

Berta Caceres - Who She Is & What She Lived For 5th anniversary of her March 2, 2016 assassination by US & Canadian-backed Honduran regime

By Grahame Russell, March 2, 2021

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/berta-caceres-who-she-is>

(Updated version of reflection published after Berta's assassination, March 2, 2016)

March 2, 2021 marks the 5th anniversary of the assassination of Berta Caceres and attempted assassination of Gustavo Castro, who was shot and left for dead that same night.



In 2016, Berta had recently moved into her own house in La Esperanza, Honduras, near where she grew up, where Berta and her children had lived with her mother - Mama Berta. 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 Castro, 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.

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

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

Securing justice against the intellectual elites is very difficult in Honduras. Almost ironclad impunity is the norm for the military-backed government and economic elites that maintain full economic, political and military relations with the governments of Canada, the US and the EU, with the World Bank and IMF, and with numerous global corporations.



Since the US and Canadian-backed military coup on June 28, 2009, thousands of Hondurans have been killed, wounded and illegally jailed for political reasons. But for the jailing of eight “material authors” of Berta’s assassination, almost no justice has been done for any of the political killings and repression since the coup.

Que companera mas companera

Berta was a mother of four, a grandmother, a daughter and 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, what she worked and fought for her whole life.



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

Who Killed Berta?

Since her 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 *sicarios*, paid assassins working for the elite sectors of Honduras. Berta was also killed by all those countries and institutions whose greed and violence she lived, stood and fought against.

She was killed by ...

- 500 years of racist, violent, dispossessing European imperialism and colonialism
- 200 years of US military interventions, exploitation, corruption and impunity in Honduras, the original "banana republic"
- generations of violent and exploitative, racist and sexist governments of Honduras propped up by the so-called "international community" (US, Canada, global corporations, IMF, World Bank ...)
- 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 the forests and earth, rivers and water, and the people of Honduras, as exploitable, discardable objects, as they use violence and corruption to produce 'for export' products and profits

Berta was killed by ...

- the banana barons (United Fruit Company, Standard Fruit, Dole Bananas, Chiquita Bananas) 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., ...)
- hydro-electric dam companies (like DESA's Agua Zarca project being violently forced upon Indigenous Lenca territories that COPINH is 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., Aura Minerals, NUCOR Corp.) ripping the earth for gold and iron ore, poisoning the waters 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 US and Canadian backed military coup of June 28, 2009, that ousted Honduras' last democratically elected government, and brought back to power the traditional elites who - once back in power in 2009- announced that "Honduras is open for global business", re-opening Honduras' borders and resources to global companies
- the elites that made Honduras' government institutions, military and police available for a massive increase of cocaine drug-trafficking towards the US markets
- the elites who hired *sicarios* to target and kill people, ... people like Berta.

Twelve years after the coup, Honduras has one of the highest per capita murder rates 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 US.

What Did Berta Live, Stand and Struggle For?

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.

Berta lived, stood and struggled 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 political crime and great 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 and loved ones died with Berta, a part of Berta lives on and has multiplied in so many more.

What To Do?

Do what Berta would do, as she always did. Live, organize, work and struggle together. 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, remembered and forever respected

Grahame Russell

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(I met Berta in 1998, as part of my work with Rights Action. Berta and her family are dear friends. Since 1998, Rights Action supported COPINH, and we continue to support Berta's family and the struggle for justice)

To support efforts for justice, and what Berta was working for in Honduras:

COPINH

www.copinh.org, <https://bertavivecopinhsigue.copinh.org>, copinhonduras.blogspot.com,
<http://copinhenglish.blogspot.com/>

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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

Credit-Card Donations in Canada and U.S.: <http://rightsaction.org/donate/>

More info

Archives – COPINH & Berta Cáceres

Over 20 years of Rights Action archives related to work in support of COPINH, divided in 2 sections: 1999 - February 2016; March 2, 2016 - present day: <https://rightsaction.org/archcopinh>

Book: Who killed Berta Cáceres? Behind the brutal murder of an environment crusader

By [Nina Lakhani](#), 2 Jun 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/02/who-killed-bertha-caceres-behind-the-brutal-of-an-environment-crusader>

Inside The Plot To Murder Honduran Activist Berta Cáceres

Text and WhatsApp messages show that the conspiracy against Berta Cáceres reached the highest ranks of the company whose dam she had been protesting.

By Danielle Mackey, Chiara Eisner, December 21 2019, The Intercept
<https://theintercept.com/2019/12/21/bera-caceres-murder-plot-honduras/>

Films & videos: Berta Cáceres

The Life and Death of Berta Cáceres (2020)

In 2016, environmental activist Berta Cáceres was shot dead in her home in Honduras. This film by Trocaire features interviews with Berta's daughter, sister and mother.

<https://vimeo.com/390771524>

Berta Cáceres: In Her Own Words / En sus propias palabras

Based on a 2012 interview we did with the Honduran environmental activist and co-founder of the Council of Indigenous People's Organizations of Honduras (COPINH).

<https://skylight.is/2016/03/bera-caceres-in-her-own-words>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjM81tYBew4>

Berta Cáceres, Goldman Environmental Prize (April 19, 2015)

In a country with growing socioeconomic inequality and human rights violations, Berta Cáceres rallied the indigenous Lenca people of Honduras and waged a grassroots campaign that successfully pressured the world's largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam. She is the South & Central America winner of the 2015 Goldman Environmental Prize, the world's largest award for grassroots environmental activists.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zh9Sn9oJR94&feature=youtu.be>

Berta Cáceres acceptance speech, 2015 Goldman Prize ceremony (2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AR1kwx8b0ms&feature=youtu.be%C2%A0>

Berta's Daughters Speak (2019)

Berta Cáceres was killed for defending the river on which Indigenous communities depend. Her daughters continue that struggle, despite the risks – as witnessed in this Amnesty International interview.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMdXkXR7U6k&feature=youtu.be>

Austra Berta Flores, mother of Berta Cáceres, speaks

Calling on international community to demand the full truth, so that those who paid and ordered the murder of her daughter be prosecuted.

<https://oxfam.app.box.com/s/ygf6fvjpl9fg08znt7irav78jjp44lz1>

Assassination of Berta Cáceres: repression, impunity, corruption & profitable businesses in Honduras (April 4, 2017)

Wide Angle interview with Grahame Russell about assassination of Berta Cáceres; the U.S. and Canadian backed 2009 military coup; U.S. and Canadian business interests with the post-military coup regimes; why so many Hondurans flee to the U.S., year after year.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVMsJyMIIRw&t=83s&list=PLztbi9KA9roUoj_SKm_cekOB_LWo9uTFW&index=25

Dos años después de su asesinato, Berta Cáceres no se murió, se multiplicó (Febrero 2018)

<https://www.franceameriquelatine.org/6370-2/>

Honduras: Blood and the Water (September 2016)

Al Jazeera Faultlines 25 minute report on assassination of Indigenous, anti-imperialist, feminist, environmental activist Berta Cáceres.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/faultlines/2016/09/honduras-blood-water-160920064355648.html>

Berta Vive (2016)

On March 2016, the assassination of Berta Cáceres shook the world. Gustavo Castro, Mexican environmental activist witnessed the crime and survived the horror of that night but was then trapped in Honduras. The defense against the construction of a dam at the Gualcarque River is the preface to this story. We follow Miriam Miranda, leader of the Garífuna people as well as a friend and comrade of Berta. Both women share the struggle for decolonization in a country that is being sold to transnational capital and where death is delivered in so many different ways.

<https://vimeo.com/229310580>

4 Years Seeking Justice (January 17, 2020)

Democracy Now interview with a daughter of assassinated Indigenous leader Berta Cáceres

https://www.democracynow.org/2020/1/17/berta_caceres_laura_caceres_interview

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