

March 1, 2019

Her Excellency Sofía Lastenia Cerrato Rodríguez  
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Dear Ambassador,

On behalf of the members and supporters of Amnesty International Canada, I am writing to share deep concerns on the 3rd anniversary of the assassination of Indigenous rights defender Berta Cáceres.

More than 59,000 supporters of Amnesty Canada have raised their voices to demand action by Honduras since Berta was gunned down in her home on March 2, 2016.

Three years later we wish to underscore the ongoing responsibility on the part of Honduran authorities to guarantee the rights of Berta's family and the members of her organization COPINH to the truth about everyone behind her murder and justice. This requires determined action to guarantee impartial, independent, timely, exhaustive investigation to identify and bring to justice everyone responsible, including the masterminds of the crime.

As you are aware, Berta Cáceres, co-founder of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) was gunned down in her home three years ago on March 2, 2016 in La Esperanza, Intibucá. Seven of eight people who were charged with involvement in the murder have been found guilty. None of yet been sentenced. The trial of David Castillo, general manager of Desarrollos Energéticos SA (DESA), arrested on March 2, 2018, has yet to take place. Castillo Mejía is the only person accused of having ordered the murder of the human rights defender. However, following a year-long investigation, a respected panel known as the International Advisory Group of Experts (GAIPE) concluded there is evidence to suggest other people may have known or participated in the planning and cover up of the assassination.

Throughout the official investigation, Berta's family and their lawyers have stated on repeated occasions that the Public Ministry has not allowed them access to the case file and the evidence collected. They have also denounced a failure on the part of authorities to

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identify all the persons suspected of being the masterminds of the murder. Lack of identification and prosecution of all those responsible for the murder of Berta Cáceres perpetuates impunity that puts other human rights defenders at risk.

It is for these reasons that we urge your government to:

1. Guarantee further impartial, independent, timely and thorough investigation into the murder of Berta Cáceres, drawing on national and international resources and expertise, so as to bring to justice all those responsible for the murder of Berta, including the masterminds, and thereby ensure the rights of the victims to truth and justice.
2. Publicly acknowledge that the efforts of COPINH to defend the rights of the Lenca people, and to seek truth and justice regarding the murder of Berta Cáceres, are legitimate and should not make COPINH into a target of threats and attacks. This message must be delivered by the highest levels of the government in Honduras.

I look forward to hearing back from you regarding the actions taken to respond to our call.

Justice for Berta!

Sincerely,

Alex Neve,  
Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada

cc : Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs