

## **Berta Caceres: Who She Is & What She Lived For 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her assassination by U.S. and Canadian-backed Honduran regime**

By Grahame Russell, March 3, 2022

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/berta-caceres-assassinated-by-us-canadian-backed-regime>

March 2<sup>nd</sup> marks the 6th anniversary of the assassination of Berta Caceres and attempted assassination of Gustavo Castro, who was shot and left for dead that same night.



### **Victim of U.S. and Canadian-backed regime of ex-president Juan Orlando Hernandez**

In the aftermath of the January 27, 2022 ouster of the U.S. and Canadian-backed dictator from power, and in the aftermath of the arrest of Juan Orlando Hernandez, now waiting possible extradition to the U.S. on drug-trafficking charges, ... it bears repetition, again and again, that Berta Caceres is a victim of the U.S. and Canadian-backed coup in 2009, and ensuing 12 years and 7 months of 'legitimization of' and support for the military backed, drug-trafficking regimes that were in power through to January 27, 2022, when President Xiomara Castro assumed the presidency.

Xiomara was the First Lady of Honduras when her husband, President Mel Zelaya, was kidnapped at gunpoint on June 28, 2009, forced onto a plane in his pijamas, and flown to Costa Rica. His entire government were ousted and persecuted.



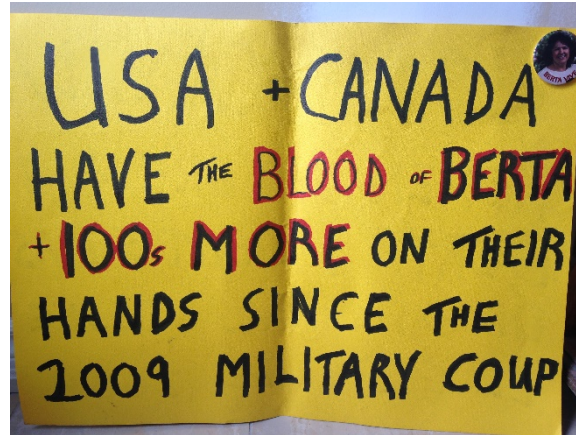
In 2016, Berta had recently moved into her own house in La Esperanza, Honduras, near where she and her children had lived with her mother, Mama Berta. Late on March 2, 2016, into the morning of March 3, a team of assassins broke into her home and shot her dead.

Unbeknownst to the killers, who had been long planning Berta's death, Gustavo, 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.

Six years later, still no justice has been done for the "intellectual authors" of Berta's assassination – the elite economic and political sectors who decided she needed to be killed, and paid for it. Attention is increasing focusing on members of the Alata Zablah family, one of the elite oligarchic families that backed the 2009 military coup, and saw their wealth increase during the 12 years and 7 months of 'open-for-global-business' regimes in power.

In 2018, due to the tenacity and courage of Berta's organization COPINH, as well as Berta's family, supporters and allies, eight men were found guilty of being the "material authors" - members of the assassination team put together and paid to kill her.

Securing justice against the intellectual elites is spectacularly difficult in large part because, until January 27, 2022, when the regime of Juan Orlando Hernandez was ousted from power, Honduras' political and economic elites maintained full and beneficial economic and political relations with the governments of the U.S., Canada, Spain and the E.U., with the World Bank and IMF, and with numerous global corporations.



Since the U.S. and Canadian backed military coup on June 28, 2009, easily over 1000 Hondurans were killed for political reasons – the assassination of Berta being the most widely known case. But for the jailing of eight “material authors” of Berta’s assassination, no justice has been done for any of the political killings and repression (torture, illegal jailings, beatings and maimings) since the coup.

### ***Que companera mas companera***

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



Berta’s mother (Maria Austra) and children (Olivia, Laura, Bertita, Salvador) in front.  
Brother Roberto and others in behind

### **Who Killed Berta?**

Since her early 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 paid assassins –*sicarios*– working for the elite economic, military and political sectors of Honduras, and by all those people, countries and institutions whose greed and violence she lived, stood and fought against.

She worked against, and was killed by ...

- 500 years of racist, violent, dispossessing European imperialism and colonialism
- 200 years of U.S. military interventions, exploitation, corruption and impunity
- generations of violent and exploitative governments of Honduras propped up by the “international community” (U.S., Canada, global corporations, IMF, World Bank, etc.)
- 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 forests and earth, rivers and water, and the people of Honduras, as exploitable, discardable objects, and who steal, kill and destroy to produce ‘for export’ products and profits
- the IMF, World Bank, IDB, etc., institutions created and dominated by these same rich, powerful nations

Berta was killed by ...

- the banana monopolies (United Fruit Company, Standard Fruit, Dole Bananas, Chiquita Bananas, etc.) 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 producing clothes for a long list of ‘top brands’: Gildan Activewear, Hanesbrand, JCPenney, Saks Fifth Avenue’s The Works, etc.
- 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, ancestral lands
- mining companies (Goldcorp Inc., recently bought out by Newmont Corp., and Aura Minerals) ripping the earth for gold, poisoning the waters of the Siria Valley 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 U.S. and Canadian backed military coup of June 28, 2009, that ousted the democratically elected government of president Mel Zelaya, and brought back to power the same elites that for so long have dominated and abused Honduras, who -

once back in power – announced that “Honduras is open for global business”, used repression as a tool of societal control, opened Honduras’ borders and government institutions to drug-trafficking, and hired *sicarios* to target and kill hundreds of people, ... people like Berta.

Twelve years and 7 months after the coup, Honduras has one of the highest per capita murder rate 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 since the coup, tens of thousands of Hondurans were forced to flee their homes and countries and try desperately to get refugee status in Mexico or the U.S.

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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.

### **What Did She Live, Stand and Struggle For?**

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 sad and enraged by this crime and loss, for Berta’s children, mother, sisters and brothers, for her family and friends in 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 in many.

### **What To Do?**

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

Grahame Russell  
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(I met Berta in 1998, as part of our work with Rights Action. Berta and her family are dear friends. Rights Action supported COPINH and Berta’s family, and Berta’s work and struggle since that time. This reflection is an updated version of one published after Berta’s assassination, March 2, 2016)

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**To support efforts for justice in this case, and for all that Berta was working for in Honduras:**

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