja Verapaz. But, it is no accident that another brutal death occurred in one of the most long suffering communities in Guatemala.

Emergency funds were sent to Isabel’s husband, Juan Uscap, as he buried his daughter and wife and pays for his own medical treatment – his feet were burned in the fire. More funds are needed to re-build their home, but re-building his life will be harder – or impossible.

This “tragedy” is piled on top of a history of racism, dispossession of land and home, massacres and desperate survival. Juan and Isabel were genocide survivors, eyewitnesses to the slaughter of their families and community to make way for the World Bank / IDB (Inter-American Development Bank)’s Chixoy hydro-electric dam project.

Read: *Endless Consequences: Another Victim of the World Bank & IDB’s Genocidal Chixoy Dam Project in Guatemala*, by Grahame Russell, July 5, 2016: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)



# German Chub

## Fighting for Justice in Guatemala and Canada for Mining Related Repression; Living With Paralysis and Bedsores Ulcers

German Chub is one of 13 plaintiffs in precedent setting lawsuits in Canada against Hudbay Minerals for mining related repression at Hudbay's former "Fenix" nickel mine in Guatemala. He is also a lead witness in the courageous and unique criminal trial in Guatemala against Mynor Padilla, former head of security for Hudbay, accused of the September 27, 2009 murder of Adolfo Ich and shooting-paralysis of German Chub.

### New York Times / Toronto Star Reports

- New York Times, April 3, 2016, *Guatemalan Women's Claims Put Focus on Canadian Firms' Conduct Abroad*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/world/americas/guatemalan-womens-claims-put-focus-on-canadian-firms-conduct-abroad.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/03/world/americas/guatemalan-womens-claims-put-focus-on-canadian-firms-conduct-abroad.html?_r=2)
- Toronto Star, June 19, 2016, *Mayan Families' Quest For Justice Against Canadian Mining Company Hudbay*, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2016/06/20/the-mayans-vs-the-mine.html>
- Toronto Star, June 20, 2016, *How A Guatemalan Murder Trial Could Forever Change Canadian Overseas Mining*, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2016/06/20/how-a-guatemalan-murder-trial-could-forever-change-canadian-overseas-mining.html>



German in the yard of new home, May 2016.

**GOOD NEWS:** In June, German finally moved with his family into their own home in El Estor, purchased and built with solidarity funds received through Rights Action. German now lives along a paved road in the town of El Estor, meaning he can easily roll about town.

**BAD NEWS:** German is bedridden, again, with a recurring bedsores ulcer that requires months of treatment. Even as he plays a courageous role in the lawsuits in Canada and Guatemala to achieve a measure of justice for mining related repression, he continues to suffer due to the bullet that left him paralyzed and remains lodged precariously close to his spinal column.

# Canadian Delegation to 'Berta Caceres Lives' Gathering in Honduras, April 13-15, 2016

In response to the assassination of Berta Caceres and attempted assassination of Gustavo Castro, Rights Action helped coordinate a delegation of organizations and First Nations leaders from across Canada to the "Berta Caceres Lives" gathering.

- Read: *Canada Has Blood On Its Hands: Justice in Honduras Requires a U-Turn in Canadian Foreign Policy*, June 4, 2016: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)

Rights Action will continue to advocate, across Canada and the U.S., for:

- The establishment of the independent international judicial commission to directly join the criminal investigation into the assassination of Berta Caceres and attempted assassination of Gustavo Castro;
- The establishment of Congressional, Senate and Parliamentary inquiries into the roles the U.S. and Canada played in support of the 2009 military coup and, since then, legitimizing and doing business with the post-coup regimes.

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# Mining Impunity Delegation to Guatemala, May 13-23, 2016

In response to systemic human rights violations, repression and environmental harms linked to Canadian and U.S. mining companies, Dr. Catherine Nolin (University of Northern British Columbia) and Grahame Russell completed a 10 day trip to Guatemala, re-examining four major mining struggles.

*"We continue to be astounded by the deafening silence and/or denials by the Canadian and U.S. governments, by the Guatemalan government, and by the mining companies and their investors about the widespread repression, human rights violations and environmental harms caused by mining in Guatemala, and by the context of corruption and impunity within which mining companies operate." (Catherine Nolin & Grahame Russell)*

**Delegation Alerts** (found at [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)):

- *Goldcorp Inc's Marlin Mine: A Family's Pain – The Death of Jaime Otero Pérez López*, May 15, 2016 – Alert#1
- *Diodora Hernandez and Goldcorp Inc. – A Stark Contrast*, May 16, 2016 – Alert#2
- *Guatemalan Supreme Court of Justice: KCA (& Radius Gold) vs. "La Puya" Land & Environmental Defenders*, May 17, 2016 – Alert#3
- *Mynor Padilla, Hudbay Mineral's Former Head of Security, Is Provided With Police "Security Detail" For Safety!*, May 19, 2016 – Alert#4

- **Canadian & U.S. Authorities Should Investigate Mining Companies Participating In Corrupted “Structures of Power Within Guatemalan State That Approve Mining Licenses”**, May 19, 2016 – Alert#5
- **Tahoe Resources: Where Is Your Mining License?**, May 23, 2016 – Alert#6

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## U.S. / Canadian Delegation to Honduras, June 5-11, 2016

Rights Action led a group of U.S. and Canadian citizens on this delegation *“In honor of the life, vision and struggles of Berta Caceres”*. Our focus of inquiry was “What do the U.S. and Canada have to do with repression, human rights violations, corruption and impunity in Honduras?”

Over the course of seven days, our delegation travelled to and met with:

- The family of Berta Caceres in La Esperanza, Intibuca;
- COPINH, the Lenca-campesino organization co-founded by Berta Caceres, at their “Utopia” solidarity center in La Esperanza, Intibuca;
- The Azacualpa Environmental Committee, in Santa Rosa de Copan, resisting harms and violations – and the destruction of their 200 year old cemetery - caused by the Canadian Aura Minerals gold mining company;
- CODEMUH (Collective of Honduran Women) working with women whose rights are being violated by the garment “sweatshop” industry, including the Canadian company Gildan Activewear, the US company Hanesbrand Inc, and more;
- OFRANEH (the Honduran Fraternal Organization of Black and Garifuna peoples) working in defense of Garifuna Indigenous rights and territorial control along the north coast of Honduras, resisting violent and illegal evictions and human rights violations carried out in the interests of Canadian and US tourism operators, the African palm industry (including the World Bank funded Dinant corporation);

*(continued)*



**Azacualpa community members gather for a spiritual ceremony by their 200 year old cemetery, in western Honduras, that Toronto-based Aura Minerals wants to destroy so they can expand their open-pit, cyanide leaching gold mine. Photo: Rights Action, April 2016**

Read:

- ***Todos Somos Berta (We Are All Berta): A photo journal of my 12 days in Honduras***, by Cara-Lee Malange, <http://us9.campaign-archive2.com/?u=ea011209a243050dfb66dff59&id=9176b382cf>
- ***No Light At End Of Tunnel: Summary conclusions of Rights Action delegation to Honduras***, June 15, 2016: [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)

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## **This Will Not Stop. Neither Will Resistance & Struggle**

Thank-you for sharing this newsletter far 'n' wide. Thank-you for your own work and struggle for another world is necessary and possible. Thank-you for your support for our work. Please send me your questions and comments.

Grahame Russell, *director*  
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**Matching Donor:** Until August 29, a donor will match (up to \$30,000) tax-deductible donations in the U.S. and Canada.

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