



Concept Note: UN Forum event on Human Rights Defenders in Latin America 2016

1. **Title: How many more killings & threats? Solutions to protect human rights defenders working on extractives in Latin America**
2. **Date & Time: Wednesday, 16 November, 10-11:20am**
3. **Moderator:** Phil Bloomer, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
4. **Speakers:**
 - **Keynote speaker: (TBC) Laura Zuniga Cáceres, daughter of Berta Cáceres**
 - **Confirmed: Latin American HRD – Omar Jeronimo (Guatemala)**
 - **Confirmed: Ben Leather, Global Witness**
 - **(TBC): Company/investor representative**
 - **(TBC): Government representative: Catherine Godin, Deputy Permanent Representative, Canadian Permanent Mission, Geneva**

5. **Short explanation of the focus and aims of this session:**

122 land and environmental rights defenders were killed in Latin America in 2015 for demanding corporate accountability. This year, the trend of attacks, harassment and criminalization of human rights defenders working on issues related to natural resource extraction has continued to worsen within a global context of narrowing civic space. The world rose up in reaction to the murder of Honduran indigenous leader Berta Cáceres in March and led many to ask what more can be done to reverse this trajectory. However, this has not prevented the subsequent deaths of several of her colleagues. What can governments, civil society, investors and progressive companies do to counteract this trend?

This session brings together States, companies, activists and NGOs to explore concrete proposals regarding how to ensure the safety of human rights defenders in one of the world's most dangerous environments in which to demand corporate respect for human rights. The purpose for this session is to shed a light on the current dangers HRDs working on corporate accountability issues are facing; to propose effective ways to counteract this trend, solutions that have been tested, and new ways to tackle the problem; and to analyze the gap between due diligence, responsible financing and impacts on the ground.

6. **Format:**

- a. Opening speech by **Laura Zuniga Cáceres** (3-4 minutes) – story of numerous threats against numerous activists and the inaction of the authorities and the other actors involved, plus the importance of the solidarity received from international civil society
- b. **Round one of questions to panelists, who have 2-3 minutes to respond:**
 - Global Witness – Global, regional and sectorial trends of threats to HRDs and roles that government and businesses should play
 - Omar Jeronimo – Threats and attacks experienced and different actors' involvement
 - Business – Types of actions companies have been taking in an effort to address threats & attacks against human rights defenders and challenges for companies in taking action
 - Government – Role of home governments of companies in tackling the issue



c. **Hypothetical case study is presented and each panelist is given 3 minutes to respond, followed by the opportunity for 2 audience members to intervene on the first 3 responses (total of 25 minutes)**

Questions:

- Government – Prevention of the situation and response to it – at home / abroad
(*Open for two interventions from the floor*)
- Omar Jeronimo – Expected response from governments and companies
(*Open for two interventions from the floor*)
- Business – Business action to prevent / respond to situation – if company involved / if the situation is happening within their sector
(*Open for two interventions from the floor*)
- Global Witness – Actions by other actors
(*Open for two interventions from the floor*)

d. **Round two of questions to panelists, who have 2-3 minutes to respond**

e. **Questions and interventions from the audience, responses from the panel**

7. **Useful links:**

- [Costs of Company-Community Conflict in the Extractive Sector](#), Harvard Kennedy School, Shift & The University of Queensland, 2014
- [Community Consent Index 2015: Oil, gas, and mining company public positions on Free, Prior, and Informed Consent](#), OXFAM, 2015
- [On dangerous ground](#), Global Witness, 2015
- [Stop the Killings of HRDs- Front Line Defenders Annual Report 2016](#), Front Line Defenders, 2016
- [Human Rights Defenders in National Action Plans \(NAPs\) on Business and Human Rights](#), ISHR, 2016
- [Peace Brigades International Annual Report](#), PBI, 2015
- [Positive action by companies to protect civic freedoms](#), Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 2016

8. **Session organizers:** Platform against Impunity, Front Line Defenders, Global Witness, Peace Brigades International, International Service for Human Rights and Business and Human Rights Resource Centre