

Latin American Gathering on Protection Strategies for Territorial Defense
May 30, 31 and June 1, 2017. Casa Xitla, Tlalpan, Mexico City

Declaration of organizations participating in the Latin American Gathering of Defenders and Authorities of the Original Peoples and Territories of Latin America. ¹

Defenders and authorities of the original peoples and territories of Latin America came together in Mexico City to share and analyze our realities, struggles, challenges and hopes.

With indignation, we have seen the advance of a neoliberal, extractivist model that plunders natural assets, invades territories and destroys life in all its forms. This is a system based on a new colonialism that generates new forms of slavery among populations inhabiting the territories devastated by insatiable greed. It is a system that considers women's bodies as other territories to occupy and conquer as spoils of war. Its impacts are intensely experienced, particularly by the indigenous, rural, black, Afro-descendant, rural-mestiza and quilombo populations.

With sorrow, we see the way in which the waters, forests and lands of our region are deteriorating, and the way those of us who defend these common assets are criminalized, prosecuted and stigmatized. With deep concern, we watch the rapid process of the re-concentration of land and wealth in increasingly fewer hands, a process that is generating monstrous and dangerous inequalities on our continent.

We live in surroundings of impunity, corruption, censorship, consciences bought and sold, militarization, hired gunmen, murders, disappearances and imprisonment. We live in narco-states where life is worth nothing and laws are used to repress those of us who raise our voices and work to make these problems disappear.

The formal powers, including governments and institutions, along with the powers that be—big capital, transnationals, drug traffickers, conservative churches and news media— are fortifying this neoliberal, patriarchal model that has made money the god that must be served at the cost of life itself, sweeping away civil and political rights, cultural rights, environmental rights, and all the rights won during so many years by our peoples.

We do not accept the manipulation by these powers of the history of our peoples, nor their discourse aimed at making us believe that the destruction of our territories and the plunder of our natural resources will bring development, progress and well-being.

¹This gathering was organized by Amnesty International, International Peace Brigades (PBI), Urgent Action Fund – Latin America (FAU-AL), Front Line Defenders, Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders, Just Associates (JASS), Bread for the World, International Protection in Coordination with Aluna Psychosocial Accompaniment, Committee for the Freedom of Expression in Honduras (C-Libre), Oaxaca Consortium, Human Rights Coordination of Paraguay (Codehupy), National Human Rights Coordination of Peru, We Are Defenders Program, Services and Consulting for Peace (Serapaz), Latin American Network of Women Social and Environmental Rights Defenders, Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders, Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA) and the Latin American Women's Union (ULAM), and was attended by defenders who drew up this statement.

We consider it outrageous that in the 21st century, when there is an increasingly wider recognition by the international community of the rights of every human being, that defenders of the water, forests, lands and territories continue to be imprisoned and killed.

Plunder and injustice, along with the abuse of power, have left enormous scars and grief yet to be resolved in our peoples and communities. We have seen the social fabric of the communities torn and the normative, cultural and historical systems weakened among the indigenous, Afro-descendant peoples and their territories. We have seen municipal and territorial autonomy disappear. We have seen a rise in feminicides, sexual violence, the trafficking of women's bodies, the fragmentation of families, the forced displacement of populations that must leave behind their homes, their loved ones, their memories. We have seen many of our people live in uncertainty and anxiety, with the daily fear of losing their lives.

Today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, in each of our countries, in each territory of Our America, a defender, a person, will be killed, jailed, disappeared, tortured, threatened, raped or exiled for defending rights established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the face of so much death, human rights defenders, particularly those who defend the environment and territories, are forming strategic alliances that will be long-lasting and allow us to better protect ourselves and strengthen our organization, resistance and political action.

We call on other peoples, scholars, progressive intellectuals, organizations and social, popular and community movements to support these struggles with decision and passion, and to refuse to allow the advance of this patriarchal, neoliberal, model that preys on our natural assets, because if it does advance, it will end up destroying all humanity and life itself.

We want to tell you that with an enormous effort, we're still alive. And we feel happy about maintaining our commitment to struggle for life. For the life of all forms of life. For freedom, justice and the permanence of memory. For a better future for all. For the planet, our common home.

In Mexico City on the first day of the month of June,

Signatory organizations and country:

Parliament of the Mapuche People of Río Negro – Argentina
National Network of Women in Defense of Mother Earth – Bolivia
Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) – Brazil
Landless Workers Movement – Brazil
Brazilian Committee of Human Rights Defenders – Brazil
Land Rights – Brasil
Anamuri – Chile

Territorial Defense Network – Chile
Mapuche People, Juan Kurrin Community– Chile
Campesino Association of Buenos Aires – Colombia
Naya River Basin Community Council – Colombia
Peoples’ Legal Team – Colombia
Ríos Vivos Movement – Colombia
Black Communities Process– Colombia
Northern Union for Life (UNOVIDA) – Costa Rica
Waorani Women’s Association of the Ecuadorean Amazon – Ecuador
Santo Tomás Women’s Association (Momujest) – El Salvador
Salvadoran Ecological Unit – El Salvador
National Coordination of Women Weaving Strength for Good Living – Guatemala
Campesino Committee of the Altiplano (CCDA) – Guatemala
Council of K’iche’ Peoples CPK – Guatemala
Mam Council– Guatemala
Ecumenical and Social Coordination in Defense of Life in Zacapa and Chiquimula – Guatemala
Plurinational Ancestral Government of Izabal – Guatemala
Youth Organized in Defense of Life – Guatemala
Madre Selva Collective– Guatemala
La Puya Peaceful Resistance– Guatemala
Honduran Center for the Promotion of Community Development (CEHPRODEC) – Honduras
El Listón Community – Honduras
Zacate Grande ADEPZA Communities– Honduras
Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH)– Honduras
Environmental Movement of Olancho – Honduras
Independent Lenca Indigenous Movement of La Paz – Honduras
Organization of Miskita Women– Honduras
Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras (OFRANEH)– Honduras
Sierra Madre Alliance– Mexico
Assembly of the Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Defense of Land and Territory – Mexico
Popular Assembly of the People of Juchitan (APPJ) – Mexico
Spinning Threads of Life Women’s Collective – Mexico
Tosepan Collective Sierra Norte de Puebla – Mexico
People’s Front in Defense of the Land (FPDT) San Salvador Atenco – Mexico
Movement in Defense of the Río San Pedro Libre – Mexico
Movement in Defense of Life and Territory (Modevite) Chiapas – México
Yaqui Tribe– México
National Network of Indigenous Women: Weaving Rights for Mother Earth and Territory– Mexico
Movement of Segovian Women – Nicaragua
‘The Time Has Come for People’s Action’ Segovian Movement– Nicaragua
National Coordination of the Indigenous Women of Panama (CONAMUIP)– Panama
Organization of Campesina and Indigenous Women – Paraguay
National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru– Peru

Shiwilu People of the Amazon – Peru
Female Campesina Policing in Bambamarca– Peru