

# URGENT ACTION

## INCREASING SMEAR CAMPAIGN AGAINST DEFENDERS

**International organization Global Witness, along with Honduran organizations MILPAH, COPINH and CEHPRODEC are facing a smear campaign against them for their work defending land, territory and environmental rights in the country. This increasing campaign puts them at risk of further harassment and physical attacks.**

On 31 January, international organization **Global Witness** launched a new report about the situation of land, territory and environmental defenders in Honduras. The weekend before, a poster began to circulate on social media, accusing members of Honduran organizations the Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz (Movimiento Indígena Lenca Independiente de La Paz, **MILPAH**), the Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development (Centro Hondureño de Promoción para el Desarrollo Comunitario, **CEHPRODEC**) and the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras, **COPINH**), as well Global Witness, of discrediting the country, being allied with radical groups and of funding smear campaigns against Honduras. On 1 February, Amnesty International called on the Honduran authorities to publicly recognize the legitimate and important work these human rights defenders do.

On 2 February the intensity of the smear campaign against the organizations increased after a member of Global Witness and two members of MILPAH appeared on a morning Honduran TV show. Participants in the show criticizing Global Witness' report called Indigenous Peoples and organizations who supported the report "liars, opponents of development and enemies of the Honduran people who are looking for jobs and willing to get out of poverty". Global Witness members told Amnesty International that after the show, several news reporters asked them questions using the same stigmatizing language used throughout the show.

Amnesty International is concerned that the intensity of the smear campaign against human rights defenders, and the silence of the Honduran authorities rejecting statements that stigmatize their activities, facilitates physical attacks against them, in particular MILPAH, COPINH, CEHPRODEC.

### **Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:**

- Calling on the authorities to provide comprehensive protection for the human rights defenders of MILPAH, COPINH, CEHPRODEC;
- Urging them to strongly reject the smear campaigns against defenders of the land, territory and the environment;
- Calling on them to publicly recognize the defenders' legitimate and important role in promoting human rights.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 MARCH 2017 TO:**

#### President of Honduras

Juan Orlando Hernández  
 Presidente de la República  
 Casa Presidencial Bulevar Juan Pablo II  
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
 Fax: +504 2221 4570  
 Email: karlacueva144@gmail.com  
 Twitter: @JuanOrlandoH

**Salutation: Dear President/ Estimado Señor Presidente**

#### Under Secretary for Human Rights and Justice

Norma Allegra Cerrato  
 Subsecretaria de Derechos Humanos y Justicia  
 Res. La Hacienda, Calle La Estancia,  
 Bloque A-Lote 8 Edificio Z y M  
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
 Fax: +504 2232 7800 Ext. 1108  
 Email: ygudiel@yahoo.com

**Salutation: Dear Under Secretary/ Estimada Señora Subsecretaria**

#### Attorney General

Oscar Fernando Chinchilla  
 Fiscal General de la República  
 Ministerio Público  
 Lomas del Guijarro  
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
 Fax: +504 2221 5660, +504 2217 5661  
 Email: fiscalgeneral@hushamail.com  
 Twitter: @MP\_Honduras

**Salutation: Dear Attorney General/ Estimado Señor Fiscal**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR IVAN ROMERO-MARTINEZ, Embassy of Honduras, 4th Floor 136 Baker Street W1U 6UD, 020 7486 4880, Fax 020 7486 4550, hondurasuk@lineone.net

**Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.**

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries for human rights defenders, especially those working on territory, land and environmental rights issues.

In the early hours of the morning on 2 March 2016, Berta Cáceres, leader and co-founder of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras, COPINH), was killed in her home in the town of La Esperanza, Intibucá Department. Berta Cáceres and COPINH had campaigned against the construction of the hydroelectric project of Agua Zarca on the Gualcarque River and the Lenca ancestral lands. COPINH has in particular defended their right to free, prior and informed consent. This is not the only project to be developed on the Lenca Indigenous territory, and other organizations such as the Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz (Movimiento Indígena Lenca Independiente de la Paz, MILPAH) have also questioned the construction of hydroelectric plants in Intibucá and La Paz arguing that the Lenca communities was not properly consulted. Due to their work on issues related to the rights of Indigenous communities, territory and natural resources, the COPINH and MILPAH have received repeated threats, attempts to criminalize their work and physical attacks and harassment for many years.

On 7 March 2016 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued a new precautionary measure of protection in favour of all COPINH members and Berta Cáceres' family on the grounds of the risks posed by their work defending human rights, environment and natural resources and their increased vulnerability following Berta Cáceres' killing.

However, Amnesty International continues to receive concerning information about several security incidents against organizations or individuals that have accompanied or raised their voice against Berta Cáceres' murder. For example, individuals twice attempted to murder journalist Felix Molina on 2 May, hours after publishing information about potential intellectual authors of Berta Cáceres' murder. On 6 July Lesbia Urquía, a sympathizer of COPINH and MILPAH, was murdered.

For more information on the situation of human rights defenders and defenders of land, territory and environmental rights defenders in Honduras, see the reports *'We are defending the land with our blood': Defenders of the land, territory and environment in Honduras and Guatemala* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/4562/2016/en/>) and *Defending human rights in the Americas: Necessary, legitimate and dangerous* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr01/0003/2014/en/>).

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