



CRY OF THE POOR

“I dream of an Amazon region that fights for the rights of the poor, the original peoples and the least of our brothers and sisters, where their voices can be heard and their dignity advanced”.

Papa Francisco





THE CRY OF THE POORS: HUMAN RIGHTS





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CRIES FROM OUR DEAR AMAZONIA - THE CRY OF THE POOR

“I dream of an Amazonia that fights for the rights of the poorest, of the original peoples, of the excluded, where their voice is heard, and their dignity is promoted”. -Pope Francis

1.1. HUMAN RIGHTS REALITY IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

We Dominicans have been working uninterruptedly for 123 years in the jungle of the Peruvian Southeast in an area of 150,000 km² in two important basins: the Urubamba and Madre de Dios Basins. The fundamental objective of our presence, since the arrival in times of barbarism caused by rubber tapping, has been the defense of the land, life and dignity of the indigenous peoples that reside there. The missionaries, in the first place, traveled the entire geography of the territory to locate the natives, as mission sites were established. To this end, land was purchased and registered, boarding schools, medical posts and chapels were built in all the mission sites.

Let us begin to analyze the reality of these rights over the Peruvian Amazonia, based on 3 main aspects:

A. RIGHT TO LAND

Says Colombian native Mayor Chacry: *“We are not owners of the oil, we are not owners of the gold, we are not owners of anything, we are only here on earth, the sacred duty that our Father left us was to be guardians and to take care of all this. The wind is our breath, the fire our Spirit, the earth our body, the water our blood. If the wind moves, it is because it is alive. The earth moves because it is alive. The water moves because it is alive, the fire moves because it is alive and they all deserve respect, just as we humans deserve respect, so do they. Mother Earth deserves twice that respect, for being a mother, for being a grandmother, she gives everything. In the past we humans lived in harmony with all the spirits, but when we wanted to gain and be like gods, that is where we lost our way, that balance was broken. That is the prayer that we, as indigenous peoples, say in Abya Yala, It's like in the Catholic religion, the Lord's Prayer”.*



Today, 72% of the Peruvian Amazonian territory is covered by hydrocarbon exploitation concessions, further accentuating social inequity, conflicts between power groups and marginalizing indigenous producers and farmers. We can add to this the militarization strategies employed to combat the expansion of illicit crops and illegal mining activities, which have had rather damaging results.

A native of our missions referring to former President Alán García as "the dog in the manger", days before the Bagua massacre took place (2009).

"Mr. President, we are the owners of Bajo Urubamba, Department of Cuzco, Province of La Convención, District of Echarati, where the gas field is located. Mr. President, listen to our claim, our clamor. Our claim is that we do not want to be sold. Mr. President, we are not animals for you to sell us, we are Christians, we are humans Just as you are human, so are we. Mr. President, you have to understand us, because many times the scholars, the big capitalists, tell us that we are a hindrance to the development of a country, but it is not like that, it is the other way around. There is oxygen because of us; if there were no indigenous peoples, there would be no oxygen for other countries. Therefore, Mr. President, you have to understand us, you have to thank the indigenous peoples of the Peruvian Amazon for the oxygen that you are breathing. I know you live in Lima, but you are breathing because of us".

Peru is one of the countries that has and has signed more protection laws for the Amazonian Native Communities, but most of those laws are violated due to the offer, mostly corrupt, of millions for the extraction of its great natural resources: oil, natural gas, gold, timber and many others. Parks, sanctuaries and territories recognized, but trampled.

Our mission in the Amazonia is mainly based on the fundamental human rights set forth by the UN in 1948; the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of the UN General Assembly in 2007; ILO Convention 169 signed by Peru; UNESCO's Education for Human Rights; the Political Constitution of Peru; and the laws of native communities.

- ILO Convention 169 (1989) has two basic principles: the right of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own cultures, ways of life and institutions, and their right to participate effectively in the decisions that affect them. These principles constitute the basis on which the provisions of the Convention must be interpreted.



- Prior consultation law. (2011): It is clear in its proposals and objectives. First of all, it seeks to address a de facto situation that is occurring in the jungle as a result of the presence of extractive companies. The general complaint is that the companies contradict the rights of indigenous peoples to the lands and natural resources that traditionally belong to them and to which their lives are linked.
- The Escazú Agreement (2018): on guaranteeing the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights to access environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making processes and access to justice in environmental matters, as well as the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of every person, of present and future generations, to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development. Neither Peru nor Brazil has yet signed the Escazú Agreement, a groundbreaking treaty by which Latin American countries pledge to protect Earth defenders in the world's deadliest region for these activists.

On June 5, 2009, the largest land conflict between Amazonian indigenous people and the Peruvian state took place, killing 23 police officers and at least 5 indigenous people. The trigger for the conflict was the enactment by the President of Decree Laws 1064 and 1090 to facilitate the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between Peru and the United States, without the Peruvian government respecting Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), which states that the State must consult and inform the indigenous communities of any decree that could directly affect their lands. The uprisings and demonstrations - coordinated by AIDASEP (Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Jungle) took place in all the Amazonian regions of the country, with the most dramatic point in Bagua, where the demonstrators were attacked by land and air, despite having reached an agreement with the Government the day before. In the face of growing public interest, Congress repealed the aforementioned decrees. For many years, the natives have been prosecuted, but the authorities responsible for the conflict have never been prosecuted.

The protagonist of the Madre de Dios River is gold and people from all over the country converge on these jungles. Few natives are dedicated to it, yet they are the ones who have suffered the worst consequences, especially in what used to be their land. The jungle shows an outrageous degree of desertification, and this desolation is advancing by leaps and bounds without the government providing a pertinent and fair solution. Deforestation advances relentlessly as a consequence of



mining concessions, the construction of large dams and highways, and intensive agriculture and coca cultivation.

The lucrative business of coca processed as the basic paste of the demanded drug has wiped out most of the forests in the Apurimac, Ene and Mantaro Valleys (VRAEM), turning it into one of the most important cocaine paste production areas. Many of these plantations are carried out invading native communities, affecting already 295 native communities.

Between 2018 and 2022 illegal plantings in indigenous territories grew by 124%. That is why drug traffickers threaten and assassinate leaders who oppose them. There are many indigenous people who succumb to this business and cultivate and offer themselves as “backpackers” of cocaine base paste. There is no political intention to eradicate this disease.

B. RIGHT TO LIFE

“If water is the source of Life, the Amazonia contains more than 20% of all fresh water on the planet”. It possesses 34% of all primary forests on Earth. The Amazonia is home to one third of the world's biodiversity: 300 species of mammals, 1300 species of birds, 1500 known species of fish. The total Amazonian population is 33 million.

The exploitation of natural resources in the Amazonia has already caused hundreds of deaths, especially of leaders and defenders of the land. Between 2016 and 2021, "according to information gathered from 11 environmental and human rights organizations, 58 indigenous leaders and residents were killed in the Brazilian, Colombian, Ecuadorian and Peruvian Amazonia. Most of these cases are still under investigation and lawyers report delays and irregularities in at least 50 of these proceedings. The suspected perpetrators are associated with illicit activities such as drug trafficking, mining, land trafficking or illegal logging, although in Brazil the experts interviewed also point to the State.

By the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023, there have already been 60 deaths due to police brutality that is absolutely condemnable and for which the government does not want to answer. The discontent is growing, and the powers of the state turn a deaf ear and act only for their own benefit, irritating the population, 90% of which disapprove of them and demand that they all leave power.



In addition to this violence, there are deaths due to river contamination caused by mercury in gold mining, where many indigenous children already contain deadly amounts of mercury in their bodies and many others are born with malformations. Oil and gas spills pollute freshwater basins and are discharged into large rivers, causing a high mortality rate in the fish consumed by the local population.

On the other hand, the right to life was denied through the sterilization to which many people, mainly women, were subjected during the Fujimori government and nowadays with campaigns that promote infertility, ignoring their own culture. Likewise, institutional and sometimes family abandonment of the elderly when they are no longer able to fend for themselves and using the euphemism: "they already want to die".

In addition to this, environmental deaths in its fauna and flora, which also end up killing all the creatures that inhabit it. Deforestation in Pan Amazonia is already 20% and climate change is profoundly affecting the entire Biome.

C. RIGHT TO DIGNITY

The Amazonia has always been a unit: a geographical unit, a biological unit, and a cultural unit. These peoples had interrelationships, to the point of constituting a Pan-Amazonian Empire that interacted with the Inca Empire. The Pan-Amazonian empire are unconquered peoples, with an enormous capacity to cope with the multiple, and sometimes dramatic, transformations experienced throughout its history. Populations with a lifestyle in full harmony with nature, which they have cared for and love as their own body, as their own mother. A lifestyle that does not require many things to be happy. These small communities are the only millenary cultures in our country that have culturally survived throughout history up to the present day.

But this profound dignity and harmony of life is being seriously threatened by the invasion of their lands in greedy rapacity over their resources that produce these deadly illnesses:

Exclusion:

In negotiations over its own resources, the State directly negotiates resources with the companies without prior consultation with the natives who have inhabited these lands since ancient times.



Education in the native communities is deplorable. There is a lot of talk about bilingualism, but the Ministry of Education does not offer a system that promotes it. Teacher training is deficient, and few teachers feel a vocation to work in native communities.

Abuse and discrimination:

Many natives leave their communities to work in towns and cities and are exploited because of their vulnerability. The girls are employed as waitresses and the boys as cheap, semi-slave labor in stores. We have denounced many times the businesses that exploit and abuse these girls and their response is to repeat that they have been entrusted or given to them by their own parents. These traders buy the natives' products at half price and sell their own at double the price.

Teachers and merchants also take advantage of the ignorance and needs of the natives of the communities. " Give me a little native" is often heard from the mouths of these unscrupulous professionals.

On the other hand, one can also see young mamtsigenkas enlisting, sometimes without reaching legal age, in the army. They are usually sent to the front line of risk with the claim that they know the territory. And if that were not enough, the children are captured by the remnants of the "Shining Path" who take advantage of the abandonment and deprivation suffered by these communities.

Discrimination from the costeño to the cholo and from the cholo to the chuncho. Peru functions as three different countries: The Coast, Highlands and Jungle ignore each other and the costeño people tend to despise the Quechua as cholos (see the ignominious TV series "India Jacinta") and chunchos.

Human trafficking:

Criminal networks and organizations and cases are on the rise. Recruitment of fellow villagers paid for trafficking agents.

The film "La Pampa" about trafficking in the Madre de Dios region of Peru, an area where illegal mining is carried out on a huge scale and has decertified a large area of land.

It is estimated that more than three million people have been victims of trafficking in Peru,



resulting in abuse within the family and the complicit silence of the community. As well as alcoholism, as an escape from not being able to control the avalanche of changes in their traditionally quiet communities.

The change from masato to beer and pure alcohol wreaks havoc on individuals, families and communities. A reality that is uncontrolled due to the avalanche of novelties introduced by the business of exploited and expropriated resources.

1.2. HUMAN RIGHTS REALITY IN THE BOLIVIAN AMAZON

Shadows:

Considering that in 2020, 263 murders against human rights defenders were recorded in Latin America, of which 202 of them occurred in countries of the Amazon Basin (Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Peru), representing 77% of the cases.

That 69% of these murders that occurred in 2020 were against leaders working in the defense of their territory, the environment and the rights of Indigenous peoples.

That in the first quarter of 2021 alone, 19 murders of Indigenous sisters and brothers (Colombia and Peru), who were defending the rights of Indigenous peoples and Mother Nature, have been recorded.

That behind the murders of Indigenous defenders of human rights and Mother Nature, there are structural problems directly linked to the advance of extractive activities that respond to the interests of corporations with government agreements that promote hydrocarbon extraction and indiscriminate mining, aggressive deforestation, drug trafficking, and the presence of an armed conflict that has been diplomatically silenced and that threatens the physical and cultural integrity of our peoples. (Rights - Resources, 2021)

Another situation has been the situation of Tipnis, which was complex due to political, economic and social conditions, however, some elements are highlighted in the following paragraphs:



- a. The current situation of the indigenous movement is worrisome due to the division of the organizations generated by the political intervention of the ruling party, given the unstable leadership and the permanent threat of their disintegration. On the other hand, according to information from communities and the geographic location of the supposed highway, the benefits it would bring would be the strengthening of illegal coca leaf cultivation and the expansion of unions (farmers' organizations). Taking into account the incultration of the indigenous community by female farmers, the other consequences of the new highway would be "inter-communal violence, settlement, indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources, school dropouts and the expansion of drug trafficking and an increase in the trafficking of indigenous women".

According to the Technical Report of the Subcentral TIPNIS, the Regional Report on Human Rights Violations in the Pan Amazonia 79 Map 10 Law No. 266 on intangibility would make possible the expansion of the coca plantations beyond the red line, into the heart of the territory. Today, colonists and third parties (individual landowners) have tried to encroach on the territory despite the fact that it is a collectively owned area, and according to testimonies from people, coca growers are already selling land along the road.

- b. The advance of coca cultivation, which will mean the destruction of the forest and after a few years, also the exhaustion of the soils due to the intensive use and the agrochemicals used (later these lands will not be productive) and the constant encroachment of the settlers and others towards the Community Lands of Origin.
- c. The destruction of forests has several environmental consequences: It is presumed that it will affect the rainwater retention capacity (a function that is fulfilled by the forests and swamps or Yomomomales), a function of water flow regulation, so that flooding would be more severe in the rainy season and in the dry season there will be less water, therefore, greater tendency to fires. This will affect the availability of water in the rivers and the fish, which will also be threatened by the contamination of the pesticides through the Tipnis area which could affect the water system in the region and aggravate flooding. It is also estimated that the road would facilitate the entry of settlers, coca growers, loggers, hunters and other predatory agents, and would affect the natural resources and the indigenous communities' livelihoods. The advantage of having a road



between Trinidad and Santa Cruz will benefit, not the TIPNIS, but the inhabitants who occupy this road, especially the settlers and coca growers. The intensive use of soil by coca growers in the southern part of the TIPNIS has caused these territories to suffer accelerated soil erosion. Coca cultivation has caused the loss of natural soil nutrients, degradation and erosion of the land, with very few possibilities of recovering these territories; the indigenous people perceive the territory as a space for free use, thus representing a problem of ethnic logics that, for several years, has been facing them: on the one hand, the coca growers, who have a parcel conception and, on the other hand, the Amazonian indigenous people, who preserve their territory and their customs (hunting and fishing). (REPAM BOLIVIA, 2018)

Lights:

The Repam Bolivia works on 7 axes of pastoral work that have to do, not only with ecological aspects or the ecclesial aspect, but with the whole world, because it has to do with the defense of human rights from 7 axes: indigenous peoples and ethnic groups in defense of their rights for example with their cultural reality, the formation and pastoral methods in Pan-Amazonian itinerant key, the subject of human rights and advocacy, the subject of border churches with the whole issue of human trafficking, and drug trafficking, socio-environmental justice and good living, communication, and international networks to which we are attached. One of the works of REPAM Bolivia was to take to the Human Rights Commission of New York the problem of Tipnis as one of the problems where human rights of indigenous groups were violated. REPAM also carried out a research mapping study.

The greatest achievement was the enactment of Short Law 180, which prohibits the construction of the highway and reaffirms the rights of the indigenous peoples. Approved on October 24, 2011. This law protects and recognizes the existence of the TIPNIS, declares it a socio-cultural and natural heritage, an ecological preservation zone, historical reproduction and habitat of the Chiman, Yuracaré and Mojeño-Trinitario indigenous peoples. For this reason, its protection and conservation are of primary interest to the Bolivian State. It declares that the Villa Tunari - San Ignacio de Moxos highway will not cross the TIPNIS, prohibiting human settlements and de facto occupations by outsiders, declaring these activities illegal and that evictions will be possible with the intervention of the public forces if necessary (Art. 3 and 5 of Law 180). In addition, its Regulation (D.S. No 1146 of February 24, 2012) approved on October 24, 2011, almost 4 months later, is published. Agreements are made in minutes to meet



the 16 demands of the indigenous and native peoples' struggle platform. From a position of the existence of indigenous peoples and the protection of the rights of all Bolivians and Mother Earth (including protected areas). (REPAM BOLIVIA, 2018)

Ms. Madelen Jaimes

Dominican Youth Movement

1.3. HUMAN RIGHTS REALITY IN THE VENEZUELAN AMAZON

Although Venezuela is a legally constitutional and democratic country, it is no secret that in recent decades human rights have been constantly violated, and one area that is experiencing this constant reality is the Venezuelan Amazon.

There are many reports, complaints, records and documents that confirm the situation in southern Venezuela. In this context, the communiqués and denunciations made by the indigenous communities themselves, as well as by REPAM and various civil society organizations and international organizations are very important, both in environmental and human rights issues.

The country's mining policy, including the actions carried out in the Orinoco Mining Arc and other territories in southern Venezuela, the political, social and economic situation, the complex humanitarian emergency in the country, are aspects that have increased the vulnerability of people and their right to a dignified life within this territory.

Rights such as free, prior and informed consultation the rights of indigenous peoples, land demarcation, the right to adequate nutrition, the right to health and medical care, the right to security, the right to quality and intercultural bilingual education, environmental rights, the right to communication and information, and even the right to life itself have been repeatedly violated by individuals and government institutions whose extractive and monetary interests do not measure the damage they cause to these populations, to nature and to the nation. It is also necessary to mention that illegal gold mining is associated with a situation of violence imposed by armed groups that impose their control over mining areas through violence, coercion and corruption. Resulting in an undetermined number of murders, kidnappings, modern slavery,

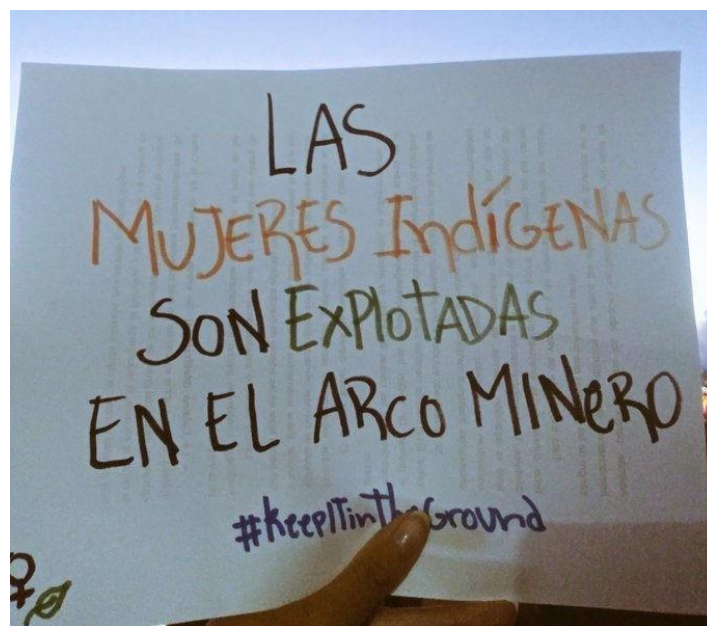


human trafficking, prostitution, including of children and adolescents. These conditions have led to communities having to surrender to the interests of armed groups or to forced migration.

There are numerous agreements, statements and laws that establish and promote the rights of indigenous peoples, environmental rights and human rights; however, they are not enforced or are violated and those who expose these violations and abuse run the risk of being arrested, imprisoned and even killed for showing the real situation. The following is an article taken from The Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 1994), which has been violated many times due to extractivism in the Venezuelan Amazon.

Article 30 "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for the development or use of their lands, territories and other resources, including the right to require States to obtain their free and informed consent prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories and other resources, particularly in connection with the development, utilization or exploration of mineral, water or other resources. After the agreement of the indigenous peoples concerned, fair and equitable compensation shall be granted for such activities and measures shall be taken to mitigate their harmful environmental, economic, social, cultural or spiritual consequences".

Source: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Article XIII
<http://www.cidh.org/indigenas/indigenas.sp.01/articulo.xiii.htm>





Poster: Indigenous women are exploited in the Mining Arc. Credit: Social Media @Uqira 2020
Taken from: <https://ecopoliticavenezuela.org/2022/09/05/mujeres-indigenas-devenezuela-las-otras-victimas-del-extractivismo/>

SHADOWS:

There is no means of sustainability for indigenous peoples, which leads to being treated as slaves in the mines, used and sexually abused or displaced from their territories, without opportunities for a better quality of life.

Uncontrolled incursion of armed and military groups that invade territory through the use of violence, threats, coercion and bribery.

The refusal of the right to access to justice, as established in the Escazú Agreement, prevents people from demanding their rights and the guarantee of a resolution to situations of human rights violations.

There are serious situations such as unhealthy conditions, human trafficking, mendicancy, homelessness of children and adults, sexually transmitted diseases, insecurity, lack of public services, malnutrition, early pregnancy, drug consumption and sale, loss of identity, nomadism, proliferation of diseases, prostitution, lack of values, separation of families, alcoholism, migration, to which the state should pay attention but its main focus is on extractivism.

LIGHTS:

Indigenous peoples and communities seek to organize and empower themselves with tools for the defense of human rights, the protection of their lives and territories, using the media and new technologies to inform about their struggles.

Monitoring and defense of human rights by the Catholic Church and NGOs that promote training, follow-up and documentation of situations that violate the right to a dignified life and integral development of indigenous and Amazonian peoples.

International advocacy with reports to the human rights commission and at the same time national advocacy before the state to repeal the Orinoco mining arc decree, respect the human rights of indigenous peoples, as well as international environmental and human rights commitments.



Report on the human rights situation in Venezuela.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc5354-situation-humanrightsbolivarian-republic-venezuela-report>

<https://ve.usembassy.gov/es/informe-de-derechos-humanos-venezuela-2022/>

DREAMS:

We dream of creating a human rights department in each of the circumscriptions, with the aim of continuing to promote the defense of human rights and provide training, information and support in situations that today violate the right to a dignified life and integral development of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon.

We dream of a Church with good Christians who welcome those who have been victims of violence, human trafficking, discrimination and exclusion in order to help them feel that they are children of God and thus have a new beginning.

We dream of a Church and a Venezuelan society that incorporates culture in its life and actions, a Church united with the struggles of the people, that spreads through the media the importance of human rights and demands from the State the fulfillment of policies that guarantee a dignified life for Venezuelans.

1.4. ANNEXES

Record of murder of activists in Peru

More than a hundred environmental activists have been murdered in 19 years in Peru.

Name:	Region	Community	Presumed motive
Estela Casanto Mauricio	Junín	Asháninka	Land trafficking
Herasmo García Grau	Ucayali	Kakataibo	Drug trafficking



Lucio Pascual Yumanga	Pasco	Asháninka	Drug trafficking
Luis Tapia Meza	Pasco	Asháninka	Land trafficking
Mario Marco López Huanca	Pasco	Kakataibo	Drug trafficking
Santiago Meléndez Dávila	Pasco	Asháninka	Drug trafficking
Yenes Ríos Bonsano	Ucayali	Kakataibo	Drug trafficking

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

1) FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES ABOUT THE AMAZONIA

- Avatar
- Even the Rain
- The Emerald Forest
- Fitzcarraldo
- Chico Méndes: final sequence of the movie with the song: "Cuando los ángeles lloran".

2) PIO AZA CULTURAL CENTER. All the videos about the Dominican missions in the Peruvian Southeast.

- “Amazonía en cifras: recursos naturales, cambio climático y desigualdades.” José Carlos Orihuela and Cèsar Conteras. OXFAM.
- “Crímenes impunes: los asesinatos de 50 líderes indígenas de la Amazonía de Brasil, Colombia, Ecuador y Perú siguen esperando por justicia.” By Vanessa Romo Espinoza and gloria Alvitres. June 2022

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Caracas, August 2023