

European Parliament, Strasbourg, March 7, 2016

**Dear HR/VP Federica Mogherini,**

**Dear Ambassador Ketil Karlsen**

**Head of the Delegation of the European Union in Honduras**

On Thursday March 3, Berta Cáceres was killed. She was a world known indigenous leader, defender of human rights, environmentalist and activist in the peasant movements fighting against exploitation and plundering of their territories by multinationals. In 2015, Mrs Cáceres won the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize.

Just a week earlier, after the assassination of several leaders of her community, Cáceres had alerted authorities of the danger to her own life and the lives of other human rights defenders and indigenous leaders. She denounced the criminalization, persecution and stigmatization of community leaders, who face human rights violations, attacks on the environment and looting by multinationals in Honduras.

Berta Cáceres was currently leading the fight against the construction of the hydroelectric project "Agua Zarca" in the Gualcarque River, developed by the company DESA. Although Honduras has ratified ILO 169, the project was started without consultation and without receiving free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous Lenca community.

Yesterday, relatives and people close to Berta Cáceres blamed the company DESA and Honduran authorities themselves of failing to implement effective protection measures to ensure her safety, with police officers and military allegedly being involved in her murder.

The main witness to the murder, the Mexican Gustavo Castro Coto, is held in Honduras after the Honduran attorney general's office has issued a 30-day immigration alert against him, preventing him from leaving the country to return home. We deplore that Gustavo Castro is not being treated as a victim of an assassination attempt; instead his life is being put at risk, along with his right to free movement.

Gustavo Castro Soto, coordinator of Friends of the Earth Mexico and director of the NGO Otros Mundos, was shot twice during the attack on Cáceres on Thursday morning, and only survived by playing dead.

Given the seriousness of the situation, and taking into account the "EU Guidelines on human rights activists", in particular paragraph 14 on "concrete measures to support the defenders of human rights, particularly in the context policy development ", we hereby request the EU Delegation in Honduras to launch, as a matter of urgency, all measures at its disposal to protect Gustavo Castro Coto and to intercede with the Honduran authorities to provide for his immediate secure return to his home country Mexico, as demanded by the witness himself. Furthermore, we call on you to ensure that an international investigation of the circumstances of the assassination of Berta Cáceres will take place as soon as possible

Sincerely,

Gaby Zimmer, Chair of the GUE-NGL Group of the European Parliament

Sofia Sakorafa, President of the Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America of the European Parliament

Marina Albiol, Vice-President of Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Assembly

Javier Couso, Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament

And other distinguish members of the European Parliament:

Helmut Scholz

Lynn Boylan

Martina Anderson

Matt Carthy

Liadh Ni Riada

Marisa Matias

Marie-Christine Vergiat

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