

Message of Solidarity from KAIROS to the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), on the occasion of its VIII Congress.

October 5, 2012

Dear sisters and brothers of the ONIC.

Warm greetings of solidarity from KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, an organization of 11 national churches and church organizations in Canada.

KAIROS has a long history of monitoring the human rights situation in Colombia and of accompanying the ONIC. We want to take this opportunity to extend to you our best wishes for the VIII Congress of the ONIC, taking place October 8-12, 2012 in Colombia. We are with you in solidarity and spirit. We also want to congratulate the ONIC as you celebrate its 30th anniversary – 30 years of indispensable work for life in a very difficult context and amidst horrendous conditions of conflict, marginalization, discrimination and poverty.

As Canadian churches, we have been accompanying the ONIC and the Indigenous peoples of Colombia for many years in your daily work and resistance against war and in favour of human rights and social justice. We have worked with the ONIC on various campaigns. We have had the opportunity to visit Indigenous communities in Colombia and to get to know the courageous work of the ONIC. As well, on various occasions, we have had the privilege of hosting and getting to know your leaders and representatives in Canada.

We will always remember in our hearts the memory of Kimy Pernia Domicó, known in Canada as a leader of enormous importance, integrity and courage. Many of us had the privilege of meeting Kimy when he travelled to Canada to testify about the impact of the mega –project, the Urra hydroelectric dam, on Embera Katio communities. The memory and the impact of Kimy's words and those of other leaders of the ONIC remain strong in Canada.

It's with much concern that we receive the news of the ongoing human rights crisis facing the Indigenous peoples in Colombia – the displacement, disappearances and assassinations. It is with great sadness and alarm that we hear the statistics of the number of Indigenous Peoples who are in danger of extinction, more than 30 of the total number of Peoples or Nations in Colombia. We know that with the disappearance of a People, an entire world and worldview is exterminated. It is urgent that the international community responds, both governments and civil society.

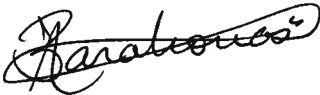
KAIROS realizes that Canadian investment and trade policies, especially in the area of resource extraction, affect Indigenous peoples, their rights and their land. KAIROS calls on the Canadian government to use its new relationship with Colombia to demand that Indigenous rights be respected. Specifically, the Canadian government should pressure the Colombian government for full compliance of the protection of Indigenous peoples, as ordered by the Constitutional Court of Colombia, so that Indigenous people can live safely on their land. Canada should support the demand (of the UN Special

Rapporteur of the rights of Indigenous peoples and the ONIC) for a visit by the UN Special Representative on the Prevention of Genocide. At the same time, we call on our government to guarantee that Canadian companies respect Indigenous rights when operating on their territories.

KAIROS also recognizes that Indigenous peoples in Canada suffer from the same history of colonization, marginalization and discrimination as Indigenous peoples in Colombia. We are committed to work for Indigenous rights and for the processes of truth, justice, reparation and reconciliation in Canada. When possible, we search for opportunities to facilitate and strengthen exchanges and linkages between Indigenous peoples in Canada and Colombia.

We want to reiterate to the ONIC and to the representatives of Indigenous peoples gathered at the VIII Congress that KAIROS and its member churches are with you and that we will continue to accompany Indigenous communities in Colombia in your daily work for peace, justice and all of Creation in the years to come.

With blessing and in solidarity,



Alfredo Barahona
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