

International Communiqué in Solidarity with People Affected by the Mining Disaster in Minas Gerais, Brazil



December 18, 2015 – The below-signed organizations express our deep anger and solidarity with the people affected by the socio-environmental crime that took place on November 5, 2015 in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. This tragedy was provoked by the rupture of a tailing dam administered by the company Samarco, jointly owned by the Brazilian company Vale and the British-Australian firm BHP Billiton.

This accident, one of the biggest environmental disasters to have occurred in the country, is responsible for the death of an uncountable number of lives, including a number of human lives. The socio-environmental impacts continue to be felt and the full extent of this catastrophe is as of yet unknown, having completely altered the local ecosystem, destroying lives that depended on the Doce river and its surroundings.

We are angered by the death and disappearance of a number of people, including children, and by the social and environmental impacts that are affecting a large part of the population. While compensation for such harms is needed, much of the damage will be irreparable and will have lasting impacts for future generations.

Similarly, this tragedy was not simply an accident, but rather the result of a development model based on the logic of extractivist capitalism that is common in Latin America and in other parts of the world. This model frequently gives rise to serious human rights violations and irreversible environmental impacts from the mining industry. What took place in Minas Gerais is the result of a means of mineral extraction that produce riches for a few, while the lives of thousands of people are negatively impacted from the socio-environmental impacts of these activities.

We share the opinion that responsibility for this tragedy is that of Samarco, controlled by Vale and BHP Billiton. Further, the Brazilian federal government and the state of Minas Gerais through adoption of this development model adopted helped give rise to the catastrophe. In the absence of a policy of free, prior and informed consent for populations affected by these mega-projects and weak environmental and social assessment processes, along with poor systems for granting mining concessions and mine inspections, these combined factors have led to this disaster.

The companies implicated in this tragedy must be judged and held responsible by the Brazilian justice system and must be held to account by the state so that they contribute to urgent response measures and compensation for the victims. The federal and state governments must also respond immediately to address the real needs of the affected peoples rather than the interests of the companies involved in this disaster who have sponsored the campaigns of various Brazilian political parties.

As a result, we support and reiterate the demands of the Brazilian Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB):

1. A compensation plan for the displaced communities and families, including: an emergency plan, a compensation and reparation plan, local participation in the carrying out of a census of affected families, including full participation of the families and the groups affected during the entire process.
2. A plan to restore the Doce river valley, including: an emergency plan, an analysis of the situation undertaken with broad, including the many movements and civil society organizations along with the state;
3. A negotiation process, including full participation of the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB) and the diocese of Mariana;
4. Means and resources for communications and transmission of information that ensures the participation and organization of affected peoples and the required technical teams, operating under coordination of those affected;
5. Implementation of an immediate action plan to prevent other dams in Minas Gerais that are at risk from breaking, such as the Germano dam.

We demand that the corporate executives of Vale and BHP Billiton be held responsible for the consequences of the tragedy affecting the region of the Doce river. Finally, we join our voices with others calling for Brazil to reconsider the development model that it has adopted and to seek other forms of development based on the promotion of social and environmental rights.

Solidarity with people affected by the Fundao dam break!

Solidarity with the Brazilian Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB)!

- Alerte Pétrole Rive-Sud, Canada
- Asociación de Desarrollo Económico Social Santa Marta ADES, El Salvador
- Bios Iguana, Colima, Mexico

- Breaking the Silence, Maritimas-Guatemala
- Cafe Rebelde Collective, Canada
- CANADA-PHILIPPINES SOLIDARITY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (CPSHR)
- Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA), Canada
- Censat Agua Viva - Amigos de la Tierra, Colombia
- Colectivo Aldeah, Peru
- Cercle des Premières Nations de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada
- Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine (CDHAL), Canada
- Common Frontiers, Canada
- Conseil central Montréal métropolitain-CSN, Canada
- Conseil des Canadiens, chapitre de Montréal, Canada
- Consejo Indigena Popular de Oaxaca-Ricardo Flores Magon, Mexico
- Consejo Tiyat Tlalli, Mexico
- Développement et Paix, Canada
- Groupe de recherche d'intérêt public à l'Université du Québec à Montréal (GRIP-UQAM), Canada
- Emerson Xavier da Silva
- Fondation du Mont Saint-Bruno, Canada
- Isabel Orellana, Directrice, Maîtrise en sciences de l'environnement, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada
- LIDECS A.C., Mexico
- Mining Justice Action Committee, Victoria, B.C., Canada
- Mining Justice Alliance, Canada
- Mining Watch, Canada
- Movimiento Mesoamericano contra el Modelo extractivo Minero-M4
- Mur de femmes contre les oléoducs et les sables bitumineux, Canada
- Organisme environnemental CIEL ET TERRE, Canada
- Otros Mundos A.C., Mexico
- Procesos Integrales para la Autogestión de los Pueblos, Mexico
- Red de Acción por los Derechos Ambientales (RADA), Chile
- Red Mexicana de Afectados por la minería-REMA, Mexico
- Regroupement des citoyens pour la sauvegarde de la forêt des hirondelles, Canada
- Réseau québécois des groupes écologistes (RQGE), Canada
- SalvAide, Canada