

Faith based organizations concerned by the social conflict in Guatemala

Forum Alianza ACT¹ in Guatemala, formed by national and international Faith Based organizations, manifests its deep concern with the rise of social conflict derived from the incursion of mega projects in Guatemalan territory. This type of mega projects also causes the deterioration of natural resources and affects food security of families, especially that of women and children. For this, the national and international opinion EXPRESSES:

Our consternation over the acts of violence that happened in two different territories, between January 16 and 17, 2017, during a pacific demonstration against the hydroelectric projects put forward by the enterprise “Promoción y Desarrollo Hídrico” S.A. (PDHSA) (Development and Promotion of Hydraulic). Such violent acts claimed the lives of 72 year old Sebastián Alonzo Juan, in Ixquisis, San Mateo Ixtatán, Huehuetenango; and 47 year old Laura Leonor Vásquez Pineda, in Mataquescuintla, Jalapa who had been part of the “Comité de Defensa de la Vida de San Rafael Las Flores” (Defense of Life Committee in San Rafael Las Flores) until 2014.

In this context, we urge:

1. The Public Ministry and corresponding authorities to investigate these acts of violence in order to find the material and intellectual authors and to do justice.
2. The Human Rights Procurator to intervene to guarantee individual rights, as well, as the collective rights of all citizens and the observing organizations which are in support of these communities throughout this process.
3. The Ministry of the Interior to obey the constitutional mandate to guarantee the well-being of all Guatemalans so that the most vulnerable populations can exercise their right to organize and hold pacific demonstrations; which is the only source they have for advocating for the protection of natural resources.
4. The State of Guatemala to implement the mechanisms established by the ILO Convention 169; amongst other national and international conventions signed and ratified by the country so that the community consultations are binding.
5. That the international community and the United Nations Human Rights Council call upon the countries with investments in the region to monitor and evaluate their actions so that they do not contribute to the social conflicts and threats towards Human Rights defenders who work in favor of social and environmental justice for the well-being of all citizens.
6. **We call upon churches and Faith Based organizations** to join in solidarity with the citizens and leaders of the communities, to support them through embracing the ethical principles of the Gospel of Jesus that call us to act for the well-being of the communities.

“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, and to love kindness and mercy, and to humble yourself and walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8

Guatemala, January 26, 2017.

¹ Alianza ACT is a coalition of 143 affiliated churches and organizations that work together in more than 100 countries to foster and promote a positive, sustainable change in the livelihoods of poor and marginalized people regardless of their religion, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, race or nationality and in compliance with the most strict international codes and norms.