

# URGENT ACTION

## NEW ATTACKS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

**Members of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and other national and international organizations were attacked by unidentified armed people in the context of an international meeting celebrating the life of murdered human rights defender and leader of COPINH, Berta Cáceres.**

On 15 April a group of around 30 people, armed with machetes and stones, verbally and physically attacked members of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras, **COPINH**), as well as members of other **international and Honduran NGOs**. The members of COPINH and other organizations were gathered for the international meeting "Berta Cáceres Vive" celebrating the defender's life. At least eight of the meeting's participants were injured in the attack.

The armed people attacked COPINH members and other meeting participants while they were returning to Tegucigalpa from the Gualcarque River in Intibucá and Santa Bárbara provinces, where a ceremony for Berta Cáceres took place. A witness told Amnesty International that police officers present did not take any action to prevent the attack or to stop it. The police officers finally escorted COPINH members out of the area after international participants convinced them to react. For years, Berta Cáceres and COPINH have vocally campaigned against the construction of the Agua Zarca dam in the Gualcarque River.

This attack is the latest in a series of incidents since Berta Cáceres' murder targeting her relatives and other members of COPINH. Amnesty International believes that these incidents amount to a campaign of harassment that is endangering COPINH's members and Berta Cáceres' relatives' safety.

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

- 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 by 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 1 JUNE 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**

#### Minister of Interior and Justice

Héctor Leonel Ayala Alvarenga  
 Ministro del Interior y de Justicia  
 Edificio de la Hacienda (Principal)  
 Res. La Hacienda, Calle La Estancia  
 Bloque A-Lote 8 Edificio Z y M.  
 Tegucigalpa, Honduras  
 Email: karlacueva144@gmail.com  
 Twitter: @SDHJGDHN

**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Estimado  
 Señor Ministro**

#### And copies to:

#### COPINH

Email: copinh@copinh.org

**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. This is the first update of UA 60/16. Further information: [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/3615/2016/en/](http://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/3615/2016/en/)

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Members of COPINH and Berta Cáceres' relatives have been targeted with harassment and attacks since Berta, 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.

The Attorney General's Office called eight of the nine COPINH coordinators to testify about Berta Cáceres' killing numerous times, in interrogations lasting for 12 or more hours. The authorities detained Aureliano Molina, one of the organization's leaders, and released him 48 hours later without charges. On 8 March in San Francisco de Lempira, southwest Honduras, four armed men in plain clothes driving two vehicles without plates parked by a community radio station's premises and took pictures of the people getting in and out. One of the armed men threatened a radio worker at gun point, then grabbed his phone and deleted the pictures he took to record the incident. The same week, community members saw other men driving cars without plates surrounding Aureliano Molina's house and trying unsuccessfully to break into his home. On 11 March in La Esperanza, midwest Honduras, COPINH members reported seeing unidentified men monitoring the organization's Casa de Sanación y Justicia (a shelter for women) and the Utopia Centre (a community centre). A car stood in front of the entrance of Utopia Centre late at night for several minutes. On 11 March, police officers took pictures of participants in a public demonstration demanding justice for Berta Cáceres in several cities of Honduras. An armed man in plain clothes followed one of Berta Cáceres' daughters in a mall in Tegucigalpa, the capital, during the same week.

COPINH has been fighting for over 20 years for Lenca Indigenous peoples' rights. 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 since 2011. Its members continue to be targeted with threats and harassment in connection with their work.

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 Berta Cáceres' 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 was the result of a robbery or a "crime of passion." At the beginning of the investigation officials only called on members of COPINH to give testimony and the Mexican activist Gustavo Castro, who witnessed and was a victim of the crime; Honduran authorities temporarily barred him from leaving the country despite fears for his safety. On 31 March, the Attorney General's Office informed they inspected Energetic Development (Desarrollos Energéticos S.A., DESA)'s offices, the company that is developing the Agua Zarca Project, and received testimony by its employees.

On 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: Members of the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras, COPINH), as well as members of other international and Honduran NGOs  
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 60/16 Index: AMR 37/3776/2016 Issue Date: 20 April 2016