

STATEMENT FROM THE DAUGHTERS, SON AND MOTHER OF BERTHA CÁCERES

Delivered from the final resting place of our Bertha. Our mom, our daughter, our guide.

Her daughters Olivia, Bertha and Laura, her son Salvador, her mother Austra Bertha alongside family and friends, wish to make public our thoughts in this moment of profound sorrow.

Our Bertha is the greatest inspiration we have known, that is why we feel a need to ensure that the truth about her life and struggle is heard. First, we want to say thank you for all the solidarity, both national and international. We want to say thank you for the support of her Lenca people, to whom she gave the best of her resistance; to the Garifuna people, with whom she bonded in struggle and visions of utopia; to all the organizations and social movements in Honduras, Latin America and the world, who have made our pain their own. We are grateful for the enormous showing of affection and condolences that the Honduran people have offered, demonstrating that Bertha's fight is the dignified fight of all the peoples and the fight that the world needs.

We must not allow the truth about the crime that ended her life to be distorted. We know with complete certainty that the motivation for her vile assassination was her struggle against the exploitation of nature's common wealth and in defense of the Lenca people. Her murder is an attempt to put an end to the struggle of the Lenca people against all forms of exploitation and expulsion. It is an attempt to halt the construction of a new world.

Her death comes in the middle of her fight against the installation of the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam on the Gualcarque River. We demand that it be made clear that the responsibility for this lies with the company DESA, which is developing the project. We hold DESA, the international financial organizations backing the project (the Netherlands Development Finance Company FMO, Finnfund, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, Ficohsa Bank) and the contractors (CASTOR and the Atala Group) responsible for the persecution, criminalization, stigmatization and constant death threats against Bertha, us, and COPINH. We hold the Honduran state responsible for obstructing Bertha's protection and for contributing to her persecution, criminalization and murder; for having chosen to favor the interests of the company over and above the decisions of the communities.

How is it possible that the same police, army and security ministry that protect the interests and installations of DESA are the same institutions that were expected to guarantee the protection of our Bertha? How is it possible that the same police, army and Honduran state that were supposed to protect her wellbeing are the same ones that sent her death threats, harassed her, and persecuted her?

It is the business groups in bed with the national government, the municipal government and the State's repressive institutions which are behind the extractive projects being developed in the region. The financiers of these extractive projects of death are the same ones responsible for the death of our Bertha and so many others struggling against the exploitation of their territories. Because it is this money that allows for the imposition of economic interests over the ancestral rights of the peoples.

We will not allow Bertha's image to be transformed into an empty logo. Our Bertha will be celebrated as part of the permanent and energetic struggle in defense of life and territory, and against this system of exploitation and pillage.

Given the demonstrated lack of objectivity seen in previous investigations in this country, we demand that the investigation of this crime be handled by an impartial international commission formed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, international human rights organizations and the appropriate governmental organisms.

We want the integrity of Bertha's status as a resistance figure to be respected. She is an eternal fighter against racism, patriarchy and the oppressive and murderous capitalist system. Her struggle is marked by a vigorous anti-imperialism, consistently affirmed in her international activities and her thorough rejection of the coup d'état financed and supported by the United States. The coup marked the beginning of this handing over of national territory to the transnational corporations to the detriment of the rights of the Lenca people and the Honduran population.

We demand the immediate and permanent cancellation of DESA's Gualcarque River concession, guaranteeing the free flow of the waters of the Gualcarque. If the government is honestly interested in justice, then we demand that they cancel all concessions for mining, dams, logging and all projects that threaten our national sovereignty.

We demand respect and guarantees of physical, legal and emotional security for our family, our communities (Rio Blanco in particular) and all those organized in COPINH.

Bertha's struggle was not only for the environment, it was for system change, in opposition to capitalism, racism and patriarchy.

Not only did they kill our mother, they killed the mother of an entire people. We are calling for an intensification of the mobilizations, denunciations and demonstrations of solidarity demanding true justice.

As Bertha said: "Wake up! Wake up humanity! There's no more time. Our consciences are shaken by the mere thought of self-destruction by capitalist, racist and patriarchal predation."

Bertha Lives!!

Delivered in La Esperanza, Intibucá on the 5th day of March of the year 2016.