

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

July 9, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We have observed with interest the investigation and prosecution of some of the men responsible for ordering and carrying out the March 2, 2016, murder of Honduran Indigenous rights defender Berta Caceres.

Berta's family and the organization she founded, the Counsel of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), have worked tirelessly over the past eight years to bring those responsible to justice. Two criminal trials have resulted in the convictions of eight men, including three executives of the DESA hydroelectric corporation, a Honduran military officer, and hired hit men. We have learned that the band of hit men who broke down the door of Berta's home to murder her were hired by DESA executives in response to Berta's support for the Lenca communities of Rio Blanco whose land and water rights were harmed by the dam.

Berta was just one of hundreds of human rights and environmental defenders who have been murdered in Honduras, but her case stands out as one of only a few that have been subject to investigation and prosecution. It has opened a crack in the wall of impunity and provides insight into the criminal structures fueling the pervasive corruption and violence that have provoked the crisis that is forcing so many Central Americans to migrate to the United States.

Today the convictions, and the continued investigations, are at risk. All eight of the men convicted for Berta's murder have appealed. Those appeals are overdue for rulings, and COPINH has reported that the judges have come under undue pressure. At the same time, the lawyers representing the corporate executives convicted of ordering Berta's murder are promoting a campaign in the media intended to call into question the basis for the convictions, through false information to which Berta's family and COPINH have not been granted a comparable opportunity to respond.

Also of concern are spurious charges presented in 2019 by DESA's CEO who was convicted of the murder, against the technology expert who provided evidence to the prosecutor's office. These charges remain under investigation and have been highlighted by the defense team in the media.

It is vital to continue investigations of those involved in Berta's case, as well as related crimes, such as financial crimes and fraud related to the hydroelectric project and the violence against villagers in Rio Blanco which includes many more killings. The international community is also culpable, as the trials exposed collusion between organized criminal networks and the private sector in a project that received


financing from international financial organizations. According to information we have received, the project was supported by the Dutch Entrepreneurial Development Bank (FMO), FinnFund, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABIE), and the regional commercial bank FICOHSA.

We are also concerned that among the false assertions made by lawyers representing the men convicted of Berta Caceres' murder is that investigative agencies associated with the U.S. Embassy uncovered irregularities in the evidence that formed the basis of the convictions.

We therefore request you to closely monitor the pending appeals of the prison sentences of the authors of Berta Caceres' murder, and to convey the State Department's support for further investigations of her murder. We further urge the U.S. Embassy to publicly repudiate false statements in the media that U.S. agencies found irregularities in the evidence against the defendants.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



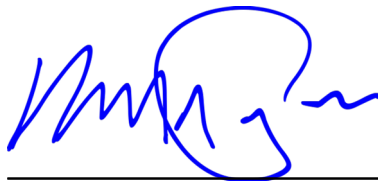
Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



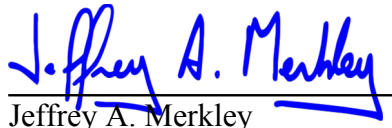
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



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Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



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Joaquin Castro  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Western  
Hemisphere  
House Committee on Foreign  
Affairs



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



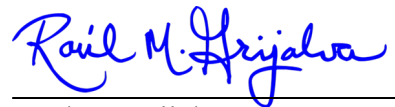
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



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Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



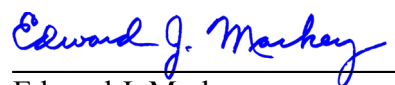
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Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



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Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



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Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

