

REPAM-Brazil Public Statement on the fight against Coronavirus

The Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network/REPAM-Brazil expresses deep concern about the protection of the health of the Brazilian people and the inhabitants of the Pan-Amazonian region, as the coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) spreads, provoking fear and causing deaths.

The Federal Government of Brazil's decision not to issue safe, comprehensive guidelines that follow the World Health Organization (WHO)'s international recommendations, reveals deep disrespect for its people at a very worrying time.

Even more serious are the attempts of institutional representatives and large shareholders, who have tried to downplay the danger to minimize the impact on the economy and consumerism. This reductionist discourse protects the economic interests of the few and prioritizes productivity over the lives of the weakest, who are reduced to mere statistics. This year's Fraternity Campaign defines the State as the "guardian of life," however it affirms that the deepest sense of life is being lost, as concerns are increasingly directed "towards the economy rather than the good of the people" (CF, n. 54-55).

Life in the Amazon is founded on a "fragile balance" (Final Document of the Synod of Amazonia, n. 43). As a result of this pandemic, criminal and predatory attacks on land have been getting even worse, with territory being exploited for economic interests that have been legitimized by the government.

The government's neglect for and absence in the Amazon region, (which is also evident through staff reductions in the main social and environmental rights bodies including Ibama, Funai, Sesai, etc.), continues to cause serious damage to the biome. The Amazonian communities that we accompany, from a pastoral and/or social point of view, report that in March there has been a considerable increase in logging, as well as in the rate of small-scale mining activities and people smuggling. This is particularly concerning as the migrants who are being trafficked have no access to healthcare.

Indigenous peoples and traditional communities have a priority health service, especially in this public health emergency. Indigenous groups who are isolated from wider society have "very fragile situation, and many feel they are the last guardians of a treasure that is destined to disappear" (Dear Amazon, n. 29).

We encourage the communities in the Amazon to be as careful as possible, and to follow the World Health Organization guidelines strictly. We are confident that if we all take care of one another, we will overcome this threat.

It is essential that everyone stays at home so we don't overburden the region's Unified Health System/SUS, which is already fragile and unable to guarantee public health even without this pandemic. Stay at home, protect your families from catching the virus and from death!

The peoples of the Pan-Amazon region know their rights and know how to appeal to the solidarity of the rest of Brazilian civil society as well as the International Community when the government fails them.

From the Amazon, there are firm demands for the Government to adopt a responsible and effective position in the face of the pandemic, to guarantee firm measures of isolation, to protect of the most fragile sections of society (the most distant communities, migrants, the prison population, residents of less structured urban districts, the elderly, etc.), and to offer safe and rapid access to essential medical care and emergency treatment, to relaunch various forms of local economy and solidarity, and to ensure food security and subsistence conditions for the population.

"The omission of Christians can have very serious consequences for transformative action in the Church and in the wider world" (CF, n. 120).

We invoke the protection of God over Brazil and the Amazon, and the intercession of our dear Mother and Patron Saint, Our Lady of Aparecida.

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