

New World Bank Policies Imperil Environment and Land Defenders



Washington, August 5 (RHC)-- The World Bank has approved its new “Environmental and Social Framework” which civil society groups say weakens human rights protections and will likely endanger the very communities the safeguards are intended to protect.

At issue are a series of contradictions which strengthens the oversight authority of the very governments that are pushing the mammoth development projects typically opposed by poor, Indigenous and working class communities. The likely result, critics say, will be more conflicts and more corpses, doubling down, as it were, on 2015, a year which the environmental NGO Global Witness says was the deadliest recorded year for environmental defenders, with an average of three slayings per week, worldwide.

This year already saw the March 3 high-profile assassination of Berta Caceres an Indigenous rights and land defender from Honduras who tirelessly campaigned against a widely unpopular dam project once funded by the Bank’s financial lending arm, underscoring yet again the violence often associated with international development projects.

In fact, World Bank President Dr. Jim Yong Kim was widely criticized after he gave a talk on April 6 at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City suggesting that incidents like Caceres' death, which caused condemnation and mourning around the world, are the cost of doing business.

Kim said that "you cannot do the kind of work we are trying to do and not have some of these incidents happen," prompting a letter from 313 organizations and 31 individuals condemning the remarks. In the same speech Kim also said: "I think our commitment is to hear the voices of the Berta Caceres's of the world, we have to."

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