

National Lawyers Guild Report on the Murder of Berta Cáceres

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The National Lawyers Guild

Founded in 1937 as an association of progressive lawyers and jurists, the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) promotes human rights over property rights and has been engaged in international affairs since its inception. A U.S.-based organization, the NLG examines the role the U.S. government and corporations play throughout the world. We document those roles, criticize them where appropriate, and ally with individuals and social movements that are struggling against U.S. influence in their countries.

Executive Summary

After learning of the murder of the internationally renowned indigenous rights activist Berta Cáceres Flores on March 2, 2016, the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) sent a delegation to Honduras to investigate the circumstances of her death and the response by Honduran and U.S. authorities. NLG delegation members spent seven days in Honduras, both in Tegucigalpa and in La Esperanza, where Cáceres lived and was killed. The delegation interviewed more than 20 people, including members of Cáceres' family, activists from the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) (the organization she co-founded and led), individuals questioned as part of the investigation, U.S. Embassy personnel, Honduran government officials, and others.

Based on the delegation's findings, the NLG echoes the concerns of the family, COPINH, and a growing international consensus regarding irregularities in the investigation, including the government's refusal to honor requests for an independent autopsy; the initial rush to judgment that the killing was a crime of passion; and the refusal to allow Gustavo Castro Soto, the sole witness, who was also injured in the attack, to return to his home in Mexico. The NLG lacks confidence that the same government that failed to protect Cáceres, and whose legal institutions are notoriously corrupt and plagued by impunity, can be trusted to find her killers.

Accordingly, the NLG urges the United States to call on the Honduran government to agree to an independent international investigation that leads to the prosecution of both the material and intellectual authors of the murder. The appropriate body to carry out such an investigation is the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an organ of the Organization of American States whose mission is to promote and protect human rights in the Americas. The NLG also urges the U.S. to suspend security assistance until Honduras has shown through concrete action and results that it respects human rights, protects human rights defenders, and upholds the rule of law. The NLG also calls for the U.S. to permanently end development aid (including direct aid and funds disbursed through multilateral development banks) that supports projects that were undertaken in violation of the right to free, informed consent of the indigenous people whose territory they affect.

Without urgent, pointed, and effective action by both the United States and the broader international community, which provide funding to the Honduran government, Honduras will likely continue its massive violation of the rights and the lives of its indigenous communities.

I. Introduction

The NLG has focused attention on Honduras since the June 2009 coup d'état that ousted democratically elected president Manuel Zelaya. That coup set the stage for the strengthening of corporate power in Honduras and a broad assault on indigenous rights that has culminated in the murder of Cáceres and other prominent environmental rights activists, as well as journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders, members of the political opposition, and others. The American Association of Jurists, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, and the International Association Against Torture sent a joint delegation to Honduras, whose preliminary report in English is [here](#). The final report in Spanish is [here](#). For the 2013 elections, the NLG sent a delegation of credentialed election observers who served as “International Accompaniers” under Honduran election law, and concluded that there were serious problems that significantly undermined any assertion that the election was “free and fair” or “transparent.” The report is available in English [here](#) and in Spanish [here](#).

Since the coup, the Honduran legislature has enacted a number of laws that have concentrated executive and legislative powers at the expense of individual rights and freedoms. It has also undertaken a broad neoliberal agenda, privatizing state resources and functions and courting international financiers for hundreds of hydroelectric, resource extraction, and other development projects developed and implemented without community participation. Many of these exacerbate longstanding land conflicts, threatening and precipitating the dispossession of impoverished and marginalized communities for business interests who quell community opposition with violence and intimidation, at times with the complicity of state security forces who actively participate in or turn a blind eye to the harassment. These projects have created a perilous climate for human rights defenders and specifically for those defending land and natural resources – and near complete impunity for perpetrators of abuse and intimidation. A report from [Global Witness](#) reveals that Honduras was the deadliest country in the world for environmental and land rights defenders, on a per capita basis, in 2013, exceeded in absolute terms only by Brazil. Many of these projects enjoy the support of transnational investments and bilateral and multilateral development aid, including from the United States. A delegation from the International Committee of the NLG traveled to Honduras in June 2014 to investigate the implementation of privatized autonomous city-states, or charter cities, that further threaten democratic institutions in Honduras. The report is available [here](#) in English and [here](#) in Spanish.

Despite the ongoing and well-documented human rights crisis, the U.S. has continued to provide military and economic support to the Honduran government, including a significant increase in funding for FY2016. Disbursement of 50 percent of the Alliance for Prosperity funds passed by the U.S. Congress in December, 2015 is only obligated after the [U.S. Secretary of State certifies](#) that Honduras is taking effective steps to combat corruption and strengthen public institutions and protect human rights, among other requirements.

II. History of the Conflict over the Agua Zarca Dam

Berta Cáceres co-founded COPINH in 1993 to address increasing threats to the lands and resources of the indigenous Lenca community posed by mining, logging, and other development projects on their territories. These threats intensified after the 2009 coup when the Honduran government exacerbated existing land conflicts by accelerating privatization and increasing concessions to private and foreign capital for mining and hydroelectric projects, many of which were on or affect Lenca and other indigenous territories and are opposed by those communities.

The mounting pressure from hydroelectric projects is based, in part, on policies of international financial institutions to privatize energy generation. As a result, the Honduran government privatized the National Electric Energy Company and passed laws in 2014 paving the way for the privatization of electrical energy generation, transmission, and distribution. The increasing price of electricity brought about by this privatization intensified demands for and the profitability of new sources of energy, engendering conflicts between indigenous communities, business interests, private security personnel, and Honduran security forces. The Agua Zarca Dam project on the Gualcarque River, a river of spiritual importance to the Lenca people, is emblematic of these conflict-generating projects.

COPINH's legal claim to their ancestral lands is based, in part, on the International Labor Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention 169 (ILO Convention 169). This convention, ratified by Honduras in 1994, mandates that governments protect the rights of indigenous people to the land they occupy, prohibiting forced displacement and protecting their rights over natural resources in their territories. In particular, Article 14 of ILO Convention 169 provides:

1. The rights of ownership and possession of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognized...

and Article 17 states:

2. The peoples concerned shall be consulted whenever consideration is being given to their capacity to alienate their lands or otherwise transmit their rights outside their own community.

When members of the Lenca community of Rio Blanco witnessed large machinery and construction equipment being transported through their territory, they became alarmed since they had not been consulted, or even informed, of plans for a hydroelectric project in their territory. The Agua Zarca dam was originally a joint project between the Honduran company, Desarrollos Energéticos SA (DESA) and the Chinese state-owned Sinohydro, the largest developer of dam projects in the world, which would construct it in conjunction with German equipment manufacturer Voith GmbH.

As a result of these preconstruction activities and the lack of meaningful consultation, beginning in 2010, Rio Blanco communities filed formal complaints. In September 2013, the communities filed a legal complaint charging DESA with land usurpation. The complaint stated that in January 2011, representatives of the DESA Corporation appeared in the community of La Tejera in the Rio Blanco region seeking community approval for the dam construction. The community rejected the project and recorded their decision in their official book of acts. On April 2, 2011, the Mayor of Intibucá, Martiniano Dominguez, visited the community and attempted to convince the population to accept the dam, but their opposition remained firm. In defiance of that community rejection, Mayor Dominguez issued a construction permit for the dam on December 27, 2011, an act that led to COPINH's formal charge of abuse of authority against him.

Beginning in 2012, DESA and Sinohydro began invading the Lenca people's land, destroying their crops, and building a road to the dam construction site. These activities culminated during the last week of March 2013 when signs and security guards appeared prohibiting communities from using the river entirely, despite its ancestral use for irrigation, drinking water, washing, bathing, and fishing. With no other recourse, on April 1, 2013 the [community built a blockade](#) on the road that the company used for access to the site.

Cáceres and COPINH carried out their campaign against the dam on many fronts – from the blockade and protests, to the courthouses in Intibucá and Tegucigalpa, to the international stage, where Cáceres appealed to the international financial institutions funding the project to withdraw their support.

The security team for DESA included DESA's own paramilitary force, the 1st Battalion of Engineers, and Honduran National Police. Throughout the conflict, members of COPINH were intimidated, harassed, assaulted, criminalized, and murdered. In July 2013, Tomás Garcia, a community leader from Rio Blanco, was shot and killed during a peaceful protest at DESA's office. Later in 2013, Sinohydro terminated its contract with DESA, citing ongoing community resistance and outrage following Garcia's death. The International Finance Corporation, the entity that manages private sector development for the World Bank, also withdrew its funding from the project, citing concerns about human rights violations.

However, project efforts continued with funding that had been obtained in 2012 from sources including the [Central American Bank for Economic Integration](#) (CABEI), the Dutch development bank FMO, and Finland's Finnfund. In August 2015, DESA initiated activities to construct the dam from the side of the river near San Francisco de Ojuera, on the opposite bank from Rio Blanco, where landholdings are more concentrated and where fewer indigenous communities reside. The affected communities, with the help of Cáceres and COPINH, organized to halt further progress on the dam and the conflicts began to intensify.

Brigitte Gynther, Latin American Liaison for School of the Americas Watch, reported that toward the end of 2015 and early 2016, tensions were escalating between COPINH members and local dam proponents. She [documented](#) several incidents of intimidation and

harassment against Cáceres during that time, which were reported to the Honduran authorities, including the following:

- On November 4, 2015, when Cáceres was not home, an unknown man took a laptop from her home.
- On the night of November 6, 2015, three shots were fired towards Cáceres as she was driving to Rio Blanco.
- On November 24, 2015, Tomás Gómez, another COPINH leader, received a phone call from a man known to be a supporter of the dam company, who informed him that they were going to fix things with Cáceres for better or for worse, "a buenas o a malas."
- On November 30, 2015, Cáceres and other COPINH leaders were traveling to request a meeting with the Mayor of San Francisco de Ojuera, who had authorized the dam, when the Honduran police detained their vehicles, while machinery dug huge holes across the public roads to prevent COPINH from passing. After Cáceres and the rest of the COPINH members finally reached San Francisco de Ojuera, municipal employees began to throw rocks at them and threaten them, including a threat that Cáceres was the one "who had to be killed." One of the armed men came close to Cáceres and almost cut her chest with a machete. All of this occurred as the Honduran police and military watched and did nothing, despite Cáceres requesting their protection. Finally, Cáceres called the Minister of Security, Julián Pacheco, and requested he relay orders for the police present to provide protection. Still, the police and military did not respond and the harassment continued.
- In late December 2015, the Honduran police detained two men for illegal possession of weapons. Cáceres was informed that one of them was reported to have explained he was contracted by DESA because "the COPINH people were f**ing things up a lot." This man was previously involved in a violent attack on a COPINH member who opposed the dam, and his police files indicate he was involved in a murder.
- Early in February 2016, shots were fired in the vicinity of Cáceres' home shortly before she arrived.
- On February 16, Cáceres and other COPINH leaders were pursued by armed men as they left Rio Blanco.
- On February 20, 2016, as Cáceres and COPINH members traveled to San Francisco de Ojuera to protest the dam, employees of DESA and the Mayor's office threatened, detained, and harassed them as well as vandalized the vehicles and buses as the police and military looked on.

III. Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and Precautionary Measures

Because of the persistent threats to her life, Cáceres was granted precautionary measures by the [Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) (IACHR) in 2009, though the Honduran government repeatedly failed to implement effective protections. Since that time, Cáceres had made repeated reports to the IACHR regarding threats, harassment, and intimidation she received as a result of her work defending human rights. The last meeting on the implementation of the measures was held on October 21, 2015, at which time, according to the Commission, “the IACHR had drawn the State delegation’s attention on the situation of risk faced by Berta Cáceres and on the shortcomings in the implementation of protective measures in her favor.” The IACHR specifically pressed the Honduran government to conduct an investigation and develop a plan “aimed at removing the risk factors which permitted the perpetuation of constant acts of violence and harassment against her.” On December 8, 2015, the IACHR requested the government of Honduras to provide information on the investigation and the implementation of protection measures.

In its [Situation of Human Rights in Honduras](#) report issued on December 31, 2015, the IACHR recommended that the government implement a comprehensive plan to safeguard human rights defenders and develop a strategy to prevent additional violence against them. The report expressed concern about the heightened risks facing historically marginalized groups, including indigenous communities. The Commission expressed concern about the use of criminal law to intimidate and threaten human rights defenders for charges such as “incitement to violence,” naming Cáceres as one such target. The IACHR listed four other members of COPINH who have been killed and others who have been violently attacked. After COPINH member Tomás García, who was unarmed and shot at close range, was killed by a soldier during a protest at the Agua Zarca dam in 2013, the entire organization was granted precautionary measures.

Tomás Gómez of COPINH reported that the precautionary measures for Cáceres were weak, inconvenient, and intrusive. On the occasions when police accompaniment was needed and requested, the organization was required to provide onerous pre-notification to authorities. Additionally, the organization was required to provide housing, transportation, and food to the police for the duration of their accompaniment. Further, Gómez reported that, when two security cameras requested by the organization were delivered to COPINH, they were not installed and necessary cables were not provided.

The delegation raised these issues with Julián Pacheco, Minister of Security and Sagrario Purdott, head of the Human Rights Office within the Ministry of Security, who defended their actions in implementing security measures and asserted that there were no failures on their part. Instead, they asserted that they were implementing the negotiated protective measures and blamed Cáceres for refusing constant and intrusive police surveillance.

However, the risk factors that prompted the precautionary measures in the first place were never addressed. Further, although the Ministry of Security had been informed of the increasing intimidation and threats that Cáceres and other members of the organization

were receiving during late 2015 and early 2016, additional security measures were not provided. Thus, the precautionary measures required by the IACHR were never fully implemented and were not effective, and the risk factors that prompted the measures in the first place were not addressed at all.

IV. Investigation of the Murder

Cáceres was murdered by assassins who kicked down the back door of her home during the very late hours of Wednesday, March 2. Gustavo Castro Soto, a Mexican citizen and prominent environmental activist, was staying in Cáceres' home at the time. After hearing gunshots, Castro was confronted by a gunman who shot and injured him. He found Cáceres dying in an adjacent room. Mistrustful of the local police and fearful for his life, Castro called for help from friends and colleagues, some of whom arrived in the early hours of the morning of March 3. Shortly thereafter, police and other authorities arrived on the scene.

The investigation came under immediate criticism. Its initial focus and numerous irregularities have caused alarm both within Honduras and internationally. The concerns listed below are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Their cumulative impact casts doubt on the political will and ability of the Honduran government to identify the material and intellectual authors of this assassination.

Almost immediately, Honduran authorities suggested the murder was a crime of passion, ignoring the escalating threats against Cáceres. Within hours, prosecutors and police began questioning potential witnesses and a possible suspect. Many of those interrogations targeted members of COPINH, and the line of questioning was focused on internal conflicts rather than the numerous threats and intimidation coming from outside of the organization. All witnesses from COPINH cooperated, giving oral and written statements, although many did not have any attorney present. They claimed the questioning was long, accusatory, and repetitive. Castro, the sole witness, was held for questioning for 48 hours. He was subjected to sustained interrogation, while receiving minimal medical care for his wounds and no psychological attention for his trauma. According to Castro, the interrogation focused on COPINH member Aureliano Molina, and Castro believed the prosecutors were leading him to implicate Molina as the man who had shot him. He claims a sketch artist seemed intent on drawing a picture of Molina instead of a person with the features Castro described.

Molina, who had traveled two hours from his home in San Francisco Lempira to La Esperanza after being informed of the murder in the early morning hours on March 3, was detained at the scene and moved to the local jail, where he was aggressively questioned for the next 48 hours. During the interrogation, investigators repeatedly told him they knew that he committed the murder and urged him to confess. Molina did not have an attorney at the time, but answered questions and gave statements. Late at night he was placed in a filthy and freezing cell, and he was prevented from taking his prescribed medication for a heart condition. Molina had several alibi witnesses who could testify that he was in fact in at his home in San Francisco Lempira at the time of the murder. He was released on the

morning of Saturday, March 5, because prosecutors did not have sufficient evidence to detain him. Molina and his family continue to be scrutinized by state authorities at their home in San Francisco de Lempira, who have attempted to search the family home without a warrant.

The U.S. Embassy indicated that Washington is providing support to the investigation through the following personnel: two consultants, one a retired police officer and one a prosecutor who had been assisting the public ministry in Tegucigalpa but is now advising the investigation in La Esperanza, as well as two U.S.-trained and -vetted forensic specialists working with the Criminal Investigation Technical Agency (Agencia Técnica de Investigación Criminal - ATIC).

Cáceres' family immediately requested an independent examiner be present during her autopsy, but the forensic examination took place the following day in the absence of the requested expert. On March 9, the Cáceres family and supporters held one of several press conferences in which they expressed their dissatisfaction with the investigation, and they denounced the focus on COPINH members despite overwhelming evidence of recent credible threats to Cáceres' life related to her work opposing the Agua Zarca dam. Her leadership in opposing development projects that were neither sustainable nor community-driven, as well as her high profile in the Honduran social movement, also made her a potential target for many.

V. Treatment of Gustavo Castro

Castro's freedom of movement has been extremely restricted since the morning of March 3, and he has been forced to remain at the Mexican Embassy since March 6. Although the Mexican Embassy had sent a representative who accompanied Castro during his interrogation and travel to the Embassy, he was unable to engage his own attorney through the initial part of his detention.

After giving many hours of testimony and wishing to return to his home and family, Castro went to the airport on March 5, accompanied by the Mexican ambassador, to board a flight to Mexico. Honduran authorities apprehended him and prevented him from boarding. On the following day, initially, all parties agreed that given the risks to his safety, further questioning of Castro would take place in the Mexican Embassy rather than in the jurisdiction of the crime, as permitted under Honduran law. However, at the last minute the agreement was revoked and prosecutors insisted that questioning take place in La Esperanza. Accompanied by Mexican authorities, Castro traveled back to La Esperanza on March 7, where he provided additional testimony.

On March 8, the judge in charge of the investigation in La Esperanza issued a new migratory detention order prohibiting Castro from leaving the country for 30 days. Castro's attorney, Ivania Galeano, immediately filed a request to review the decision, which was denied the following day. Galeano then requested copies of documents in the case file, including the testimony that Castro had given before he had an attorney present. She also

asked the judge to correct erroneous dates in the ruling that make it appear that Castro had tried to leave the country after he had been given notice of the initial migratory detention order, when in fact he had no notice of travel restrictions. When Galeano insisted that the date be corrected, the judge suspended her from the case, and from the practice of law, for 15 days.

According to Galeano, Castro's legal rights have been violated. Castro was entitled under law to receive attention for his injuries as a victim, yet Honduran authorities provided minimal treatment for his medical and psychological trauma. Castro also should have been afforded witness protection by Honduran authorities, as well as protection as the victim of an attempted murder. As a witness to a murder of an internationally recognized figure, his own life was and continues to be in significant danger. Honduran authorities are obligated to recognize the grave threats to Castro's security. Since Honduran authorities have been unable or unwilling to protect human rights defenders, witnesses or victims, the only viable protection for him is to leave the country. Castro's due process rights were also violated, since he was required to travel to La Esperanza, placing him at grave risk, when the interrogations could have taken place in Tegucigalpa or Mexico under Honduran and Mexican law.

VI. International Outcry

Cáceres' death has caused an outpouring of international condemnation. Among those weighing in are [The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#), an [open letter to Secretary of State John Kerry](#) signed by more than 250 civil society organizations, [Amnesty International](#), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women ([UN Women](#)), the [AFL-CIO](#), the [Vatican](#), the United Nations [Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples](#), and thousands of grassroots activists around the world, including almost one hundred [Goldman Prize recipients](#).

Although the demands of various organizations vary, most echo the family's request for an independent international investigation, the cessation of the Agua Zarca project, and the protection of human rights defenders. In Washington, concern is growing. 62 members of the House of Representatives have called for the withdrawal of U.S. military aid to Honduras; [Senator Patrick Leahy](#) has denounced U.S. complicity in supporting the Honduran government; and [a letter](#) from Representative Eliot L. Engel (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Rep. Nita M. Lowey (D-NY), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Appropriations, has requested information on compliance with human rights conditions on U.S. funding.

The international pressure has shown some positive results. In the aftermath of the murder of another member of COPINH, Nelson Garcia on March 15, two major international financiers of the dam – the Dutch development bank [FMO](#), which has invested US \$15 million in Agua Zarca, and [Finnfund](#), which has invested US \$5 million in the project – announced they would “take a time out on the project.” However, funding can be reinitiated at any time, as [Finnfund stated](#), “FMO and Finnfund will not, *for now*, make

disbursements to the project” (emphasis added). CABEI, which has loaned US \$24.4 million to the project, [has not discontinued funding](#).

Most recently, on March 25, 11 U.S. senators sent a [letter](#) to Secretary Kerry calling for a transparent international investigation of Cáceres’ death.

VII. Family and COPINH Demands

Family representatives held press conferences on March 4, 5, 10, and 11 where they condemned the assassination of their mother and expressed outrage over the ongoing threats and persecution against COPINH and the Lenca people. They presented several demands of the family and COPINH including (1) an independent international commission of experts to investigate Berta’s death, (2) cancellation of the Agua Zarca dam project, (3) suspension of all such projects within the territory of the Lenca people, (4) demilitarization of the territories of the Lenca people, and (5) effective implementation of the Protection of Human Rights Defenders Law.

The family representatives also requested a meeting with President Juan Orlando Hernández and other relevant officials in order to “guarantee respect for the integrity of the Lenca people.” To date, there has been no official governmental recognition of these requests, and no such meeting has been scheduled. The NLG delegation did discuss these requests with officials from various governmental agencies and they were all unwilling to commit to these requests, deferring them to higher authorities.

Regarding the naming of an independent investigative commission, Karla Cueva, Subsecretary of Human Rights, indicated that the Honduran government had accepted investigative assistance from the United States and the United Nations. When asked to respond to the family’s request for an independent investigation by the IACHR, Cueva conflated this demand with the Honduran government’s agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights to provide a perfunctory level of oversight, though the local mission in Honduras lacks independent investigative authority, and the office does not possess the capacity or expertise to provide meaningful review.

VIII. Conclusion

The assassination of Berta Cáceres is emblematic of the repression and impunity plaguing Honduras. The investigation has thus far inspired no confidence that the Honduran government, with or without the assistance of the United States, has the political will or capacity to uncover both the material and intellectual authors of this crime. Instead, the government appears intent on using this tragic death to discredit COPINH and to deflect responsibility for the crime. This is, in part, due to the government’s complicity in fostering a climate of repression. Despite intense international pressure, the Honduran government has been unwilling to agree to an independent international investigation of the crime – a step that is critical to a real accounting for Cáceres’ murder and the context in which it

occurred, including the recent escalation of threats emanating from DESA and its agents and the government's inability or unwillingness to protect her. A panel of experts appointed by the IACHR would ensure an independent, transparent, and impartial investigation.

More broadly, in order for the Honduran government to confront the crisis facing land and environmental rights defenders, it must address the root causes of the conflict that imperiled Cáceres and continues to create a climate of danger for COPINH. To that end, the Honduran government must respect internationally protected rights of indigenous people to self-determination in their territories, and cancel concessions granted in violation of these rights, including the Agua Zarca project.

Members of the international community must also reckon with their part in Cáceres' killing. This includes the United States, which provides security aid and development assistance, both directly through agencies such as USAID and through multilateral development banks, and other international financiers, who are also responsible for supporting a government that callously, and ultimately with deadly results, elevates property and business rights over the human rights of its people.

The U.S. must suspend security assistance until Honduras has shown through concrete action and results that it respects human rights, protects human rights defenders, and upholds the rule of law. It should also permanently end development aid (including direct aid and funds disbursed through multilateral development banks) that supports projects that were undertaken in violation of the right to free, informed consent of the indigenous people whose territory they affect.

Without urgent, pointed, and effective action by both the United States and the broader international community, Honduras will likely continue its massive violation of the rights and the lives of its indigenous communities.

IX. Summary of Meetings

United States Embassy in Honduras

James Nealon, United States Ambassador to Honduras; Julie Schechter Torres, Deputy Chief of Mission; Jason Smith, Human Rights and Labor Officer; Luis Peral, Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisor; and Jarahn Hillsman, Deputy Political Counselor

Interviews

Aureliano Molina, COPINH; Tomas Gómez, COPINH; Brigitte Gynther, Latin American Liaison for School of the Americas Watch; Representatives from Witness for Peace; Mery Aguicia, COFADEH; Mauricio Aceituno, National Subdirector of Office of Public Prosecutor; Ricardo Castro, Criminal Investigation Technical Agency (ATIC); Neldon Funes, Witness Protection Office; Attorney Arnold Guifavro, C-Libre; Rio Blanco COPINH Members (names withheld); Oscar Castro Soto, brother of Gustavo Castro Soto; Ivania Galeano, attorney for Gustavo Castro Soto; Attorney Karla E. Cueva, Subsecretary of Human Rights and Justice;

Julián Pacheco Tinoco, Minister of Security; Sagrario Purdott, Human Rights Officer/Ministry of Security; Orlin Cerrato, Director of SERCAA; Fredis Lagos Sánchez, Head of Criminal Investigations; General Félix Villanueva, Director of the National Police; and Commissioner General Héctor Iván Mejía Velásquez, National Police

X. Delegation Participants

Lauren Carasik is a Clinical Professor of Law and Director of the International Human Rights Clinic at Western New England University School of Law.

Maria Robinson is an investment consultant and a board member of the Marin Task Force on the Americas.

Judy Somberg is the Co-Chair of the National Lawyers Guild Task Force on the Americas. She practices law in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mark Sullivan is an attorney from Santa Cruz, California working on human rights issues, primarily in Latin America.

Acknowledgements

The National Lawyers Guild expresses our gratitude to all of the people who took the time to meet with us in Honduras. In particular, Karen Spring, Honduras-based Coordinator for the Honduras Solidarity Network, was critical to organizing the meetings and providing translation throughout. Her expansive knowledge of the political situation in Honduras and close connection to Berta Cáceres, her family, and COPINH were essential to our understanding of context of the murder.