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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Center for Global Nonkilling, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 May 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Extractivist violence must be urgently documented and addressed

In 2019, more than 200 environmental defenders were killed, mostly in conflicts involving mining and particularly targeting Indigenous peoples and other front-line defenders (1). However, this death toll is only the tip of the iceberg of gross human rights violations inflicted by transnational corporations and complicit governments.

The concept of "extractivist violence" has been introduced to better understand the forms of violence directed against nature or against people and caused by extractive activities, particularly mining. These forms of direct, structural or cultural violence include soil, water and air pollution, health impacts, threats, corruption or practices of social engineering or 'soft counterinsurgency', are often difficult to identify and expose (2).

In our 2021 written statement (A/HRC/48/NGO/183) it was recalled how the 2019 critical failure of a mine tailings dam in Brumadinho, Brazil, killed over 270 people and released 10 million cubic meters of tailings; and how the 2015 tailings dam failure in Mariana, within the same region, released 32 million cubic meters of tailings, killing 19 people and polluting 650 km of rivers with heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and mercury before reaching the Atlantic. In "Safety First: Guidelines for Responsible Mine Tailings Management" (2022), published by Earthworks, it is warned how mine tailings dams are "failing with increasing frequency and severity".

It is well known how mining has frequently directly fuelled and prolonged wars, instigated political instability, increased the vulnerability of countries to war and undermined the quality of governance, further expanding the consequences of what has come to be called the resource curse.(3)

The growing demand for metals has brought about a concerning trend in which extractive violence and associated human rights violations are minimized, hidden or even ridiculed both by transnational corporations and governments. For example, labelling any criticism as "NIMBY - Not in my back yard- syndrome. This is done through a variety of means than span from public relations, social engineering and soft counterinsurgency to open threats, direct physical attacks and killings. This raises the need to not only acknowledge extractivist violence but also document and report it.

A recent example of good practice for reporting and documenting extractivist violence is the Iberian Mining Observatory (MINOB),(4) an environmental citizenship initiative launched by several environmental collectives with the support of the Spanish Ministry of Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda. MINOB portal compiles geo-referenced observations of the violations of social and environmental rights caused by the extractive industry throughout the Iberian Peninsula, publicly presenting existing evidence on each case. Over 100 cases are currently being documented. This initiative also has a monitoring and early warning system to detect, map and report violations, facilitating the exercise and defence of human rights and mitigating existing asymmetries between affected communities, one the one hand, and transnational corporations and governments, on the other.

Giving the growing concern of violence and other human rights violations associated with extractive industries and particularly with transnational mining corporations, we urge the HRC to appoint a special rapporteur mandated to monitor the global situation of extractivist violence, to collect, examine and assess information on its occurrence and make recommendations on how to best address it. It is further suggested that the HRC, UN Member States and other NGOs to support the establishment of a working group on the issue of extractivist violence.

Fundação Montescola, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

1 Global Witness (2020). *Defending tomorrow*. London: Global Witness. At:

<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defending-tomorrow/>

2 Sehlin MacNeil, Kristina (2018). "Let's name it: identifying cultural, structural and extractive violence in Indigenous and extractive industry relations," *Journal of Northern Studies*, 12(2): 81-103.

At: <http://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1068251/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

3 Seas At Risk (2021). *Breaking free from mining – A 2050 blueprint for a world without mining*. Brussels: Seas at Risk. At: <https://seas-at-risk.org/publications/breaking-free-from-mining-a-2050-blueprint/>

4 Available at: <http://www.minob.org>