

Lesbia Janeth Urquía : Honduras confirms murder of another member of Berta Cáceres's activist group

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Four months after the assassination of award-winning environmentalist Berta Cáceres, an indigenous activist and member of her organization has been killed.

Authorities in Honduras have confirmed the murder of yet another indigenous activist, four months after the assassination of award-winning environmentalist Berta Cáceres prompted international outrage over the targeting of campaigners who oppose mega-projects and resource extraction in the Central American country.

Judicial officials said in a statement on Thursday that they had opened investigation into the murder of Lesbia Janeth Urquía, 49, whose body was found abandoned in a rubbish dump in the municipality of Marcala, about 160 km (100 miles) west of the capital, Tegucigalpa.

The statement said Urquía had suffered a severe head injury and that a possible motive for her murder was "the supposed robbery of her professional bicycle", which she was planning to ride when last seen on Tuesday afternoon.

Urquía, a mother of three children, was a member of the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (Copinh) - the organization founded by Cáceres - and had been working to stop a hydroelectric projects in Honduras's western La Paz department.

"The death of Lesbia Yaneth is a political femicide that tries to silence the voices of women with courage and the bravery to defend their rights," Copinh wrote on its website. "We hold the Honduras government directly responsible for this murder.

"Lesbia Yaneth was a fervent defender of the community rights and opponent of the granting of concessions and privatization of rivers in La Paz," the group said. Copinh said Urquía's murder "confirms that a plan has been put in motion to disappear those who defend nature's common goods".

Last month the *Guardian* reported allegations by a former Honduran soldier who said that Cáceres and other activists were included on a hitlist circulated among special forces units. Honduran officials have denied the allegations.

Cáceres, who last year won the prestigious Goldman environmental prize, was shot dead in her home in March after receiving dozens of death threats related to her opposition to the Agua Zarca dam on the Gualcarque River, which she said was being constructed without the consent of the local populations.

She was perhaps the most high-profile victim in a string of killings; according to watchdog group

Global Witness, more than 100 environmental activists were murdered in Honduras between 2010 and 2015.

Five suspects in Cáceres's slaying have been arrested, including two employees of the company constructing the Agua Zarca dam and an active-duty major in the Honduran army.

Less than two weeks after Cáceres was killed another Copinh member, Nelson García, 38, was shot dead during a violent eviction by Honduran security forces.

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P.S.

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