



Updates on the 40th session of the Human Rights Council

Franciscans International envisions a global community in which the dignity of every person is respected, resources are shared equitably, the environment is sustained, and nations and peoples live in peace. We use advocacy as a tool to combat and curb human rights abuses, among others through our work during the most recent session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Business and Human Rights

On 25 January, a tailing dam in Brazil's Minas Gerais state breached, killing over 214 people. It soon emerged that its owner, mining company Vale, had repeatedly ignored warnings and failed to take measures that could have prevented this disaster.

Unsustainable, large scale industrial projects that impact the rights, livelihood, and safety of local communities have become a global phenomenon. Over the years, Franciscans International (FI) has [actively contributed](#) to efforts by the United Nations to adopt binding international rules on business and human rights.

The disaster in Brumadinho again tragically showed the urgent need for more corporate accountability. During the recent 40th session of the Human Rights Council, FI hosted experts from Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to call for renewed action by the international community to address this pressing issue.

Papua and West-Papua

The Franciscan Family has deep roots in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West-Papua. In February, FI staff members visited the territories as part of an ecumenical delegation – the first large civil society mission able to do so in nearly two decades. Based on our previous work and the information provided by representatives from the government, security forces, civil society, and local churches during the visit, FI raised a number of issues at the Council, including reports of ongoing violence and forced displacement on the islands.

Sri Lanka

FI has also been closely involved with the peace and reconciliation process in Sri Lanka after decades of civil war. Despite commitments by the government to establish transitional justice mechanisms following a resolution by the Council in 2015, little progress has been made so far. During the session, we supported Sri Lankan civil society to speak out on the importance of ending impunity and ensuring accountability as a key step toward lasting peace.

30 years at the United Nations



Franciscans International hosted a reception at its Geneva office, followed by a Holy Mass presided by Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN, to celebrate its 30-year anniversary. This was the first in a series of events that we will organize throughout the year to bring together our NGO partners, diplomats, and Franciscans from all over the world.

[Find out more...](#)

About the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is a UN body in Geneva with a mandate to promote and protect human rights around the world. It 47 members, who are elected by the General Assembly, convene at least three times a year to investigate allegations of human rights violations and address thematic issues such as freedom of religion.

Because of its general consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council, FI can take an active part in the Council's deliberations. During sessions, we regularly deliver oral statements that highlight areas of concern, which become part of the official record.

We also invite Franciscans from the grassroots to join us in Geneva. Here, they work with our team and meet with diplomats and other stakeholders to provide testimony about the problems that affect their communities and advocate for solutions. Finally, FI organizes side-events, open to everyone attending the sessions, which provide a platform for Franciscans to interact with human rights experts.

Oral statements

During the session we delivered oral statements on Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Indonesia (including West-Papua), Malaysia, and Sri Lanka.

[More information...](#)

Side-events

FI organized and participated in side-events on Sri Lanka, Indonesia, fisheries, the right to life, human rights defenders, and mining disasters in Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

[More information...](#)

Our brothers and sisters at the Council



Rodrigo Peret, OFM

Member of the mining Commission of the Brazilian Bishops and the Conference Coordination of the Latin American network "Churches and Mining"

"In this context, FI is a gift, inspired by the values of Saint Francis and Saint Clare, because it makes dialogue possible."

Brother Rodrigo is a leading expert on mining practices in the Americas. During the session, he provided the diplomatic community in Geneva with an update on the recent disaster in Brumadinho, as well as on the situation in Mariana, where the consequences of a similar tragedy in 2015 are still felt by victims.

He also called attention to global negative trends in the extractives industry. Despite commitments made by companies to improve their business practices through voluntary codes of conduct, local communities are often left with little recourse if their rights are violated.



Nathalie Kangaji Kayombo, SND

Coordinator of the *Centre d'Aide Juridico-judiciaire* and Deputy Executive Secretary of the *Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix*

"Coming to the United Nations changed something within me; I felt empowered to act and speak on behalf of the people I work for."

Despite its natural wealth, years of conflict and poor governance have left the Democratic Republic of the Congo as one of the poorest countries on earth.

Sister Nathalie works in a community where spills of toxic waste have devastated the local agriculture, disproportionately affecting women and children. Although the company responsible promised compensation, this has yet to happen.

At the Council, Sister Nathalie spoke about the importance of establishing inclusive processes, which would give ordinary people access to justice and an effective remedy when their rights are violated.

The 41st session of the Human Rights Council will take place from 24 June 2019 to 12 July 2019.

If you want more information about our work at the United Nations, please don't hesitate to contact us on geneva@fiop.org

