

IM-DEFENSORAS STATEMENT

ONE YEAR AFTER THE ASSASSINATION OF BERTA CÁCERES

Mesoamérica, March 6, 2017 – One year after the murder of our compañera Berta Cáceres, feminist territorial defender and Coordinator of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), the more than 750 women human rights defenders who make up the Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders (IM-Defensoras), reaffirm our admiration and acknowledgement of this comrade who has been, is, and will continue to be a guiding force for all of us.

Berta's legacy has a special significance for all women in Latin America and the entire planet, but also for men, movements, and struggles in search of a better world. She has taught us that there can be no territorial autonomy without the autonomy of our bodies, and vice versa; that no collective struggle is conceivable if it is not also a feminist struggle; and that patriarchy, capitalism and racism are the heads of the hydra that do violence to our bodies, make our lives precarious and plunder our territories.

And so today, we also express our concern over the impunity enjoyed by the masterminds of the crime and over the context of attacks, harassment, and smear campaigns perpetrated against members of COPINH and women human rights defenders, both organizations and individuals, who have repudiated the situation experienced by rights defenders in Honduras and continue to demand that justice be done for Berta's assassination.

The arrest of the presumed perpetrators of the murder and the proof of their ties to the DESA corporation and the Honduran Army show the need to clearly establish intellectual responsibility for the crime through an investigation carried out by an independent group of experts under the auspices of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), as demanded by Berta's family and COPINH.

Instead of doing this, however, the DESA company itself and other entities have heightened the disparagement and attacks against COPINH, Berta's family and other national and international organizations that have denounced the murder and persist in demands for justice. Two examples of this are the campaign of harassment, threats and disparagement against the Global Witness organization after the release of their assessment report, [“HONDURAS: THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS COUNTRY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM”](#), and the criminalization process against the Center for Women's Studies – Honduras (CDM-H), which we denounced on March 1st in a [#DefenderAlert](#).

From our point of view in IM-Defensoras, the case of Berta Cáceres is paradigmatic of what many women human rights defenders in our region face simply for being women who have decided to disobey patriarchal mandates and take our place in the forefront of a multitude of struggles. We

cannot allow her murder —which was preceded by many other attacks, including threats, harassment, disparagement, defamation and criminalization— to go unpunished; this would imply tolerance of the fact that women can be silenced and killed without it being too costly. And that’s not the case. We’re not going to let it happen. And we’re not going to stop demanding justice until all the intellectual authors of the crime are identified and put on trial. And we’ll do it for Berta and for all the Bertas here and everywhere who defend the rivers, the land, their communities, their bodies, their sexuality, and their right to autonomy and a decent life.

Berta didn’t die, Berta multiplied. And her voice resounds along with ours in demanding that justice be done and that the masterminds of the crimes be identified and put on trial; that all attacks cease against her family, COPINH and all people and organizations who stand with them and repudiate the high-risk situation faced by human rights defenders in Honduras; and that all due respect be paid to the autonomy, dignity, rivers and territories of the Lenca people.

#1YearWithoutJustice
#BertaLives
#COPINHCContinues
#JusticeForBerta

