

April 2019

CELEBRATE EARTH MONTH Protect defenders of the earth

Do you have a river, lake or a spot near the ocean that is special to you?

For Laura Zúñiga Cáceres, (*Lao ra ZOO niga KA se res*) the Gualcarque River in the Central American country of Honduras is more than special. Her people, the Lenca Indigenous people, consider the river to be sacred. Its fresh water is necessary for food, plants and medicines that Lenca communities rely on to survive.

That's why Laura and other Lenca Indigenous people are determined to protect the river. They protested a plan to dam the river in order to create electricity. Lenca people are opposed because of the impact on their land, food, water and survival.

Laura's mother, Berta Cáceres led the campaign to stop the dam project. First she received threats. Then gunmen burst into her home and shot her. Other Lenca

leaders have also been attacked and killed.

Laura and her family live in danger. But they refuse to be silenced by fear. They are determined to continue defending their right to a healthy environment and their rights as Indigenous people. They will keep trying to protect the river that they rely on to survive.



Laura Zúñiga Cáceres © Sean Hawkey

Laura says: "My mother taught us that we have a right to live and be happy, a right we can only achieve by defending natural resources like water and the environment, which belong to all of us. We will continue to do that. In Honduras, we continue to defend our lives. Despite fear and violence, we continue to dream of a future that is just for everyone."

To celebrate Earth Month, will you raise your voice to defend Laura and her people so they can continue to speak up for their rights and a healthy environment?



The year before she was killed, Laura's mother Berta Cáceres won an important international environmental award, known as the Green Nobel. She is pictured here pointing at the Gualcarque River. At the ceremony, she said: "The Gualcarque River has called upon us, as have other threatened rivers. We must answer their call."

Photo credit: noalamina.org

WHAT CAN I DO? Please write a short, polite letter to the Ambassador of Honduras.



- * Start with Dear Ambassador.
- * In your first sentence tell the Ambassador something about yourself to make your letter personal. You might want to mention how important it is for everyone around the world to protect water and the environment. Or tell her about your favourite body of water.
- * Explain the danger facing Laura Zúñiga Cáceres, her family and other Lenca defenders of the right to a healthy environment. You could mention the killing of Laura's mother or how threatened earth defenders are when they keep raising their voices to protect their environment.
- * Ask the Ambassador to make sure that her government protects all defenders of Indigenous rights and the environment in Honduras. Ask her to make sure no one else is threatened or killed.

WHERE DO I SEND MY MESSAGE?

Ambassador Cerrato Rodríguez
 Embassy of Honduras
 130 Albert Street, Suite 805
 Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5G4

E-mail: ambassador@embassyhonduras.hn
 Postage: \$.90

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?



Ask friends and family to sign a postcard that asks Honduras to find and punish everyone involved in the killing of Laura's mother Berta. Justice will help protect other earth defenders like Laura from harm. Email kprice@amnesty.ca to order Berta postcards.

If you're not getting monthly Lifesavers but would like to, reach us at the contact information in the header. There's no cost, and you can stop receiving them at any time.