



European Alliance for the Self-Determination of Indigenous Peoples

Statement on Indigenous Peoples' Day August 9, 2021

On the occasion of the International Day of Indigenous Peoples, the European Alliance commends the decision of the German Parliament (Bundestag) on April 15, 2021, to ratify Convention 169 of the UN's International Labor Organization (ILO 169), which so far is the only international law instrument that provides legally binding protection for indigenous peoples. It has been ratified by merely 24 countries, six of which are in Europe. In Germany, non-governmental organizations and human rights representatives from various parties in the Parliament had worked for years to get the federal government to take this step. However, this is only the first one on a long road: the rights of indigenous peoples enshrined in ILO Convention 169 must now be implemented in the (government) policies of the Federal Republic of Germany – and must be respected by companies doing business in indigenous territories, hence, the approval of the German Supply Chain Act has set a positive milestone in this respect.

Indigenous peoples face growing threats around the world, not only from climate change, but also from massive oppression and persecution. It is on their land that most raw materials are found, mined by large corporations for the greed of resources – too often without free, prior and informed consent or settlement of compensation.

The human rights organization Global Witness states in its 2020 report that 212 persons were murdered in 2019 for standing up for human rights and environmental protection. Frontline Defenders, another Human Rights NGO, reports that 331 environmentalists and human rights defenders were murdered in 2020 – a significant proportion of whom were specifically advocating for indigenous rights (26%). Since 2017, Front Line Defenders has documented the murder of 327 people advocating for Indigenous rights. The numbers only include documented cases; the number of unrecorded cases is high. In addition, many indigenous human rights activists are intimidated, unlawfully imprisoned, etc. Many human rights defenders suffer such a terrible destiny, but the proportion of indigenous people is disproportionately high in relation to their share of the population.

There is little ray of hope for Europe's Indigenous Peoples either: For example, Sami in the far north of Norway fear for their livelihood because copper is to be mined on their territory. The region is the nursery of the Sami reindeer. In addition, the tailings from the Nussir copper mine are to be dumped in the nearby Repparfjord, endangering the salmon stocks of the Sami fishermen. The project partner and buyer of the copper is the German company Aurubis from Hamburg. Companies based in the countries of the Alliance members, such as Glencore, Areva, Holcim, etc. are also involved in indigenous territories.

Therefore, the European Alliance strongly urges countries that have not yet ratified ILO169 to do so in respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and calls in particular upon Austria, France and Switzerland to follow the example of Germany.

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