The need for a global ecological conversion

"We must break with the historical paradigm that sees the Amazon as an inexhaustible larder for other countries without taking into account its inhabitants."

– Pope Francis, Puerto Maldonado, Peru, January 2018



Indigenous and traditional peoples are on the frontlines of the struggle to preserve the Amazon. Yesica Patiachi of Peru's Indigenous Harakbut community was present in Puerto Maldonado when Pope Francis announced the special synod for the Amazon. She has a message to share with all humankind:

"The destruction of the Amazon is not just the problem of Indigenous peoples, but of all humanity.

If the Amazon disappears, it is very likely that all humanity will disappear, because it is here that forests that give life are preserved, with the largest reserve of freshwater, numerous species of flora and fauna, including ourselves, the Indigenous peoples. But if we continue to be crushed, if foreigners continue to invade us, without even considering a prior consultation, ...[if] various governments make us invisible, it gradually makes our language, our traditions, our people die."

Watch Yesica's testimonial at **devp.org/campaign/yesica**.

Indigenous peoples' rights and teachings

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) enshrines Indigenous peoples' rights, including their rights to their lands and resources and to free, prior and informed consent for land use. Worldwide and in Canada, Indigenous communities are struggling to have these rights respected. As we stand in solidarity with the Amazon's defenders, we must also stand with land and water defenders here in Canada. In facing the climate crisis and securing our descendants' rights to dignity and plenitude, our best hope lies in the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) creed of considering the impact of every decision on the next seven generations. Guided by this principle, we should strive to leave the Earth in better condition than we found it.

Voices at risk in Brazil

The defenders of the Amazon are extremely vulnerable to intimidation, persecution, criminalization and violence. The situation is particularly alarming in Brazil, where a new government is derecognizing Indigenous rights and deregulating resource exploitation.

Our partners are helping Amazon communities defend their territories and rights. They want Canadians to know about these struggles and mobilize in solidarity.

Seringueiros of Machadinho d'Oeste

The Machadinho d'Oeste municipality in Brazil's Rondônia State is home to 16 *seringueiro* (artisanal rubber tapper) reserves dedicated to hunting, fishing and gathering. Powerful logging companies are intimidating and evicting the *seringueiros*. With 15 of them murdered in the last decades, resistance has been brutally suppressed. Despite the arrest of some corrupt officials for issuing illegal logging permits, intimidation persists. Already isolated, the *seringueiros* are being driven further inland, away from the sustenance of the Machadinho River.

For our partner, Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT, the Pastoral Land Commission), protecting and empowering the oppressed *seringueiros* is a matter of urgency.

Mura people of Amazonas

The Indigenous Mura people live in 38 communities around Manaus, the capital of Brazil's Amazonas State. They lead sustainable lives, subsisting on fishing, hunting and gathering. Their way of life is being threatened by a Canadian-financed potash mine. Despite the mining company's claims of having engaged them and sought their consent for exploiting their territory, the Mura people won an interim injunction against the mine on the grounds of inadequate consultation.

Our partner, Rede Eclesial Pan-Amazônica (REPAM, the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network), is helping the Mura people with litigation and is working to safeguard their right to free, prior and informed consent.





Take action!



Defend the defenders

We want to send the *seringueiros* and the Mura people a letter of solidarity with **65,000 signatures** (one for each species of tree and vertebrate in the Amazon) to show our appreciation for their courage and reassure them that we are by their side in their struggles. Your signatures will also help us advocate for Canada and Brazil to protect the forest and its people.

Sign our letter in your parish or school or online at **devp.org/act**.

If you prefer, you can write your own letter and children are encouraged to draw a message of hope.

Please send all solidarity letters and drawings **by April 2020** to the address below or to **action@devp.org**.

Help us reach our goal of 65,000 signatures!

Take the intergenerational pledge for our common home



Your actions make a difference! Commit to at least one personal change for our common home. Be part of our mosaic of global citizens committed to preserving our common home for future generations by sending us a selfie with a sign reading: "I care for our common home" in a heart shape. Change starts with each and every one of us.

Take the pledge and upload a selfie (optional) at devp.org/pledge.

Spread the word!

- **Follow @DevPeace** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and share our posts **#ForOurCommonHome**.
- **Join** the *For our Common Home* Facebook group and make your pledge selfie your profile photo.

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A future for the Amazon, a future for all

There is no place on Earth like the Amazon rainforest. It is home to:

1/2
of all living plants and animals

1/10
of the world's known species

1/5
of the planet's fresh water

1/3
of the Earth's forests

30 million
people

380
Indigenous groups

140
groups living in voluntary isolation

In the Amazon, Indigenous, riverside and forest peoples lead sustainable lives, taking only what is needed to maintain their livelihoods. Their caring use of the land ensures that the woodlands and waterways of this rainforest are preserved for future generations.

Protecting the Amazon is a matter of survival not only for them but also for all of us, because we and all the Earth are interconnected.

We must all care *For our Common Home*.

The Amazon and its people are under threat

The Amazon is the world's largest tropical rainforest, spanning nine countries. It serves as the lungs of the planet, absorbing carbon emissions and providing 20% of the oxygen we breathe. It helps stabilize the climate of the Earth, our common home.

Yet, we permit the plunder of the Amazon for the sake of resources such as:

- → **Lumber**
- → **Oil**
- → **Minerals**
- → **Hydroelectricity**

These resources feed our growing consumer needs, but the consequences are devastating for the people of the Amazon and all of humanity.

Some scientists reckon deforestation is already causing the Amazon to emit more carbon than it absorbs, further warming the planet instead of cooling it. Deforestation also compromises the forest's capacity to recharge groundwater reserves, increasing the risk of drought and hunger.

Profit-driven exploitation also impoverishes Indigenous peoples and violates their rights. Those who resist it and seek to defend their lands are harassed, persecuted, forcibly displaced and sometimes even killed. As its rightful residents suffer, the Amazon continues being stripped away.

Recognizing the importance of the Amazon for all of humanity, Pope Francis has called for a Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region, which will ask how the Church can respond to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor of this territory. See more at devp.org/seasonofcreation.



"The native Amazonian peoples have probably never been so threatened on their own lands as they are now."

– Pope Francis, Puerto Maldonado, Peru, January 2018

New highways and **railroads** clear the forest and facilitate mass resource extraction.

Logging strips the land, which is then used for **cattle ranching** and **industrial agriculture**.

Oil extraction and **mining** (e.g., for gold and iron) pollute the land, air and waterways.

Hydroelectric dams impede the river, cause unseasonable floods, devastate aquatic life and disrupt riverside communities.

The Amazon's rivers and forests must be protected so that Indigenous and traditional peoples can maintain their sustainable way of life, which will prevent further biodiversity loss and mitigate climate change.

17% of forest cover has been lost in the last 50 years.