
[Open letter from Latin American women's network to governments and social movements](#)

On the occasion of International Women's Day, March 8, the Red de Mujeres Defensoras de los Derechos Sociales y Ambientales (Latin American Network of Women Defenders of Social and Environmental Rights) – made up of women from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay who represent a wide range of organizations, institutions, collectives and local groups, including environmental and research organizations, women from both the countryside and the city, professional women and others with a basic level of education – has published an open letter on its website (<http://www.redlatinoamericanademujeres.org/>) addressed to governments and social movements in Latin America. Through this letter (see the full text below), they are seeking to raise wider awareness of the situations they face throughout the region as a result of large-scale mining activities. Their goal is to collect as many signatures as possible in support of their demands. You can sign on to the letter by sending a message to redlatinoamericanamujeres@gmail.com

Full text of the letter:

On this day that is so special for all women around the world, on which we commemorate women's struggle for their rights to equal participation in society and for their integral development as human beings, we would like to address you and invite you to reflect on what this day means for us.

We are Latin American women who have joined together to fight in defence of the right of our societies to live with dignity and social justice in a healthy environment and in peace, and to oppose “mega projects” involving the extraction and plunder of our natural wealth, particularly metal mining activities, due to their highly negative impacts on society in general and women especially. When mining companies arrive in our communities, we suffer the systematic violation of our rights; they pollute and destroy nature, and reduce the space available for work and family life. Our daily lives and convivial social and family relationships are altered by problems like alcoholism and a lack of safety on the streets. The problem of violence against women, including psychological, physical and sexual abuse, is exacerbated, along with human trafficking and forced prostitution, discrimination and social exclusion in the work-related, political, social and economic spheres, and the criminalization of women leaders of social protest movements, in addition to the theft of our lands and an increase in health problems.

The establishment of mining company operations in our territories has increased the burden of work for women, when they are left alone to deal with the care of their homes and families, working the land, raising livestock and even working outside the home to earn a living, when their men go to the mines or do not return.

With the arrival of big mining companies and the backing they receive from governments through laws that benefit these companies and the repression and criminalization of social protest, some of us have also faced aggression, imprisonment, torture and even death, as in the case of our sisters Bety Cariño Trujillo in México and Dora Alicia Sorto in El Salvador.

For all these reasons, on this day we want to call on governments and social movements so that they recognize that in addition to its harmful social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts, large-scale metal mining in Latin America has particularly adverse effects on women. It has also impoverished our communities and deprived us of land, water and healthy food, which are fundamental for our survival and that of future generations.

The development model based on the unlimited exploitation and plunder of natural resources for the international accumulation of capital that enriches a small few and impoverishes the majority of our peoples, and particularly women, a model that is persistently implemented by Latin American governments, including so-called progressive governments, represents a destructive, impoverishing development that we do not want.

We demand:

- That no more mining concessions be granted in our territories.
- That environmental permits be cancelled when companies do not respect them.
- That no more special laws be drafted to facilitate mining activity to the detriment of traditional and more sustainable activities such as agriculture and livestock raising, on which a large part of our peoples depend for their survival, whether as peasant farmers and/or as consumers of the food produced on these lands.
- That the problems caused by the harmful impacts of mining activity in our countries, communities and lives be investigated and addressed through public policies.

For the right of women to be heard and to decide on the kind of development we want! No to large-scale metal mining on our lands!

Latin American Network of Women Defenders of Social and Environmental Rights

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Sent by Red de Mujeres Defensoras de los Derechos Sociales y Ambientales,
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