

Declaration in support of PAX and human rights work in the coal-mining region of Cesar, Colombia

We, the undersigned organizations and trade unions, are writing to express our support for the legitimate work of PAX and other NGOs, human rights defenders and victims' organizations in the coal-mining region of Cesar, Colombia.

We welcome the on-going peace negotiations in Havana as they offer a historic window of opportunity for the victims of gross human rights violations. The future peace agreement could create the basis for a broader, more inclusive and sustainable peace process. It could also offer the framework for regional processes of reconciliation and truth finding, and in this way contribute to the human rights situation in the Cesar mining region, which is still critical to this day. All stakeholders, including the mining companies, should commit to a dialogue process – a dialogue that could be the basis of a future reconciliation process.

Therefore, we sincerely regret the fact that false and derogatory statements are being made against the legitimate work of NGOs and human rights defenders who have always promoted a respectable, non-litigious approach to a collective reconciliation process within the framework of Colombia's peace process.

These legal accusations are a serious obstacle to future dialogue and reconciliation in Cesar. Taking a hard-line, antagonistic approach that tries to criminalize non-governmental civil society organizations that support the local population in their right to get justice goes against the current spirit of peace and reconciliation in Colombia. This has a paralyzing effect on the work of civil society organizations in general, and on human rights defenders and victims' groups in particular.

We, NGOs and trade unions, demand that no false and derogatory allegations are made against NGOs and human rights defenders – including PAX Netherlands. We call on those involved to change their approach, and we insist on the necessity for a reconciliation process between the mining companies and the victims of violence in the Cesar mining region.

In sum, we urge:

- European policymakers to publicly defend the importance of respect for the work and political space of independent civil society groups and critical voices in *bilateral meetings* with Colombian *government* officials and representatives of *mining companies*;
- Energy companies to call upon the mining companies to refrain from taking legal steps and, instead, to engage in a dialogue aimed at reconciliation, and to respect the work of civil society organizations on economic, social and human rights issues;
- The Colombian Government to protect the integrity and liberty of NGOs and human rights defenders.

List of signatories (in alphabetical order), May 6th, 2015

11.11.11 – Coalition of the Flemish North South Movement (Belgium)
350.org (International Movement)
action pro colombia e.V. Aachen (Germany)
AG "Gerechtigkeit, Frieden und Bewahrung der Schöpfung" der dt. Franziskaner (Germany)
Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz-Kolumbien (Switzerland)
BankTrack (France)
BI Umweltschutz Lüchow-Dannenberg (Germany)
Bougainville Freedom Movement (Australia)
Brot für die Welt (Germany)
CATAPA - Mining moves North & South (Belgium)
Center for International Environmental Law (Switzerland/USA)
Christliche Initiative Romero e.V. (Germany)
CNV (Federation of Christian trade unions in the Netherlands)
Coal Action Network (UK)
CoalSwarm (USA)
Cordaid (Netherlands)
Earthlife Africa Johannesburg (South Africa)
ECCR - Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility (UK)
Ecodefense Russia
FairFin (Belgium)
FIAN Deutschland e.V. (Germany)
FNV (Federation of trade unions in the Netherlands)
Gaia Foundation (UK)
Germanwatch e.V. (Germany)
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (USA)
Global Justice Now (UK)
infoe e.V. (Germany)
International Accountability Project (USA)
ISHR - International Service for Human Rights (Switzerland/USA)
Kampagne Fossil Free Deutschland (Germany)
Kolumbiengruppe e.V. (Germany)
LAMMP - Latin America Mining Monitoring Programme (UK)
London Mining Network (UK)
Mensen met een Missie (Netherlands)
Misereor (Germany)
Mundubat (Spain)
NIMD (Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy)
Oxfam-Novib (Netherlands)
Pax Christi - Deutsche Sektion (Germany)
Pax Christi International
PIPLinks – Indigenous Peoples Links (UK)
PowerShift e.V. (Germany)
PWYP UK
Sierra Club (USA)
SOLdePaz.Pachakuti (Spain)
SOMO (Netherlands)
Stop Mad Mining - For ethical mining and resource consumption (Intl. Network)
terre des hommes (Germany)
urgewald e.V. (Germany)