

Religions for Peace World Council Statement
in Support of the Amazon and Its Indigenous Peoples
On the Occasion of the World Rainforest Day

22 June 2021

The world's rainforests are a sacred trust, an irreplaceable gift that is essential to maintaining balance for all life on Earth, now and into the future.

Indigenous peoples and communities around the world have served as guardians of rainforests for generations, ensuring stewardship and protection of these vital and ancient ecosystems. This is particularly true in the Amazon.

On this World Rainforest Day, we come together as religious leaders representing the world's major faith traditions and hundreds of millions of people across the planet to offer this statement in support of indigenous peoples of the Amazon.

We unite our voices to honour the traditional knowledge, culture, and spirituality that indigenous communities have cultivated to ensure a harmonious relationship with nature. As representatives of religious traditions, we are aware of the role of religions in contributing to systemic oppression and violence against and within indigenous communities. Therefore, we have a responsibility to be accountable and not be silent when violence ensues today.

In doing so, we recognize with deep concern the persistent violence indigenous peoples face as defenders of the Amazon.

In 2020, 202 indigenous peoples and environmental defenders were murdered in countries of the Amazon Basin (Colombia, Brazil, Peru and Bolivia). In the first quarter of 2021, 19 indigenous peoples have been murdered in Colombia and Peru alone.

The lack of recognition and safeguarding of indigenous lands in the Amazon represents one of the most significant threats, since most of the murders have been due to the work of defending indigenous territories against invaders from extractive industries, plantations, mining and infrastructure, deforestation and drug trafficking.

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The ongoing intimidation, violence and murder perpetrated against indigenous peoples of the Amazon represents a human rights emergency that demands urgent action. As such, we express profound concern around recent developments in several Amazon countries, where newly proposed bills, legislation and policies are rolling back protection of indigenous rights and lands.

Many indigenous organizations have already lodged complaints to the United Nations against the violation of indigenous peoples' rights, observing that several Amazon countries are not in compliance with international and constitutional obligations to protect their physical, territorial, and cultural rights and integrity.

As religious entities that seek to promote peace, respect for human dignity and the environment, we appeal to all Amazonian countries to prevent ongoing threats to indigenous peoples as well as regressive legislation that undermines their rights.

Concerned with the very ability of indigenous peoples to make self-determined decisions related to their land, territory and resources, we urgently appeal for the following:

- That effective policies be adopted and/or strengthened to protect the lives and human rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon.
- That the titling and creation of indigenous peoples territories be guaranteed with the due participation of representative indigenous organizations and with respect for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as enshrined in the ILO 169 Convention and further elaborated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- That the ratification and implementation of the Escazú Agreement be prioritised, in order to guarantee a safe and enabling environment in which people, groups and organizations that promote and defend human rights and forest protection can act without threats, restrictions and insecurity.

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- That the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples be recognized, valued and incorporated in strategies to combat climate change and deforestation.

Finally, we remind the global community that rainforests allow for clean rivers to reach our oceans, unique biodiversity to flourish, and the rainfall to seep deep into the soil to nourish our crops and flowers. The rainforests benefit all of humanity, without distinction, and thereby serve as a visible expression of the ultimate, pure and ever-present love of the Divine for its creation.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to the [Faiths for Forests Declaration and Action Agenda](#), which binds us across spiritual traditions to work in cooperation and shared purposes for the protection of rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples.

We pray and stand in solidarity with indigenous peoples and forest communities in the Amazon, and beyond, and urge for ongoing efforts to ensure their rights, cultural integrity and dignity.

Signed by the [Religions for Peace World Council](#)