

Honduran top court finds David Castillo guilty in murder of Berta Cáceres

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Dozens of people demonstrated outside the Honduran Supreme Court?

Tegucigalpa, July 5 (RHC)-- Chamber I of the National Sentencing Court of Honduras read the ruling in the case against David Castillo Mejía, who was found guilty of the murder of environmentalist Berta Cáceres.

While the hearing was taking place, dozens of people demonstrated outside the Honduran Supreme Court in expectation of the ruling for David Castillo, considered one of the masterminds of the crime, which occurred on March 2, 2016.

The ruling was notified by the Sentencing Court "by unanimous vote" and the prison sentence that Castillo will receive will be announced next August 3rd, stated the spokesperson of the Judiciary, Lucia Villars.

Castillo, an executive of the company Desarrollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA), was convicted as "intellectual co-author" -- the mastermind -- of the murder of the Lenca environmentalist and could face a sentence of between 20 and 25 years.

With the conviction of one of the intellectual authors, the manager of the company of the Atala Zablah family, whom she herself denounced for corruption, remains to be tried. During the trial, wiretapping and wiretapping were one of the key pieces of evidence used by the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) to prove Castillo's guilt in the death of the environmentalist.

Castillo's guilt was qualified by the Public Prosecutor's Office as "a historic oral and public trial guilty verdict." The Public Prosecutor's Office informed that "it is reiterated that the present case is still open and work is being done to identify other intellectual authors involved in the murder of the human rights activist".

"From the evidence evacuated in the debate, during two months, Chamber I of the Sentencing Court with National Jurisdiction considered that the extraction and emptying of information in cellular devices of the accused and others involved was sufficiently revealing to establish that Castillo ordered the death of Cáceres."

This would be part of a plan to eliminate any obstacle that would interfere with DESA's operations on the Gualcarque River, ancestral territory of the Lenca indigenous people," the Attorney General's Office said in a press release.

In December 2019, a Honduran court sentenced four of eight defendants to 34 years in prison for the murder of Cáceres and 16 for the attempted murder of Mexican Gustavo Castro. Three others were sentenced to 30 years in prison as co-perpetrators of the crime.

Cáceres confronted DESA for defending the Gualcarque river, where the company intended to build the Agua Zarca hydroelectric dam, considering that it caused damage to the environment, mainly to the Lenca communities.

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