

or stolen, and witnesses being intimidated and killed, securing the evidence in this case is imperative.

The Honduran Government should take whatever steps are necessary to protect the leaders of COPINH, whose lives remain in jeopardy. The government's past responses to requests for protection have ranged from inaction to ineffective.

The Agua Zarca concession and other hydro or extractive concessions that were obtained without the consent of local people whose lives or territory would be adversely affected should be cancelled. The Honduran Government needs to substantially reform the way it reviews and grants such concessions, which have too often been the product of corrupt dealings that resulted in environmental degradation, social unrest, and violence.

The assassination of Berta Caceres, as outrageous and tragic as it was, presented the Honduran Government with an opportunity to show that justice is possible in such cases and that even people who hold positions of economic or political privilege and power can be held accountable. Instead, we have witnessed more of the same—important evidence being mishandled and possibly even ignored and withheld from those entitled to it. A partial investigation that resulted in the arrest of those who reportedly carried out the crime, followed by months of silence without identifying those who were behind it. This is not acceptable.

Over the past 2 years, President Hernandez and other top Honduran officials have traveled to Washington to lobby for Honduras's share of U.S. funding for the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity of the Northern Triangle of Central America. Among other things, they have earnestly voiced their commitment to human rights and respect for civil society. They are going to find out that action, not words, are what matter.

Over the past 2 years, the U.S. Congress has provided a total of \$1.4 billion to support the plan, of which a significant portion is for Honduras. I supported those funds because I recognize the immense challenges that widespread poverty, corruption, drug trafficking, gang violence, and impunity pose for those countries. These problems will not be solved by building a wall along our southern border or deporting tens of thousands of Central Americans currently living in the United States.

I mention this because the assassination of Berta Caceres brings U.S. support for the plan sharply into focus. Today that support is in jeopardy.

It is why those responsible for her death and the killers of other Honduran social activists and journalists must be brought to justice.

It is why Agua Zarca and other such projects that do not have the support of the local population must be abandoned and replaced with an inclusive, transparent process that complies with

international environmental and social safeguards.

It is why the Honduran Government must cease its attempts to undermine the work of the Mission to Support the Fight against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras, MACCIH, which has begun to investigate the link between the assassination of Berta Caceres and corrupt dealings between DESA and Honduran state agents.

It is why the Honduran Government must finally take seriously its responsibility to protect the rights of journalists, human rights defenders, other social activists, COPINH, and civil society organizations that peacefully advocate for equitable economic development and access to justice.

Only then should we have confidence that the Honduran Government is a partner the United States can work with in addressing the needs and protecting the rights of the Honduran people, particularly those who have borne the brunt of official neglect, corruption, and violence for so many years.

Today any hope that the Honduran Government may have of continued U.S. assistance under the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity will hinge in part on the outcome of the Caceres case, concrete actions that demonstrate support for the legitimate role of civil society and the independent media, and real reform of the justice system.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 268, on the nomination of William L. Wehrum, of Delaware, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 269, on the motion to invoke cloture on Derek Kan, of California, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.●

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mrs. MCCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 253 on October 30, 2017, on the confirmation of Trevor N. McFadden to be U.S. district judge for the District of Columbia. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 254 on October 30, 2017, on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to be U.S. circuit judge for the Seventh Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 255 on October 31, 2017, on the confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett to be U.S. circuit judge for the Seventh Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 256 on October 31, 2017, on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Joan Louise Larsen to be U.S. circuit judge for the Sixth Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 257 on November 1, 2017, on the confirmation of Joan Louise Larsen to be U.S. circuit judge for the Sixth Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 258 on November 1, 2017, on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Allison H. Eid to be U.S. circuit judge for the Tenth Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 259 on November 2, 2017, on the confirmation of Allison H. Eid to be U.S. circuit judge for the Tenth Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 260 on November 2, 2017, on the motion to invoke cloture on the nomination of Stephanos Bibas to be U.S. circuit judge for the Third Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.

Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for vote No. 261 on November 2, 2017, on the confirmation of Stephanos Bibas to be U.S. circuit judge for the Third Circuit. Had I been present, I would have voted nay.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent due to a family funeral for the votes on confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 407 and the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 159.

On vote No. 268, had I been present, I would have voted nay on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 407.

On vote No. 269, had I been present, I would have voted yea on the motion to invoke cloture on Executive Calendar No. 159.●

VETERANS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, this Saturday is Veterans Day. On this 11th day of the 11th month each year, we pause to honor and pay tribute to our veterans and the countless sacrifices they have made to serve our country. We also honor their families, who have endured extended absences and profound personal challenges as they have watched those most precious to them put themselves in harm's way. In that spirit of gratitude, I want to recognize some of Maryland's bravest and finest servicemembers who have given the last full measure of devotion to our Nation.

Sgt. Eric M. Houck, 25, died from gunshot wounds in the Peka Valley of