



ENVIRONMENTAL LAUREATES' CALL TO END REPRESSESION AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS

We, winners of the world's environmental awards attending the 6th International Convention of Environmental Laureates in Freiburg, Germany, are deeply concerned about the marked rise in intimidation, harassment, repression, and physical assault of environmental defenders being reported in many parts of the world. We sharply criticize those governments that are failing in their duty to guarantee the lives and safety of civil society members.

As threats to the global climate, biodiversity, ecosystems, natural reserves, and human health have become more common and more severe, environmental activism has proliferated and become more visible around the world.

In response, a growing number of state and private actors are utilizing legislative tools and other techniques to control and suppress the activities of civil society groups deemed threatening to their agenda. These range from restricting access to funding, to criminalizing legitimate activism, labeling environmental groups as foreign agents, and engaging in illicit surveillance. Of grave concern is the growing evidence of heightened intimidation and reprisals, including imprisonment and even targeted assassinations to silence civil society members.

2015 was the deadliest year on record for people working to protect the environment, with 185 human beings being killed because they dedicated their lives to protecting human health from pollution and to preserving our planet. Berta Cáceres, winner of the Goldman Environmental Prize, who was murdered in her home in Honduras last year because she challenged mining and dam-building corporations, is just one example of someone losing her life for defending human rights and the environment.

We, winners of some of the world's most prestigious environmental awards, call on governments to immediately halt the harassment, attacks, and threats against environmental defenders and organizations and to guarantee that they can fully exercise their rights under domestic, international, and human rights laws, including the essential freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

We commend the national and international efforts and initiatives that have been undertaken to ensure that environmental defenders and groups are able and encouraged to operate freely and express their opinions.

We, participants of the 6th International Convention of Environmental Laureates, will continue unabated our efforts to protect the earth's ecosystems, preserve natural resources, and prevent life-threatening climate change. We will continue to monitor the actions of state and non-state actors and will raise our voice against any threats to the health and safety of environmental defenders.