To:

Ms. Lilianne Ploumen

Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

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Mr. Nanno Kleiterp

Chief Executive Officer FMO, Nederlandse Financierings-Maatschappij voor Ontwikkelingslanden

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CC:

Mr. Bert Koenders, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Mette Gonggrijp, Dutch Ambassador in Costa Rica

Mr. Jean Frijns, Chairman of the Supervisory Board, FMO

Mr. Jesse Klaver, Member of Parliament Groen Links

Mr. Jasper van Dijk, Member of Parliament SP

Ms. Marianne Thieme, Member of Parliament Partij voor de Dieren

Mr. Joel Voordewind, Member of Parliament Christen Unie

Mr. Halbe Zijlstra, Member of Parliament VVD

Mr. Diederik Samsom, Member of Parliament PvdA

**Call for ending the financing of violence in Honduras**

Intibucá, Honduras, March 24, 2016

Dear mrs. Ploumen and mr. Kleiterp,

From Honduras, we write you his letter, because of our concerns on the situation we are observing here. We urge you to reflect once more on your involvement in the shocking events of the past weeks.

Over the past couple of weeks, the international attention for the Agua Zarca dam project in Honduras has increased, due to the assassination of Berta Cáceres. Berta was one of the founders and leader of COPINH, the indigenous organization that defends the rights of the Lenca people in Honduras. In January, we spent a month in Honduras investigating the Agua Zarca case. During this time, we came to understand the perilous dynamics of this project. For the moment, we returned to Honduras in order to support COPINH in these difficult times.

Honduras is the most violent country in the world. Moreover, it is known for its high impunity rate: 90% of the crimes remains unpunished. In the media, the violence is usually attributed to drug gangs, but this is short-sighted: the government has a big part in the violence. Honduras is being held in a spiral of violence by a powerful elite. This elite has power over politics, the military and the private sector and has shown in various ways that they do not flinch for anything. Several of the oligarchic families were involved in the 2009 coup d’etat. Also, they have been involved in the massacre that took place in Bajo Aguan over the past years, in order to secure their interests in the palm oil market. There are numerous examples of the interference of the elite in the judicial system.

It was not easy for us, as Dutch citizens, to understand how far-reaching the consequences are of a state that is (not) functioning as the Honduran government does. Still, in January it became crystal clear to us that the members of COPINH risk their lives with the work they do. Also, it became clear to us that the Lenca communities, which COPINH defends, have never experienced any form of support from the state. As an inhabitant of the community where Nelson Garcia was murdered last Sunday said: ' We are meaningless, they can do with us whatever they like'.

We urge you, again, to do everything that is in your power to guarantee an independent investigation on the murder of Berta Caceres. Although there has been international pressure on the Honduran government, until today there has been no sign that the research is conducted in a proper manner. There are serious concerns that the research is being manipulated and that it will be used to further discredit COPINH.

Moreover, we demand that FMO immediately withdraws from the Agua Zarca project. The reaction of FMO we observed in the past few weeks, baffles us. The situation is now getting out ow hand and instead of reacting to that adequately, taking decisions has been postponed. This has been done because of the security situation in Honduras. We do not understand that. Honduras has never been safe. FMO decided to finance Agua Zarca right after the murder of Tomas Garcia by a soldier, in which his son Allen was heavily wounded as well. At that time, FMO did consider it to be safe enough to invest in the project. Besides, there are no signs that the security is about to improve in the coming months. If Honduras is not found to be safe enough for a Dutch banker, with all means to ensure its safety during its visit, how does FMO asses the situation for the Lenca people that defend their land?

If FMO, and the Dutch government that is responsible for the bank, do not quickly decide to withdraw from the project, our confidence in that they truly value human rights will drop to zero.

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