**De-legitimization and hate campaigns always precede death**

*September 22, 2018*

Last week was a very intense one for human rights defenders at the national level.

There are reports of attacks in Colón, Atlántida, Yoro, Copán, Santa Bárbara, Intibucá, La Paz, Choluteca and Francisco Morazán; simultaneously, the same pattern.

In Colón, military intelligence invented the existence of an independent peasant organization in order to attack British journalist, Nina Lakhani, who is investigating violent deaths in the Aguán valley and covering the trial for the murder of Berta Cáceres in Tegucigalpa.

The non-existent peasant association accuses the journalist of supplying peasants with arms in order to wipe out the Xatruch task force, destroy investments of the Standard Fruit Company and the Facussé Corporation in the region and to paralyze British Gas which is in the process of obtaining an enormous contract from the Honduran dictatorship for petroleum exploration in the Atlantic.

In the same department of Colón, a satellite business of the Facussé-Nasser emporium, Los Pinares, and the municipality of Adán Fúnes, are identified as promotors of hate campaigns against the communities in the San Pedro and Guapinol sectors that resist these projects of death in the Nombre de Dios Mountains, the natural barrier along the entire Caribbean.

In Atlántida, Victor and his brother Martín Fernández, from San Juan Pueblo, are the targets of a hate campaign sponsored by the Pérez, Hawit, Atalas families and MINOSA that insist on destroying an ancestral cemetery to extract gold by a Canadian company. Martín Fernández, lawyer by profession, full time environmental defender, leader of the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ) is the object of surveillance, persecution and direct physical aggression.

Víctor, his older brother, a lawyer with a track record in anti-corruption, leader in Atlántida, Yoro, Cortés and Santa Bárbara, defender of the rights of the Tolupán, Pech and Lencas, has also received death threats in the midst of a hate campaign against him. Víctor was the defense attorney for Berta Cáceres in Santa Bárbara and Intibucá where she was criminalized from 2012 until her murder in March 2016. Currently Fernández represents COPINH in the trial against those who murdered the indigenous, Lenca leader.

Víctor and Martín, are both beneficiaries of two resolutions from the Inter American Commission on Human Rights assigning protective measures due to the high degree of risk for environmental defenders and for attorneys and those who accompany indigenous people and agrarian communities.

In the department of Copán, the leadership of MADJ as well as ACI Participa and ASONOG, are the targets of de-legitimization campaigns financed by MINOSA, a business backed by Canadian capital, which insists in desecrating the cemetery of the Azacualpa community in search of gold, with the complicity of mayors, medical examiners, prosecutors and the police.

In the department of Yoro the team of journalists with Radio Progreso, led by Jesuit priest Ismael Moreno, also suffered a de-legitimization campaign due to its work accompanying communities that resist the deadly extractive model that COHEP, the Chambers of Commerce and Mining Associations promote in Honduras.

Further to the west, the Environmental Movement of Santa Barbara (MAS) is also the object of a de-legitimization campaign for accompanying the communities of Gualala, opposed to the mining of a mineral that will destroy 80% of the town of Arenales. In Santa Bárbara, coup supporters authorized 86 mining concessions and 28 dams on rivers that will convert the department into a social and environmental explosion.

Throughout Honduras, American Pacific, a U.S. mining company purchased by Canadians, has 45 concessions for metals in the departments of Santa Bárbara and Choluteca. The coup dictatorship supports, extorts and defends them.

In La Paz, in the south of Francisco Morazán, the communities, organizations, leaders and defenders of Reitoca confront individuals and groups with power, linked to criminal sectors that have impunity, that are protected by representatives of the dictatorship disguised as authorities, journalists and the media.

This entire national community of human rights defenders are targeted by campaigns, in the same pattern, carried out by this criminal community: poorly made videos with pirated images, false profiles and distorted memes in the social networks, official declarations by spokespersons for the dictator and the private sector that violate territories without consultation. It is a perverse mix of criminal logic.

The objectives of the campaigns are diverse, including; impacting community resistance efforts, generating doubts about the authenticity of the work of human rights defenders, sowing fear, destroying collective morale, and the physical assassination of leaders.

The worst example of this is the crime against Berta Cáceres and the DESA Company whose top executives are active military, police and FICHOHSA bank executives, accused by COPINH of planning and carrying out her murder. Prior to doing so, they pursued their victim in the media, networks and communities.

This is why hate campaigns are not a joke. This is why the government of the United States warns its citizens not to come to Honduras, a dangerous country because of the control of the criminals in power. This is why the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights is worried about these campaigns.

It is not enough to be worried. We must stop the campaigns and detain those responsible for them. We must denounce the media that reproduce them, the executives and those who finance the diffusion of hate messages and bring them to justice.

The money of the companies and their relations with organized crime must never be greater than the will of the people. The people do not want mines, big dams or the destruction of the Caribbean by British petroleum. COHEP can organize all the campaigns that it wants and the dictator can support them all, but the communities say NO. This is not the development we want, the hell with it. Period.

*COFADEH, Voices against Forgetting 9/22/2018*

<http://defensoresenlinea.com/las-campanas-de-descredito-y-de-odio-siempre-preceden-la-muerte/>