
Honduras: The Peoples' March for Life

Some 3,000 people marched 200 kilometres to converge in Tegucigalpa with the aim of demanding that President Ricardo Maduro's government protects the country's natural resources. They came from four different Honduran cities and took from 22 to 30 June to reach the capital.

The march was promoted by the Olancho Environmental Movement (Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho – MAO) and the Committee of the Families of People Detained-Disappeared in Honduras (Comité de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos en Honduras – COFADEH), together with other student, worker, peasant and indigenous organizations and the Catholic and Evangelical Churches. "This is an alarm to get the government to look after forests, natural resources, water sources and the life of generations to come," declared the parish priest of a locality in the western province of Olancho, Father José Andrés Tamayo,. The previous year he had also headed a march against indiscriminate logging of Honduran forests by logging and mining companies (see WRM Bulletin No. 72).

Here below are some excerpts from the speech made by Father Tamayo to the demonstrators:

"After seven days of supportive cohabitation with the population along the four highways leading to this Capital, we have finally reached our destination. At times we were drenched with rain and at other times we were burnt by the sun, advancing kilometre after kilometre towards a common objective: life.

We have been monitored and stalked by land and from the air. We have been threatened with deportation and lawsuits, sometimes by the very people who should have supported us. We have been censored, sometimes by the very brethren who should have kept their fears somewhere else. Warned of the worst, all the worst, by the very authorities of the country who fear when the people take the floor. Nevertheless, we are finally here.

It must be recognized that along each of the four highways covered, we lived through seven days of solidarity and merriness with the people who shared food, water, fruit, sheets, soap, lodging and joy. They financed this March. They are the owners of this March. The people are aware that nobody will do anything for them that they are not willing to do for themselves. For years now, they have seen corrupt politicians occupy public positions, from which they have been delivering forests, mines, lagoons, beaches and land to foreign capital, and we do not even know their origins.

Those responsible for the present crisis are the corruption that produces misery, the injustice that produces unrest, and the short sightedness of a voracious political class with plane tickets to leave with our natural wealth when the voices of the people join together. When things take on the colour of life.

We are protected by article 65 of the Constitution of the Republic, which recognises the right to life, and by article 80 that recognises our right to petition. We are asking those supposed to have the power to make decisions to stop the destruction of natural resources. We can no longer tolerate

illegal logging, auctioning of timber by the State itself, the destruction of biodiversity in the South, open cast mining all over the country, nor the contamination of our waters. We cannot remain silent before the delivery of our natural wealth to those who do not take care of it, to those who only turn it into money, destruction and death.

We have chosen the path of passive resistance, like Gandhi or Martin Luther King. We have chosen the path of peace, like Saint Francis of Assisi, but we have also chosen the path of dignity and life, like the Honduran people.

We have come on this National March for Life to ask the Government to take various decisions, also the international community and ourselves. We have come to congratulate the brethren of La Labor, Ocotepeque, who found the strength in unity to evict a mining company exploiting its fresh water sources in the cloud forest of Guisayote. We have come to congratulate the people of El Rosario, Comayagua, the Valley of Siria in Francisco Morazán, of Guinope in El Paraiso, of Aramecina in the South, of the fisher people of the Gulf of Fonseca and the inhabitants of Olancho, among others, for having understood that life should be defended there where we live, where we cohabit with Nature.

As a newspaper from here in Tegucigalpa asked, “What follows?” Dialogue follows and demands. We know that the President has before him the claims of Hondutel, of intern doctors, of nurses, of the People’s Bloc, of the teachers, of INFA, of the Culture Secretariat, of the business community, of the International Monetary Fund, of many people. But, what we are seeking is himself, specifically his political will, and specifically we are seeking the people, the will of the people, which is the source from which sovereignty arises. Finally, the people are those who command.

All is done for life. Let us always continue to March!”

Article based on: “Discurso del Padre Tamayo en la Marcha por la Vida”, sent by Cofadeh, e-mail: cofadeh@sdnhon.org.hn , and “Comunicado de Cofadeh”, <http://www.cofadeh.org/> ; “Llega marcha ambientalista a la capital de Honduras”, The Associated Press, Freddy Cuevas, <http://www.univision.com/contentroot/wirefeeds/lat/253434.html>