



# MISSION NEWS

Canadian Jesuits International (CJI)

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## Defending human rights

Participants in the Indian chapter of the World Social Forum at a meeting on human rights in New Delhi.

Xavier Jeyaraj SJ is director of the Jesuit Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat (SJES) in Rome and a member of the Jesuit Province of Calcutta in India.

**H**uman rights are cultural concepts, evolving continually in response to socio-cultural and political changes. Since 1948, when the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), there have been further resolutions, declarations, covenants and laws. All these expressions of human rights have been advanced thanks to the continuous, collective struggles of marginalized people all over the world, who continue to experience human rights violations and abuses (including by police and governments), together with the support of social scientists and non-governmental organizations.

During the last half century in India, the country I will focus on here, innumerable people's movements with a rights-based approach (RBA) have emerged, especially among minority groups, fishers and farmers. They have been demanding their "right to have rights" and a rectification of the injustices done to them for centuries by the elites and upper classes. Their demands are based on rights granted in the Indian constitution, and in national laws and international covenants. Some recent laws, including the Right to Information (RTI), the Right to Education (RTE), the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and the Right to Food (RTF), were enacted mainly

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## The vision & mission of CJI

The vision of Canadian Jesuits International is a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation, transformed through active commitment and finding God in all things.

The mission of CJI is to love and to serve by working with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world. Together with Jesuit and other partners, CJI responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

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## A word from Jenny Cafiso, CJI Director

About 20 years ago, while visiting Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, I met with an official of an inter-governmental organization who had been posted there. He told me that he was tired of dealing with the refugees and all their demands: “They ask for things as if it were their right to have them.”

I was speechless. I could not believe that a person charged with protecting the rights of refugees could not see that the things they were asking for – food, shelter, basic dignified living conditions – were not privileges, or gifts, or favours, but human rights.

That conversation left a lasting impression on me. I think of it every time I see a refugee father hand over a child to someone on the other side of a fence for safety, or a mother choosing to go without food so that her kids can go to school. It is as if safe passage or education were a privilege for a select few, rather than a right for everyone.

Today, we see the most basic rights of people trampled all across the globe: millions do not have access to food or healthcare or education or land. In recent decades the response to this reality and to “underdevelopment” has shifted from a *needs-based* or *service delivery* approach, to a *rights based approach* (RBA). According to this approach, peace and development are only possible if people who have been marginalized and denied their rights are empowered. It moves away from charity and handouts to transforming power relations so that everyone can develop their human potential and live in dignity.

The RBA approach fits well with Gospel values and with the Jesuit mission to be reconciled with God, with one another and with creation. We believe that human beings are made in the image of God and therefore have dignity. We are called to protect human dignity and defend human rights.

In this issue of the newsletter we bring the experience of Jesuit initiatives which are using a human rights based approach to defend and affirm the dignity of marginalized people: the right to food and women’s rights in India; the right to ancestral land and self-determination in Chiapas; the right to a clean environment and economic justice in mining areas in DRC; the right to freedom of expression and political participation in Honduras. We also read of the efforts of individuals, young and old, and of organizations across Canada, including CJI, to defend human rights and to work toward true reconciliation.

We are grateful that you have joined us in this effort.

## Defending human rights (continued from cover page)

due to public pressure exerted by people's movements all over India.

Since the establishment of the Society of Jesus, Jesuits have been committed to serving God, by serving people who are poor and excluded. In India, Jesuit social activists and lay colleagues have been active participants in the difficult struggle for the rights and living conditions of Dalits (former "Untouchables") and tribals (indigenous peoples) particularly since the 1970s. In these four decades Jesuits have established, against great odds, more than 100 social centres among these vulnerable communities "to educate, agitate and organize," as the famous Indian reformer Dr. Bhimrao "Babsaheb" Ambedkar once said.

Although each centre's approach and level of participation in social movements may vary, all of them remain committed to empower, protect, promote and affirm the rights of Dalits, tribals and other suffering and marginalized communities. The aim has been to affirm inherent community rights, rather than individual's rights, over the natural resources of *jal, jungle* and *jameen* (water, forest and land) and over their socio-cultural identity and dignity.

In 1989, the Jesuit Conference of South Asia (JCSA) chose defending the rights of "dalits, tribals, women, unorganized labour and illiterates" as a priority for work (Kath-

mandu statement). It was to permeate all ministries of the Society of Jesus. Reaffirming this commitment in 2000 with the publication of "Walking with the Poor," JCSA specifically urged its social apostolates to go beyond charity and development "to promote structural changes for justice" through a rights-based approach.

Collective action by Jesuits in Social Action (JESA) came about particularly after the World Social Forum (WSF) meeting in Mumbai in 2004. WSF provided the impetus to JESA to establish a common platform, called South Asian Peoples' Initiatives (SAPI), with other like-minded organizations. This helped to foster confidence in one another and to move from isolated struggles to building alliances. People began to feel that "we are not alone." The unity gave new hope and energy to carry on the struggle and to build a just and equitable society.

In the decade that followed, SAPI empowered its members through issue-based meetings, deliberations and joint preparation of peoples' manifestos before national and state-level elections, as well as through rights-

based training, campaigns, lobbying and publications. These efforts led to the formation of an advocacy platform called *Lok Manch* (People's Forum) in 2016 on the issue of Right to Food, which touches the lives of millions of the most poverty-stricken people in India.

Studies have shown that more than 2.5 million people die of hunger in India every year, most of whom are women and children. In 2014 more than 100 people died of starvation in the tea gardens of Darjeeling alone. The Human Life Development and Research Centre (HLDRC), which is the Jesuit social centre in Darjeeling Jesuit Province, works among tea garden employees, to empower and equip them to claim their basic rights, including the right to food.

The struggle to affirm the rights of excluded peoples to food, shelter and entitlements through organizations like Lok Manch and HLDRC is only a starting point for advocacy for Jesuits in South Asia, not an end!!

*CJI supports the work of Lok Manch and HLDRC among excluded peoples in India. For more, see [www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/location/india](http://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/location/india).* ■



Participants arriving for a Lok Manch meeting.

## The right to self-determination in Chiapas, Mexico

Ivette E. Galván García is a lawyer on the Advocacy Team of the Jesuit Centre for Research and Social Action for Peace. She is active in the Jesuit Mission of Bachajón in Chiapas.

Protecting the rights of indigenous communities in Mexico has required great effort and numerous struggles by individuals and groups who have raised their voices and risked their lives to gain recognition as the founding peoples of the Mexican nation.

For more than 50 years, the Jesuit Mission of Bachajón has contributed to this struggle in solidarity with the Tzeltal people in the northern part of the Mexican state of Chiapas. The accompaniment of the people has included a number of strategies for political participation, including the preparation of indigenous candidates for municipal leadership. However, even though some indigenous candidates have won elections and become part of the municipal government, overall the people have not achieved full recognition of their indigenous rights. This is due to corruption and the abuse of power entrenched in the political party system.

A show of support at a meeting of indigenous people in San Sebastian, Chiapas.



The ongoing denial of indigenous rights has recently led to non-violent political resistance, supported by faith groups, beginning with the 2015 elections. People in the municipalities of Chilón and Sitalá, whom the Bachajón Mission accompanies, took a stand by spoiling their ballots. Their action was significant both because of the number of people involved and because it symbolized their rejection of the parties' corruption and injustice.

After the non-violent action of 2015, indigenous communities decided to make a concerted effort to recov-

er ancestral principles of organization and governance. This meant creating an environment where one another's words are heard and valued, where the earth is respected as our mother and where everything is seen to have life and transcendent value. The people reached out to their leaders, called *Trencipaletik*, who have moral authority and deep knowledge of indigenous history and culture. Meetings with traditional leaders became spaces to link minds and hearts and to illuminate a path forward.

An important result of the meetings was the decision to call new assemblies to reflect on the experiences of other indigenous peoples who had the same problems with political parties. Notably, it included the Purépecha people of Cherán who, in 2011, successfully defended their territory against illegal logging by organized criminal gangs in collusion with municipal authorities. The Purépecha now have an indigenous municipality that is recognized by the Mexican government and that serves as a precedent for other indigenous peoples.

In February 2017, when all indigenous communities of the region met at a General Assembly, they agreed to forge a community-based model of government that respects their worldview. To that end, a team of lawyers from the Jesuit Mission of Bachajón together with indigenous representatives wrote a brief to the government demanding the recognition of two rights: the right to a customary system for the election of municipal leaders and the right to their own way of exercising governance. The document was in line with national and international laws that protect indigenous peoples and was presented to the Mexican Institute of Elections and Citizen Participation on 17 November 2017.

Currently we are thus in a legal, organizational struggle to defend the right to self-determination of the Tzeltal communities of Chilón and Sitalá. It is an important struggle for 2018, when municipal elections will again take place.

*Special thanks to Mauricio Palacio for translating this article from Spanish. CJI supports Jesuit work with indigenous peoples and their rights in Chiapas. For more, please see [www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6401](http://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=6401).* ■

## New ombudsperson to promote human rights

Canadian Jesuits International and other members of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA) have actively lobbied the Canadian government for the past decade to appoint an ombudsperson to investigate numerous allegations of human rights abuses committed by Canadian extractive industries, primarily mining companies, operating overseas.

At last, there has been a major breakthrough in our campaign!

On 19 January 2018, Canada's Minister of International Trade announced the creation of an independent Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE). The CORE office will have the mandate to investigate allegations of harm arising in overseas operations, make public findings on allegations, issue recommendations to prevent and remedy harm, and monitor the implementation of recommendations. According to the government this will be the first office of its kind in the world.

CJI is celebrating this campaign success with fellow members of the CNCA and with our partners in Africa, Asia and Latin America, especially those who have related first-hand accounts to us about how their communities have been adversely impacted by Canadian mining operations. Canada is home to over 55% of the world's largest extractive companies and therefore bears tremendous responsibility for how these companies conduct their business overseas.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), to take but one example, Canadian mining companies have

been major players in the extractive sector for years. In the mining industry, DRC is known as “elephant country” due to its enormous mineral wealth, including the world's largest coltan and cobalt reserves, huge deposits of gold and copper, and significant quantities of diamonds, tantalum, zinc and tin. But during the First and Second Congo Wars (1996–1997, 1998–2003), and with ongoing violence and po-

artisanal miners as unofficial explorers for new deposits. When old or newly discovered deposits look profitable for larger scale production, the artisanal miners may simply be evicted, with or without compensation. About one third of the more than two dozen international mining companies active in DRC have their headquarters in Canada. The practices of these companies in a country with extremely weak in-



Artisanal mining in the Kivu area of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

litical instability to the present day, mass-scale looting of mineral assets, expropriation of land, bribery, low wages, mining-related illnesses, environmental damage, child labour, prostitution, rape and murder have become endemic in mining areas. Roughly half a million people in DRC are involved in artisanal mining. Often they work in abandoned mines and have links to local buyers or militias, and ultimately what they mine is sold to external companies. Mining companies sometimes use

stitutions and high levels of crime, violence and exploitation should *of course* be of concern to Canadians.

At CJI, in solidarity with our partners and other members of the CNCA, and with the support of the Jesuit Justice in Mining Network, our focus going forward will be to ensure that the new CORE office is adequately funded and that the government diligently follows through on CORE recommendations with the political will required for effective change. ■

Fr Ismael "Melo" Moreno SJ,  
director of Radio Progreso in Honduras.

Luke Hansen SJ

## Advocating for human rights in Honduras

The Jesuit Provincials of English and French Canada, Fathers Peter Bisson and Erik Oland, sent letters to Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chrystia Freeland, in December 2017 and again in January 2018. They expressed deep concern regarding the violence and abuses of human rights in Honduras following seriously flawed elections held there on 26 November 2017 and called on the Canadian government to exert pressure for change.

In their first letter, Fathers Bisson and Oland wrote: "Canada needs to speak out strongly and unequivocally against this abuse of the democratic process and all violations of human rights in Honduras." In the second letter, they specifically addressed their concern for the safety of Fr Ismael "Melo" Moreno SJ and eight other community leaders in Honduras who had become targets of "a highly organized smear campaign."

Canadian Jesuits International fully supported the Provincials' actions and provided up-to-date information from our partners in Honduras – Radio Progreso, a Jesuit-run community radio station, and ERIC (the Reflection, Research and Communications Team). Other Jesuit organ-

izations that have spoken out against state repression in Honduras include the Province of Central America, the Conference of Provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Xavier Network, of which CJI is a member.

“We urge you and the Government of Canada at this critical juncture to apply immediate pressure on the Government of Honduras to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that the people of Honduras enjoy the full range of human rights.”

*Canadian Jesuit Provincials*

Thus far the Canadian government has done little to call the government of Honduran President Jorge Orlando Hernández to account. CJI continues to support the Jesuits' work for social, economic and environmental justice in Honduras.

To read the Provincials' letters, see [www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=7197](http://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=7197). ■

## Solidarity with Latin America event

On 21 February, Canadian Jesuits International held a public event via video link with Fr Roberto Jaramillo SJ, President of the Jesuit Conference of Provincials in Latin America. More than 50 people were in attendance in Toronto while Fr Roberto spoke with them from San Salvador. The theme of the evening was “Latin America: Struggles, Solidarity, Hope.”

Fr Roberto worked for 18 years in the Amazonian region of Brazil and he is the former Coordinator of the Social Apostolate for the Jesuits in Latin America.

In his presentation, Fr Roberto gave an overview of current struggles in Latin America and also of solidarity and hope through social programs of the Jesuits, including some that CJI supports, such as human rights training in Mexico, civil society engagement in Honduras, solidarity with indigenous youth in the Latin America region, and Comparte, which works on alternative economic processes with small-scale farmers and producers.

Two question-and-answer sessions took place during the event and there was a good exchange of learning and support. For more, please see [www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=7408](http://www.canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/?p=7408). ■

CJI director Jenny Cafiso introduces Fr Roberto Jaramillo SJ (on screen).



CJI supporter Luis Lozano asks Fr Roberto a question.



## Thank you, Miriam!

CJI said farewell to Miriam Lopez-Villegas who was the International Programs Coordinator until early March 2018. Miriam was a very dynamic member of our team for over two years, bringing great management skills to the projects we support and strengthening our relationships with partners. Miriam's dedication, compassion, energy and ardour for human rights and social justice will be sorely missed. We wish her the best in her ongoing humanitarian work and say a big THANK YOU for being with us! ■

## Xavier Network meeting

The director of CJI, Jenny Cafiso, participated in the spring meeting of the Xavier Network (XN) which was held in Rome, March 14–16. The main issues discussed were the coordination of international programs among XN members, the development of common standards for safeguarding and child protection, and a special meeting with the international staff of Jesuit Refugee Service.

A highlight of the three-day meeting was a visit with Fr Arturo Sosa, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Fr Sosa encouraged the Xavier Network, of which CJI is a member, to build solidarity based on a reconciliation rooted in justice, transparency, collaboration and networking. He spoke of discernment aimed at personal, communal and institutional conversion, and he exhorted XN members to be messengers of hope. ■

## Leaving a legacy of love and service

**B**y making a planned or an estate gift to Canadian Jesuits International you can foster and continue the values that are important to you and to your family. We know from your generous support of our work that you share our mission of “love and service” with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world.

Please consider including CJI in your planned giving!

You can do this by simply adding a codicil in your will to donate a portion of your assets to CJI, or by making other types of gifts including stocks, securities, annuities or making CJI the beneficiary of an insurance policy. Our promise is to be a good steward of your legacy gift.

Please contact our Donor Relations Coordinator, Isabel Perez-Doherty, for further information. Call 1 800 448 2148 or email [iperezdoherty@jesuits.org](mailto:iperezdoherty@jesuits.org).

Have you already included CJI in your will? Please let Isabel know, so we can thank you personally. ■

## Y40 Social Justice Day

**C**anadian Jesuit International’s annual Youth 4 Others – Social Justice Day took place on April 24. This year’s theme was “Youth in solidarity: A bold call for action,” inspired by Pope Francis’ reflection on Luke 1:30 for World Youth Day 2018.

Students and educators from eight schools in Hamilton and the Greater Toronto Area attended the event. Keynote speaker Lola Moussa talked about her experiences and learning from the war in her home country of Syria and about her work there with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). Lola also worked with JRS in Lebanon, where she was the Regional Programs Officer until coming to Canada in February 2018.

Students were also able to participate in morning and afternoon workshops on a variety of topics, including the grassroots education work of Fe y Alegría in Latin America and Africa, the “nuts and bolts” of solidarity work by students in Canada, and the work of Jesuits in specific areas such as Darjeeling, India, and the Dominican Republic and Haiti. ■

## New Outreach Coordinator

**C**JI welcomes Pieter Niemeyer as its new Outreach Coordinator. Pieter began at CJI in March and he comes with many years of pastoral and social justice experience. He has worked in community accompaniment and as a high school teacher in Africa and has served as a reservist with Christian Peacemaker Teams and led numerous learning tours to the Middle East. Welcome Pieter! ■



Pieter Niemeyer

## DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS!

Please give to CJI. Your donation will help to protect and promote human rights in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Please give generously by making a one-time donation, a regular monthly donation or a bequest in your will.

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