



## **Churches and Mining Network**

### **IV GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Buenos Aires, Argentina

August 20-22, 2019

#### **LETTER TO COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY MINING**

Dear communities threatened, criminalized, exploited and devastated by mining extractivism, which resist hopefully,

Gathered in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from August 20 to 22, 2019, sixty lay people, bishops, priests, religious and pastors men and women, from 10 countries of Our America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Peru) and the United Kingdom, we share our voices and the rich experience that we lived here these days through this heartfelt letter.

We internalize and embrace as our own the pains, joys and hopes of the voices of these communities, that with faith and intense strength face the impacts, increasingly disastrous, of extractive activities in their territories that kill people and exterminate nature.

We deeply understand the global forms and implications of mining expansion throughout our subcontinent, with climate change being the terminal symptom of the great damages caused by this capitalist, neoliberal and predatory system. We are encouraged to share the multiple resistances of our peoples, rooted in their territories, encouraged by their native, traditional and Christian cultures and spiritualities. We decided to undertake actions to strengthen these struggles, knowing that the survival of our planet, our Mother Earth, Pachamama, also depends on them.

Illuminated by the Mayan Cross and the Indo-African-American mystics who invited us to harmonize the ways of the human being with the ways of God and his Creation; who invited us to recognize the lights and shadows of the different cardinal points to which we belong and whose land we received, we want to tell you that our community heart became a cross, which reached out to the East and the West, to the North and South of this Latin American land and of all the lands that scream for help.

We were deeply moved, touched and humanized by the tears of the people of Brumadinho and of their bishop Dom Vicente Ferreira, as we honored each of the names of the 272 dead and 20 missing persons, the Córrego do Feijão e Paraopeba rivers and all its biodiversity, victims of the crime committed by the mining company Vale against this community. Also, remembering the more than 60 people killed and the 218 criminalized in the last 10 years because of their activism in mining-related conflicts and all the resistant peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean in the



face of this capitalist model of “infinite growth”, through the dispossession of the most vulnerable, we became silent, outraged, angered in tears, prayers and a sense of urgency.

Encouraged by the encounter with the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and their brave public march that illuminates the marches of our entire Latin American and Caribbean House; encouraged by the embrace of Mother Norita Cortiñas who invited us to persistent patience, hopeful and committed to memory, justice and life, we felt a sense of admiration for all communities that defend individual and collective human rights, of the land, the environment and the common goods of Our America. We took steps to walk by their side.

Motivated by the memory of the Latin American and Caribbean martyrs, with pain, strength and dignity, we scream demanding the clarification of the murders and massacres made by mining companies, with omission or collusion with governments, against inhabitants of territories, women and men defenders of Mother Earth, and of the aggressions against biodiversity, in the different countries of our continent, and most urgently in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.

We receive with indignation the news of the criminal fires in the Amazon region, encouraged and tolerated by the Bolsonaro government, directly threatening the life of the planet, since the Amazon is the largest forest on whose perspiration the planetary climate depends, not only in South America.

We demand the establishment of responsibilities and the adoption of measures of truth, justice and re-dignification. We demand that the governments of the different countries of the region adopt the protection measures required to safeguard the lives of defenders, activists and community leaders, who are threatened, and we urge the peoples to struggle to guarantee the full functioning of democracy and the exercise of their rights.

The priority actions that we propose in this context lead us, as a network, to interfere in corporations, States and in the Churches, to promote divestment in mining of the Global North to embrace the dialogue and exchanges among different eco-spiritualities and to strengthen our communication.

From our community heart, made cross and hug, in solidarity with the Latin American mothers who comfort and maintain the march for justice and memory with all hope; made urgent step and precise shout, we want to ratify that we are one with you and our Common House.

In loving celebration, united in the joy of those who know that, with Christ Jesus, Life conquers death and pain, we will make of every fight a feast: for all of life and forever! Let Life dawn!

**Buenos Aires, August 22, 2019**  
**IV Assembly - Churches and Mining Network**