

URGENT ACTION

HONDURAS: DEFENDER KILLED, OTHERS HARASSED

Nelson García, 38, active member of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH) was killed on 15 March in Rio Lindo (West). Since the murder of Berta Cáceres on 3 March, other COPINH members and Berta Cáceres' relatives have been harassed by authorities and unidentified armed men.

In the afternoon of 15 March, Nelson García, 38, was shot dead in the face by unidentified men when he was returning home from a violent eviction conducted by law enforcement officials and which has been protested by Lenca Indigenous communities in Rio Lindo, Cortés Department (Northwest). COPINH members and Berta Cáceres' relatives have faced successive security incidents and harassment by authorities since her murder.

According to COPINH, eight of its nine coordinators in La Esperanza have been called to testify about Berta's killing numerous times and in interrogations lasting more than 12 hours. They have not been informed of the purpose of the questioning. Aureliano Molina, one of the organisation's leaders, was detained hours after the killing and released 48 hours later without charges.

On March 8, in San Francisco de Lempira (Southwest), four armed men in plain clothes driving two vehicles without plates parked by a community radio's premises, taking pictures of the people getting in and out. A radio worker was threatened at gun point by one of the armed men, who grabbed his phone and deleted the pictures he took to record the incident. Other men driving cars without license plates were seen the same week surrounding Aureliano Molina's house and trying unsuccessfully to make an illegal search of his home.

On March 11, police officers were seen taking pictures of participants in a public demonstration in La Esperanza demanding justice for Berta Cáceres. One of Berta Cáceres' daughters was followed by an armed man in plain clothes in a shopping center in Tegucigalpa the same week.

On March 12, in La Esperanza (Midwest), unidentified men were seen monitoring COPIHN's Casa de Sanación y Justicia (a shelter for women) and the Utopia Centre (a community centre). A car stood outside the entrance of Utopia Centre late at night for several minutes.

Please write immediately in <preferred language> or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities for a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into Nelson García's killing and all other security incidents and harassment against COPINH members and Berta Cáceres' relatives;
- Calling on the authorities to take all appropriate measures to guarantee the safety of COPINH members and Berta Cáceres' relatives in accordance with their wishes in order to fulfil their obligation to protect them as set in the precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights;
- Calling on the authorities to publicly recognize the legitimate and rightful work done by COPINH and all Human Rights Defenders in the country and to take other effective measures to stop their criminalization.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 APRIL 2016 TO:

President
Juan Orlando Hernández
Presidente de la República
Casa Presidencial
Bulevar Juan Pablo II
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email: info@presidencia.gob.hn
Twitter: @JuanOrlandoH
Salutation: Dear President/ Estimado
Señor Presidente

Attorney General
Óscar Fernando Chinchilla
Fiscal General de la República
Ministerio Público
Lomas del Guijarro
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Email: fiscalgeneral@hushamail.com
Twitter: @MP_Honduras
Salutation: Dear Attorney General/
Estimado Señor Fiscal

Also send electronic copies of your appeals to COPINH's email:
copinh@copinh.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. For further information also read UA 50/16

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/3614/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

COPINH has been fighting for over 20 years for better standards of living of its community in Río Blanco, north-western Honduras. Since 2011, COPINH members have been campaigning for their right to free, prior and informed consent in relation to a proposal for a hydroelectric plant that might force them out of their ancestral lands. Its members have been targeted with threats and harassment for years in connection with their work.

Berta Cáceres, leader and co-founder of COPINH, was shot dead on 3 March in her home in the town of La Esperanza, in the province of Intibucá, west Honduras.

Despite having been the subject of threats and harassment for years in connection to her human rights work—for which she was granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights—the investigation into her death so far has appeared to minimize any link between the crime and her work as a Human Rights Defender.

Information made public by local law enforcement officers initially suggested the murder had been the result of a robbery or a “crime of passion.” Officials so far have repeatedly called to give testimony only members of COPINH and the Mexican activist Gustavo Castro, who witnessed and was victim of the crime, and has been barred from leaving the country despite fears for his safety.

None of the people who Berta Cáceres denounced for their constant harassment and threats, including representatives of companies working in the area, have been questioned yet. For years, she had vocally campaigned against the construction of the Agua Zarca dam in the community of Río Blanco.

On last 7 March 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 situation after Berta Cáceres' killing.

Name: **Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH).**

Gender m/f: **both**

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