

10 July 2009

The Honorable Lawrence Cannon
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Cannon:

As Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, I would like to bring to your attention the problems related to the activities of the Canadian mining company Pacific Rim in El Salvador.

According to information provided by the Archdiocese of San Salvador and the El Salvador Episcopal Conference, we have learned this company's mining activities pose a serious threat to the quality of life for the people of the region. Allow me to cite some of the issues:

- 1) It has been demonstrated that this type of mining activity causes irreversible damage to the environment and neighboring communities.
- 2) The use of cyanide in the silver and gold extraction process can cause grave health problems.
- 3) Inevitably, the water used in this process will be contaminated, resulting in grave deterioration to the entire water system of the central zone of the country.
- 4) The contamination will also damage the flora and fauna, and will eventually extend to agriculture, livestock farming, and fishing.
- 5) Economically, less than three per cent of the company's profits will serve the population and government of El Salvador.

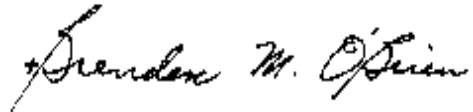
Faced with such facts, the Government of El Salvador has publicly announced its decision not to allow this type of mining. In fact, no economic activity should be reduced to merely profit making purposes. As the Catholic Church's social doctrine reminds us, the objective of the economy is "the development of wealth and its progressive increase, not only in quantity but also in quality; this is morally correct if it is directed to man's overall development in solidarity and to that of the society in which people live and work."

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Therefore, we would ask that you help ensure that the Canadian mining company Pacific Rim respects international norms in regards to human rights and the environment.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brendan M. O'Brien". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

Most Reverend Brendan M. O'Brien
Archbishop of Kingston
Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Justice and Peace
Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops