

SHORT TALK



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Good morning!

My name is _____. I am speaking to you as a member of Development and Peace — Caritas Canada, the official international development and solidarity organization of the Canadian Catholic Church. Development and Peace works with partner organizations and communities all over the world that are striving for justice. Every fall, we mobilize thousands of Canadians to support them.

This year, we asked our Honduran partner ERIC – Radio Progreso how we can support them. Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for people defending human rights and the environment. ERIC accompanies them at the frontlines of these struggles. Let me tell you about one such community and what you can do to help.

In the Colón Department of northern Honduras, the Guapinol and San Pedro rivers form a vibrant ecosystem rich in plant and animal life. They spring from a hilly, forested area that was made a national park in 2012. Later, the Botaderos Mountain National Park was renamed after Carlos Escaleras, a local farmer and water defender who was killed for his work for justice.

The Guapinol and San Pedro rivers are also vital to the lives of hundreds of communities along their banks. For decades, these communities have defended the rivers from pollution by heavy industries.

Soon after the national park was created, the extractive industry had its boundaries altered. An iron oxide mine was opened in the once-protected area. Local communities responded just as quickly. They organized committees and established a peaceful resistance camp. Church leaders have vocally supported the movement. Yet, the Guapinol defenders have faced violence from the state, private security and other outsiders.

They have been smeared, evicted, criminalized, arrested and worse. Since January, three of them have been murdered! Many of us might have given up. But these people are determined to assert their rights to live in peace and to contest the legality of the mine. And they have invited us to help.

But what can we do? Development and Peace is collecting signatures on a letter to the Honduran ambassador in Canada. I have the letter at the back of the parish today. You can also sign it by scanning the QR code on the poster, or by going online at devp.org/act.

The letter asks the Honduran government to take concrete actions to bring justice and protection to the people and the rivers. In other words, it asks the government to heed what Pope Francis calls “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.”

Signing this letter will show the Honduran state and international community that Canadians care about human rights and the environment. It will show the people of Guapinol and San Pedro sector that they are not alone.

Please add your voice to our letter today. And keep our partners around the world in your prayers.

Thank you.