

# Solidarity with Continental Day of Action against Canadian Resource Extraction

We stand in solidarity with those coordinating actions in Canada and Latin America on August 1st to protest the imposition large-scale resource extraction projects and particularly industrial mining on communities without their consent, which can have severe negative impacts on the wellbeing of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

As home to some 60% of the world's publicly traded mining companies and currently a major source of capital in the mining sectors of many Latin American countries, the Canadian government's aggressive promotion of the Canadian mining industry in Latin America is shameful, particularly given frequent violations of individual and collective rights in mining-affected communities and the Canadian government's intransigence to enact mandatory controls on its overseas mining industry, despite [repeated recommendations to do so](#).

At the recent Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia, [Prime Minister Stephen Harper dedicated the majority of his address](#) to government and business leaders to promoting Canada's mining industry, stating: "Looking to the future, we see increased Canadian mining investment throughout the Americas - something that will be good for our mutual prosperity and is therefore a priority of our government." [Referring to environmental laws that his government was in the process of gutting](#) through the recent omnibus budget bill, Harper promoted legal, judicial and regulatory stability, low taxes and streamlined environmental reviews as necessary to attracting Canadian foreign investment in the region. He cynically mentioned the importance of science in determining the outcomes of environmental reviews, [while muzzling scientists on the public payroll and laying them off in considerable numbers back home](#).

Turning a blind eye to the proliferation of conflict, including at many mine sites owned by Canadian mining companies from Argentina to Mexico, the Prime Minister further indicated in his speech how [Canada is now diverting public monies from its overseas development aid budget to fostering partnerships between NGOs and mining companies](#), despite strong evidence that large-scale mining tends to undermine sustainable activities and compromise the futures of affected communities.

Communities are not only undermined on a project by project basis, but also by the design of the very legal regimens that Harper says should remain stable and which Canada has had a hand in promoting, together with international financial groups like the World Bank and other foreign governments.

In Colombia, where Harper was speaking and where nearly a dozen

demonstrations are planned to take place across the country on August 1st, we recall that Canada provided technical support to the development of the current mining law that was instrumental in opening up the country's mining sector to foreign investment. Canadian investors have been key beneficiaries of these reforms and are positioned to further benefit from the new Canada Colombia Free Trade Agreement that shores up corporate rights with no corresponding protections for communities and the environment. Furthermore, despite having agreed to produce an annual human rights report following the implementation of this agreement, the Canadian government confirmed suspicions that this was mere window dressing in order to get the agreement passed through parliament [when it released an eighteen-page document in spring of this year with no human rights content whatsoever. Colombian civil society groups report that their government did not release anything.](#)

Meanwhile, [Colombia remains the most dangerous place](#) to be a trade unionist with the highest rate of internal displacement worldwide and an overwhelming number of human rights violations taking place in mineral-rich parts of the country. Over the course of 2011, threats against human rights defenders were on the rise, especially against leaders of displaced communities and those seeking the return of lands, misappropriated mainly by paramilitary groups. The indiscriminate granting of mining concessions in Colombia has also led to further insecurity and conflict, given overlap with protected natural areas, important sources of water, the territories of indigenous and afro-Colombian peoples, and lands being worked for agriculture or artisanal and small scale mining.

In such a context, and when mining companies have the laws stacked in their favour and the Canadian government and industry is demanding rigidity in public policy to secure their interests in the Americas to the detriment of democracy, human rights and the environment, promises of voluntary corporate social responsibility ring not only hollow but as a terrible double standard. No Canadian mining company would ever accept a voluntary framework governing their access to water and land for their industrial operations. But indigenous, peasant farmer, rural and urban populations from Argentina to Mexico are finding out that protective measures for their lands, water and lives too often come second place to those for corporate investments. [When they speak up, they often face repression, criminalization, threats and attacks.](#)

This action demonstrates collective opposition to the corporate driven policies in the extractive sector and of the Canadian government and points to an increasingly coordinated hemispheric movement to hold the extractive industry accountable for systematic abuses. On this Continental Day of Action Against Canadian Mega Resource Extraction, we call on people living in Canada to learn more about unjust mining practices and their impacts on communities in Canada and abroad in which Canadian companies are too often involved and in which many of us are knowingly or unknowingly invested through both public and

private savings plans. Too many of our public spaces, including public universities and institutions such as [the Museum of Nature in Ottawa](#), are also becoming privatized and give uncritical promotion to Canadian mining companies and company executives who have made donations, which surely land them generous tax breaks as well. We need to demonstrate greater solidarity, to question our investments and push for divestment. We also need to reclaim public spaces for the public good.

Most importantly, we need to demand that the Canadian government respect and promote individual and collective human rights including the rights of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior and informed consent, consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and international jurisprudence, as well as the right to water and the right to live in a safe and healthy environment; to regulate the activities of Canadian extractive industry companies abroad; to respect and promote to cease providing Overseas Development Aid to mining companies or to promoting partnerships among civil society organizations with the mining industry; to cease providing political and economic support to companies facing serious allegations of human rights abuses and environmental damages; to ensure that non-citizens have recourse to Canadian courts for harms they may suffer as a result of the activities of Canadian corporations operating abroad; and to stop negotiating free trade and bilateral investment treaties that enshrine corporate rights over the rights of people, workers and the environment.

## **Signed**

Canadians Against Mining Injustices in Peru

[Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine \(CDHAL\)](#)

[Common Frontiers](#)

[Council of Canadians](#)

[Canadian Union of Public Employees \(CUPE\) - Ontario](#)

[Canadian Union of Public Employees \(CUPE\) - National](#)

[Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Solidarity Network](#)

[MiningWatch Canada](#)

[Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala \(NISGUA\)](#)