

## **A PROFILE OF FIVE (5) DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE PARTNERS IN MEXICO**

### **Background**

Commitment to human rights has always been and remains an important focus for DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. Our work is devoted to social justice in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, promoting a global culture of peace and justice based on our profound belief in the sacredness of all life and the dignity of the human person. As a Catholic organization, we are in full communion with the Catholic Church in Canada and the Bishops of Canada on all moral and ethical issues governed by the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Human rights are an important and topical issue in Mexico in every sense of the term. Mexico is periodically reviewed by the United Nations Human Rights Council (based in Geneva), most recently in February 2009. Official government institutions as well as civil society organizations (NGOs) are consulted in this process.

Our partners and some grassroots Catholic groups who are not partners of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE (religious orders, parishes and Catholic laity) also participate in these national consultations, with a wide variety of other groups who report on human rights issues in their respective sectors.

The *Report of Organizations of Civil Society on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights in Mexico* is the summary input of all of these various submissions into the final UN document *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review - Mexico*, which is then reviewed at the United Nations and with the Government of Mexico.

It is this *Report of Organizations of Civil Society on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights in Mexico* that is cited in the article recently posted on a pro-life Website, alleging that five of our partners in Mexico (out of 11) are actively promoting abortion. A brief profile of these partners follows.

#### **1. Red “*Todos los derechos para todas y todos*” (“All Rights for Everyone” Network)**

A social network of 54 organizations—including many Catholic organizations and the Justice, Peace and Life Commission sponsored by religious organizations—that works for human rights throughout Mexico. D&P funding is institutional, to help the network structure civil society, and organize meetings and training courses. The organization participates in the periodic review of human rights in Mexico conducted under the auspices of the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Network’s areas of work are: human rights for women; the collective rights of indigenous peoples; economic, social, cultural and environmental rights; security and administration of justice; working with formal structures of human rights; and the protection and training of “defenders” of human rights.

The organization takes positions on women's rights. Their work is well respected both in Mexico and internationally.

#### **2. RMALC (Mexican Action Network on Free Trade)**

As its name indicates, this network of NGOs was founded in response to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The issues they address concern the impact of free trade (and its current rules) on the poor and workers.

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Like many other Mexican civil society organizations (105), they signed the document submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in the context of the periodic review of human rights in Mexico.

### **3. Center PRODH (Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center)**

An organization founded by the Jesuits to promote human rights, participation and social justice. Development and Peace provides them with institutional support, particularly to increase their capacities to defend victims of human rights violations. For example, a member of their staff was assassinated, and they worked with our Education Department to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The recognition of the seriousness and quality of their work is great: they have consultative status with the UN's ECOSOC and are accredited as observers to the Organization of American States. They receive funding from several Catholic organizations, including the Italian Conference of Catholic Bishops and several Caritas organizations in Europe.

### **4. CENCO (National Centre for Social Communication)**

Founded in 1964 by the Mexican Catholic bishops and independent since 1969, CENCOS maintains links with the Church. Its area of activity is civil communication, community radio, freedom of speech and press, etc. CENCOS develops communication tools to assist in the development of democracy, justice, equality and human dignity in Mexico.

CENCOS receives funding from, among other sources, the World Association of Christian Communication.

### **5. CIEPAC (Centre for Economic and Policy Research and Community Action)**

A group based in Chiapas that focuses on developing more just economic and social models and respect for human rights, particularly for the indigenous peoples and farmers of Chiapas. They work in research and education. We have worked with CIEPAC in our campaigns on water and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Our funding provides core institutional support.

In all these cases, the organizations supported by DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE do not advocate or promote legalizing abortion. They work in many diverse areas of social justice according to their mandate and, on the occasion of the periodic UN human rights review, they participate in major national coalitions—along with many Catholic and non-Catholic organizations—who advocate that human rights be respected in Mexico.