

December 1, 2025

Statement from 153 faith organizations in 25 countries in support of the Salvadoran people and their religious leaders and institutions as they struggle to preserve El Salvador's historic, world-leading ban on metals mining.

We, the undersigned, from a diversity of church structures (representing local, regional, and national expressions of churches and related agencies), express our steadfast support for the people of El Salvador and their religious institutions and leaders who are struggling to maintain their country's historic ban on metal mining – in place from 2017 to 2024 – so all Salvadorans can enjoy their God-given right to clean water. We stand in solidarity with civic and religious leaders who are being persecuted and imprisoned for working against injustices, including the devastation that metals mining would cause their communities.

Salvadoran faith communities played a pivotal role in securing the country's world-leading ban on metals mining. In the early 2010s, the government of El Salvador established a technical committee of three renowned mining experts who came to El Salvador at the Government's invitation to review and recommend mining policy options. In their 2012 report, they reaffirmed the widespread public opposition to mining. They pointed to the extreme threats to El Salvador's fragile watersheds from arsenic, cyanide and other toxic chemicals used and released in mining. Accordingly, in 2017, the Archbishop of San Salvador led a march to the National Assembly to deliver a copy of a draft law that would prohibit metals mining to save the country's rivers. A few weeks later, the Salvadoran legislature passed the law unanimously.

Public opposition to metals mining remains as strong as it was in 2017, with a December 2024 poll by the José Simeón Cañas Central American University – a deeply respected Jesuit institution – showing that three in five Salvadorans believe the country is not suitable for metals mining. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of Salvadorans still lack access to potable water in their homes and many more go days without water due to existing scarcity and contamination of rivers, lakes, and streams, which would be exacerbated by mining.

Nonetheless, in December 2024, the Salvadoran Government abruptly overturned the ban and quickly passed a new law allowing mining with little debate and no environmental or social safeguards.

In response, in El Salvador, Catholic, historic Protestant and Evangelical religious churches across denominations and faith-based civic organizations have spoken out forcefully and mobilized their members. In March 2025, Mons. José Luis Escobar Alas, Archbishop of San Salvador, personally presented petitions signed by 150,000 people urging repeal of the December 2024 law, saying "listening to the clamor of the Salvadoran people, knowing that if metals mining were implemented in our country, we would all be seriously harmed, including future generations." The Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church in El Salvador reiterated its opposition to metals mining in a May 2025 Pastoral Letter.

Inspired by Christian teachings that recognize water and nature as a sacred gift from God, and reaffirmed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*, we echo the call of Salvadoran church leaders that the reintroduction of mining would exacerbate environmental and humanitarian threats. They point out that mining would exacerbate the already dire water contamination in El Salvador, further polluting the Lempa River, which supplies water to over 60 percent of the population.

They remind us that access to water is a fundamental human right and that clean water is not a commodity, but a shared inheritance entrusted to all people by God. And they remind us that ending the mining ban is fueling egregious rights violations against those organizing to protect their water and land from destruction.

We faith organizations from across the globe amplify this call by Salvadoran church leaders to end the persecution and criminalization of those defending the right to clean water – a call backed by tens of thousands in El Salvador and abroad, including UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor. We amplify their call that the Government of El Salvador not threaten, stigmatize or persecute people and organizations that are “carrying out their duties” to protect water, land and communities and support their call for the immediate dropping of charges against water defenders and human rights lawyers.

We pray for the Salvadoran people and their government, that they protect the sacred gift of creation, uphold human rights, and ensure every family clean water – now and for generations to come.

Signatories by country and region in alphabetical order:

Africa Regional

All Africa Theological Education by Extension Association
Programme for Christian Muslim Relations
World Student Christian Federation

Argentina

Iglesia Anabautista Menonita de Buenos Aires

Asia Regional

World Student Christian Federation Asia

Austria

Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika (IGLA)
International Fellowship of Reconciliation - Austria

Belgium

Protección Internacional Mesoamérica

Canada

Comité para los Derechos Humanos en América Latina (CDHAL)
Development and Peace - Caritas Canada
Ecological Justice Working Group, United Church of Canada, Regions East
Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service
Justice, Mission and Outreach Committee for the United Church of Canada in the Maritimes
KAIROS Canada
The Office of Religious Congregations for Integral Ecology (ORCIE)
Ottawa Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends
Parrish of Saint Oscar Romero, United Free Catholic Church of Canada
The Presbyterian Church in Canada
Providence Associates
The United Church of Canada

Chile

Fundación Tantí (Semilla)
Observatorio por el Cierre de la Escuela de las Américas - Chile

Colombia

Centro Ecuaménico Popular para América Latina CEPALC
Coalición de Movimientos y Organizaciones Sociales de Colombia (COMOSOC)
Episcopal anglicana
Iglesia Colombiana Metodista
Mesa Ecuaménica por la Paz (MEP)
Pensamiento crítico y subjetividad

Costa Rica

Departamento Ecuaménico de Investigaciones (DEI)
Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana

Cuba

Centro Oscar Arnulfo Romero

Democratic Republic of Congo

Centre Arrupe pour la Recherche et la Formation
Church of Christ Congo

Dominican Republic

Centro de acción y reflexión padre Juan Montalvo

Ecuador

Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos "Segundo Montes Mozo SJ" (CSMM)

Germany

Oficina Ecu mica por la Paz y la Justicia

Guatemala

Cardinal Alvaro Ramazzini
Conferencia de Iglesias Evangelicas de Guatemala
Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas
Sister Parish of Decorah, Iowa
Convergencia Nacional de Resistencia CNR
Ecumenical Council of Guatemala

Honduras

Derechos Humanos sin Frontera Honduras
Fundaci n San Alonso Rodr guez
Misioneros Claretianos Honduras

International

Pax Christi International
GreenFaith

Italy

Secretariado de Justicia Social y Ecolog a, Jesuitas

Kenya

Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)
CAM-SOLGIDI
Childrights Patrons Network
Kenya Alliance of Advancement of Children (KAACR)
Mully Children's Family
Muungano Widows Community Based Organization
Senior Women Citizens for Change

Mexico

Casa del Migrante de Saltillo
Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolom  de Las Casas
Consejo Mexicano de Bienestar
Otros Mundos Chiapas
CDH Tepeyac del Istmo de Tehuantepec, A.C.

Middle East Regional

Middle East Council of Churches

Palestine

The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East Council of Churches (DSPR-MECC)

Defence for Children International- Palestine

Jerusalem Center for Women

Wiam, the Palestinian Conflict Transformation Center

Philippines

Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform

Puerto Rico

Red Continental Cristiana por la Paz

Mesoamerican Region

Red Eclesial Ecológica Mesoamericana (REMAM)

South Africa

Ecumenical Accompanier Program for Palestine-Israel – South Africa

Spain

Molocan, Cooperatismo Integral

OMAL

Ongd AFRICANDO

Red Europea de Comités Oscar Romero (SICSAL Europa)

Switzerland

Ecumenical Water Network

United Kingdom

Environmental Network for Central America (ENCA, UK)

Laudato Si' Research Institute

United States

Alliance of Baptists

Alma de Izote Collective, Chicago, IL, USA

American Friends Service Committee

Anabaptist Climate Collaborative

Associates of the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine

Benet Hill Monastery

Bethel Christian Fellowship, Denver, Colorado

Bishop Mark Seitz, Diocese of El Paso

Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)

Church Women United in New York State

Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery

Concerned Citizens retired Miners Coalition of Superior, Az.

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces
Crossbridge Baptist Church, Boca Raton, FL
Divine Mercy - Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, Castro Valley, CA
Doctors for Global Health-Mexico
Dominican Sisters of Hope
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, CA
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill
Downtown United Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY, Justice Team
El Dorado Institute
Evangelical Reformed Church United Church of Christ, Frederick, Maryland
Faith in Action
Familia Vicentina Internacional
FOCUS /Wichita
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Peace Center, Clinton, Iowa
Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart
Fuerza Mundial (Women of the Americas)
Hope House of Prayer, Cleveland, OH
Immaculate Heart Community Commission on Justice
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
JB Foundation
Latin America Task Force of the Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Mennonite Mission Network
Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart
Mission Outreach Ministries of Ridgefield-Crystal Lake Presbyterian Church
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Orden de Hermanos Menores
Parallel Productions
Philippe Bourgois, University of California
PICA
Presbyterian Church (USA), Office of Public Witness
Presentation Sisters, San Francisco, CA
Provincial Council Clerics of St. Viator
Religiosas de la Asuncion de Chaparral, NM
Romero Interfaith Center of Philadelphia
Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN
Sister Cities of NJ
Sisters of Charity
Sisters of Charity of New York
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team

Sisters of Saint Francis Rochester MN
Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia
Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston Justice and Peace Office
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary
Strangers No Longer (Michigan, USA)
St. Ann Catholic Church, West Palm Beach, FL
St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, New York, NY
St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, Towson, Maryland
Union Church
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Unite North Metro Denver
Washington Ethical Society
Weber Sustainability Consulting
West Burke Unitarian Universalist Society
Wheaton Franciscan JPIC Office

USA/Canada

Rights Action (USA/Canada)

Zambia

United Church of Zambia University
Women for Change
Zambia Council of Churches