

# URGENT ACTION

**URGENT ACTION TITLE:** Honduras: Armed attack against members of COPINH

**PUBLICATION DATE:** 5 July 2017

**URGENT ACTION TYPE AND NUMBER:** THIRD UA 60/16

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## URGENT ACTION SUMMARY:

On 30 June unknown assailants attacked Berta Zuniga Cáceres, Sotero Chavarría Fúnez and José Asunción Martínez, coordinators of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), while they were on the road returning to La Esperanza municipality. The safety of COPINH members remains at risk.

## URGENT ACTION LETTER:

Dear Minister,

I am concerned to hear about another violent attack against human rights defenders of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) following their meeting with the Indigenous Council of Cancire community to discuss defending the community's territory and environment.

On 30 June, COPINH coordinators Berta Zuniga Cáceres, Sotero Chavarría Fúnez and José Asunción Martínez were returning home from Cancire when a vehicle overtook theirs at high speed. Three people carrying machetes and the driver stepped out and began hitting COPINH's car with their weapons. Again on the road a few minutes later, the same vehicle tried to force COPINH's car off the road.

Sotero Chavarría Fúnez recently reported unknown men trying to kidnap the mother of his children. On 21 June, an unknown man threatened COPINH coordinator Francisco Javier Sánchez with a pistol while he was working the land, saying he would kill his children.

It is clear that defending land, territory and the environment is incredibly dangerous work in Honduras. In 2016, 116 defenders working on these issues were killed worldwide, the majority in Latin America and 12 in Honduras alone.

I urge you to ensure that COPINH members have all the protection they ask for, and for you to publicly recognize the legitimate human rights work done by their organization.

Yours sincerely,

## TARGET'S CONTACT DETAILS & "COPIES TO"

Minister of Security

General de División Julián Pacheco

Secretaría de Estado en el Despacho de Seguridad, Aldea el Ocotal

Antiguo Local de la Academia Nacional de Policía ANAPO

Tegucigalpa, Honduras

Email: [comunicacionCNDS@gmail.com](mailto:comunicacionCNDS@gmail.com), [sprudott@yahoo.com](mailto:sprudott@yahoo.com)

Salutation: Dear Minister/Estimado Señor Secretario de Seguridad

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Spanish

**APPEAL DEADLINE NOTICE:** 16 August 2017

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[Sections to add when relevant]

**LINK TO PREVIOUS UA:** <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/3776/2016/en/>

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION (400 WORDS + RELEVANT LINKS):**

Members of COPINH and Berta Cáceres' relatives, including her daughter Berta Zuniga Cáceres, have been targeted with harassment and attacks since Berta Cáceres, leader and cofounder of COPINH, was shot dead on 2 March 2016 in her home in the town of La Esperanza, in the province of Intibucá, west Honduras.

On 8 March 2016 in San Francisco de Lempira, southwest Honduras, four armed men in plain clothes driving two vehicles without plates parked by a community radio station's premises and took pictures of the people getting in and out. One of the armed men threatened a radio worker at gun point, then grabbed his phone and deleted the pictures he took to record the incident. The same week, community members saw other men driving cars without plates surrounding Aureliano Molina's house and trying unsuccessfully to break into his home. On 11 March in La Esperanza, COPINH members reported seeing unidentified men monitoring the organization's Casa de Sanación y Justicia (a shelter for women) and the Utopia Centre (a community centre). A car stood in front of the entrance of Utopia Centre late at night for several minutes. That same day, police officers took pictures of participants in a public demonstration demanding justice for Berta Cáceres in several cities of Honduras. An armed man in plain clothes followed one of Berta Cáceres' daughters in a mall in Tegucigalpa, the capital, during the same week.

On 13 July 2016, the offices of Honduran organization Broad Movement for Justice and Dignity (Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia, MADJ) were burglarized. The burglar stole computers with sensitive information on high-profile cases they represent, including the assassination of human rights defender Berta Cáceres (for more information, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/4453/2016/en/>).

On 31 January 2017, international organization Global Witness launched a new report about the situation of land, territory and environmental defenders in Honduras. The weekend before, a poster began to circulate on social media, accusing members of Honduran organizations the Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz (Movimiento Indígena Lenca Independiente de La Paz, MILPAH), the Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development (Centro Hondureño de Promoción para el Desarrollo Comunitario, CEHPRODEC) and COPINH, as well Global Witness, of discrediting the country, being allied with radical groups and of funding smear campaigns against Honduras (for more information, see: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/5613/2017/en/>).

COPINH has been fighting for Lenca Indigenous peoples' rights for over 20 years. COPINH members have been campaigning for their right to free, prior and informed consent in relation to a proposal for a hydroelectric plant that might force them out of their ancestral lands since 2011. Its members continue to be targeted with threats and harassment in connection with their work. Despite having been the subject of threats and harassment for years in connection to her human rights work—for which she was granted precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights—the investigation into Berta Cáceres' death so far has achieved minimum progress. Amnesty International has called on the authorities to ensure that the evidence is made available so that the parties involved in the case can exercise their rights and so that a thorough and impartial investigation into the killing can take place (see *Justice still in jeopardy in Berta Cáceres murder case*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr37/6335/2017/en/>).