



Greetings from the FI Office!

We thank you for your involvement and interest in FI's work to influence key policy makers to promote human rights for marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Here are some of FI's recent activities. For questions or more information, please contact communications@fiop.org.

OUR NEW WEBSITE IS ONLINE!

After many months of hard work, the new, refreshed Franciscans International website is online! We would be delighted for you to go and visit: www.franciscansinternational.org

Please note that some sections are still under construction; they will be updated gradually.

If you have any feedback or comments, don't hesitate to let us know, by emailing: communications@fiop.org



Canada: Hold Your Mining Corporations Accountable for Human Rights Abuses!

Serious human rights abuses continue to be perpetrated around the world by businesses and corporations, with no access to effective remedies for the victims. Indigenous peoples are being displaced from their land, water and air are being polluted, and human rights defenders denouncing these impacts are being harassed and killed. FI and its partner on the field have been on the forefront of the fight for businesses and corporations to be held accountable for their human rights abuses, mainly by advocating for a legally binding instrument on business and human rights. As an active member of the Churches and Mining Network, FI specifically promoted the recognition that States have human rights obligations extending beyond their national borders, notably regarding the impact of their business enterprises when they operate abroad.



Bucket-wheel excavator (© Udo Kempen, Creative Commons)

On April 25th 2016, over 200 Latin American and international organisations, including FI and the Mining Working Group, collectively addressed an open letter to Canada's Prime Minister, urging him to make changes to Canada's policy regarding the global mining sector. They called specifically for Canadian mining companies operating in Latin America to carry out their operations in conformity with international human rights standards.

Among the actions recommended to the Prime Minister, the following are particularly important for FI:

- Guarantee access to effective remedies, including effective access to Canadian courts so that victims of human rights violations involving Canadian businesses abroad can obtain justice, truth, and reparations.
- Ensure effective, independent, and impartial mechanisms to monitor and investigate complaints of human rights violations involving Canadian companies abroad.

FI continues to seek opportunities to call for a more robust legislative framework on business and human rights, as it prepares for the second session of the open-ended intergovernmental working group (IGWG) on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights that will take place in October 2016.

Read the letter to the Canadian Prime Minister [here](#).

Thailand: Establish Concrete Measures to Protect Your Human Rights Defenders!

The lack of respect for the human rights of asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers, and indigenous people in Thailand remains concerning. The country is now recognised as a global centre for human trafficking: it is a country of destination, origin, or transition for many men, women, and children, many of whom are subjected to forced labour. An estimated 450,000 stateless people live in its territory, including many Rohingya people, who have fled persecution in Myanmar.

Thailand was reviewed on May 11th 2016, by the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), in Geneva. This was Thailand's second UPR review. In collaboration with the Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI), Franciscans International (FI) prepared a [joint submission](#), based on information shared by human rights defenders in the country with whom FI and FMSI partner regularly. The report highlighted key human rights violations with regards to asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, minorities, and victims of trafficking.



Panelists at Thailand UPR side-event

In addition to preparing the submission, FI joined partners in hosting a conference at the United Nations during which members of Thai civil society were able to give first hand information about the violence and lack of protection suffered from human rights defenders. They shared stories of disappearances and killings of human rights defenders with no real investigation from the authorities, forced evictions of indigenous people living in forests, and growing harassment of those who express disagreement with the government. Panelists noted that more than ten countries called for Thailand to ensure concrete measures to protect human rights defenders; and underlined the importance for Thai authorities to ensure the implementation of these measures.

Participants of the conference released a [statement](#) reflecting on the UPR and making further recommendations for the Thai government regarding the implementation of measures to protect human rights defenders.

[To top](#)

Calling Tanzania To End Violence Against Albino Populations

People with albinism face particularly difficult stigma in Tanzania, as local beliefs have cemented the perception that they are unnatural or cursed individuals. They are rejected by their families, avoided by their peers, and discriminated against, from school yards to court rooms. In many cases, people with albinism have suffered violent mutilations at the hands of traditional leaders who lead people to believe this puts an end to their "magical properties." Although the Tanzanian government has taken action to put an end to such violence, ritual killings continue, highlighting that more robust measures need to be taken in terms of protecting the victims and persecuting the perpetrators.



Albino Child (@IFRC)

Franciscans International (FI) and partners Edmund Rice International and the Marist International Solidarity Foundation, used the process of Tanzania's second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on May 9, 2016 to document and share the alarming information about the plight of people with albinism, and propose recommendations to the government, in a [joint submission](#). The submission also addresses continuing difficulties for marginalised populations to access quality education, high infant and maternal mortality rates, and concerning issues around child labour and the sexual abuse of children. FI has been working with partners in Tanzania since the country's first UPR in 2012, monitoring the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Government, and preparing for the second UPR by lobbying member states and gathering information for the submission. In July 2015, FI and partners organised a national consultation in Arusha, to share information and organise for the UPR.

Several official recommendations were made to the Tanzanian delegation at the UPR session, around education, health, and child labour, reflecting FI and partners' concerns. A remarkable 27 recommendations were made around the issue of albinism and harmful practices, indicating global concern over the plight of this population in Tanzania. FI and its partners in the country will continue monitoring how the Government implements these recommendations, and will be working with local human rights defenders to keep the government accountable to its commitments.

Governments Should Preserve The Fundamental Rights Of Indigenous People

Indigenous peoples and groups worldwide are experiencing violent human rights violations. They are being increasingly marginalised as land is being taken away from them and their access to basic rights such as health and education is shrinking. Many of them are being excluded from participating in policy decisions that affect them, thus deprived from their rights to free, prior and informed consent. At the core of these violations against indigenous peoples is the denial of self-determination, which has been acknowledged as essential to the exercise of all other human rights.



15th Session of the Forum on Indigenous Issues

Every year, the United Nations holds the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which offers indigenous peoples and groups the opportunity to voice their concerns with member states. This year's forum, "Indigenous Peoples: Conflict, Peace, and Resolution," held from May 9-20, addressed the participation of indigenous people representatives and institutions in UN meetings in which issues that affect them are being discussed.

On the second day of the Forum, May 10th, speakers gathered to take stock of progress made in the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In this context, Franciscans International, Vivat International, and Passionists International delivered an oral statement, noting that mining activities in Indonesia, Brazil and the Philippines had not only been destructive for the environment, but had also marginalized and excluded indigenous peoples from their territories. Furthermore, land-grabbing had allowed for the massive expansion of palm oil plantations in Borneo and West Papua, Indonesia, both by transnational and national corporations through concessions provided by national and local governments, in violation of the right to free, prior and informed consent. The statement also highlighted the violation of the human rights of activists, environmentalists and human rights defenders who had been targeted and subjected to intimidation.

Many other participants pointed to government and business actions that had resulted in the plundering and destruction of natural resources. Speakers urged the Forum to monitor and ensure the implementation of the Declaration and called on governments to repeal oppressive laws and practices that encroached on the fundamental rights of indigenous communities and peoples.

FI Website



Visit the regularly updated Franciscans International website for news, events, photos and reports:

www.franciscansinternational.org



[To top](#)