



## Greetings from the FI Office!

We thank you for your involvement and interest in FI's work to influence key policy makers to promote human rights for marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Here are some of FI's recent activities. For questions or more information, please contact [communications\[at\]fiop.org](mailto:communications@fiop.org).

### Migrant Crisis in Central America: Mexico Needs to Protect Migrants in its Territory

*Ramon Marquez denounces the situation of migrants in Central America at the UN*



The refugee crisis in Central America is serious: it is estimated that 400 000 people transit from Mexico to the United States annually. Mexico's programme "Frontera Sur," put into place in mid-2014 to respond to the crisis, is only exacerbating human rights violations throughout Central America, leaving migrants without protection and vulnerable to all sorts of crime, extortion, and violence perpetrated in complete impunity.

Furthermore, a rapidly increasing number of unaccompanied minors and women and children have been arriving at shelters, desperate to escape from the violence experienced in their home countries. No protection mechanisms are accessible to these migrants, and the authorities that are supposed to protect them are showing increased violence towards them.

Franciscans International (FI) is dedicated to addressing the issues surrounding migrants and asylum seekers from a human rights perspective, focusing on the protection of migrants and their rights, and has been working with the Franciscan migrant

shelter La 72 for over a year, to raise international awareness about the situation of migrants in Central America.

On June 15th, FI joined a large group of NGOs in hosting a discussion at the UN in Geneva, about issues surrounding Central American migration. FI arranged for Ramon Marquez, Director of La 72, to share his experience on a panel of experts. Along with Caritas' National Director in El Salvador, Antonio Banos, Mr. Marquez pointed out the increase of crime and human rights violations surrounding migrants making their way North, through Mexico. He noted that out of 10'000 migrants received at La 72, more than 1'000 confessed to have suffered human rights violations in Mexican territory; and that out of 150 reported cases of such violations, only 14 received protection. Calling the event a humanitarian crisis, the panellists called for the Mexican government to take clear measures to address migrants' rights on their territory, to ensure better protection for them, and to enable access to effective justice. They noted how violence had become structural and generalised across the country, and plead for quick action.

FI used the opportunity of Mr. Marquez' visit to introduce him further to key NGO partners in Geneva. He also participated in UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) and IOM (International Office for Migration) consultations about how to best face migration issues, and met with key staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Read the [oral statement](#) delivered by La72 and FI to the Human Rights Council on June 14th.

Read the [whole story](#) on our [website](#).

## Philippines: Implement Your Indigenous Peoples Rights Act!

*Ms. Nora Polie Sukal, a representative of the Bla'an community, and the panel at the UN.*



The Philippines have been suffering from the consequences of aggressive extractive industry and the numerous human rights violations that are linked to it. In the region of Tampakan in South Cotabato, Mindanao, in the Philippines, the Tampakan Cooper-Gold mine owned by Sagittarius Mines Incorporated (SMI) has been trying to operate since the 1990s. But the project will directly impact watersheds, vast areas of forest, and ancestral domains that are sacred for local populations. An estimated 5000 people, mostly indigenous, will have to be re-settled when the project starts to operate. The mining activities will also endanger food and water sources, impacting living conditions. The risks of pollution, erosion, siltation, flash floods, landslides, and other seismic geo-hazards are very high.

For these reasons, the Bla'an indigenous communities are protesting against the mining project. In response to the strong opposition of local populations, military forces and paramilitary groups have been deployed to the area and are acting in defence of the investment. The militarization has resulted in the murder of anti-mining and indigenous leaders, and other violations of human rights. The company maintains that it respects and upholds the United Nations' Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, but in practice, they use military force to maintain control of the mining area.

For several years, Franciscans International (FI) has been working with Filipino NGOs and affected communities in Tampakan, in order to highlight the case at the United Nations, and call the Government of the Philippines to effectively implement its Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA Law) to protect the rights of indigenous peoples on the lands coveted by mining companies. On June 20th 2016, during the UN Human Right Council, FI partnered with Fastenopfer to organise a discussion on the impact of development projects on the displacement of indigenous peoples, using the example of the Tampakan Cooper-Gold Mine Project.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Dr. Chaloka Beyani, who visited Tampakan in July 2015 and presented his report to the Council, opened the discussion by giving an account of his visit to Tampakan, highlighting the human rights violations caused by the project, and including descriptions about the government's complicit behaviour with the mining company.

Ms. Nora Polie Sukal, a representative of the Bla'an community, testified and shared her experience of how the mining company has wreaked havoc among her tribe, causing disunity and cultural loss, not to mention unpunished human rights violations and potential environmental damage. She called for truthful implementation of the IPRA Law that is meant to protect Indigenous Peoples, for the respect of the Principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and for authentic consultation of indigenous people regarding the proposed project. Ms Sukal ended her intervention by expressing concern for her own security, fearing possible reprisal or pressure upon her return to Tampakan.

Finally, Ms Cécilia Jimenez gave an overview of the legal and policy frameworks surrounding the issue of indigenous peoples' rights in the Philippines, explaining the need to continue putting pressure on the Filipino government to uphold its responsibilities towards its indigenous peoples.

Read the statement read by Ms Nora Polie Sukal to the Human Rights Council [here](#).

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## New Database Helps Better Protect Asylum Seekers' Rights

*ERI and FI representatives promoting the new database at the UN.*



Human mobility and global migration have been gaining increasing attention and visibility, as we are faced with an unprecedented crisis surrounding the lives and security of forcefully displaced people. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, has noted that 2016 is proving particularly deadly for migrants and asylum seekers, and has called for the international community to address the root causes of such movements, protect people en route and at borders, prevent discrimination, and promote inclusion.

In this context of its commitment to addressing issues surrounding migrants and asylum seekers from a human rights perspective, FI joined partners Destination Justice, Edmund Rice International, and ICJ in sponsoring the presentation of a new

online database, developed by Global Detention Project, to track immigration data globally. The event took place at the United Nations in Geneva, on June 14th 2016, as a side event to the Human Rights Council.

Immigration detention is often a process which is far less transparent than the criminal detention system; it is obscured by the use of opaque terminology ('removal centres', 'migration stations', 'border reception centres,' etc.) and the legislation changes constantly. The database represents a great step forward in transparently documenting state practices towards the detention of migrants. It is a rich resource for policy-makers, civil society actors, and human rights institutions seeking information about the evolution of detention practices, and information on detention centres and other immigration control regimes per country. Several NGOs and civil-society actors present at the event shared their enthusiasm about the database and committed to using it to further their work in protecting the human rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

To access the Global Detention Project's database, click [here](#).

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## Residents of Nairobi's Largest Informal Settlement Make Plans to Address the Violations of their Rights

*Community members from Mukuru discuss the rights to adequate housing and land.*



Mukuru, Nairobi, is one of Kenya's largest informal settlements. It counts over 100 000 residents and is characterised by poor drainage and sewage systems, poorly designed houses built near the road reserves and drainage system, and the grabbing of land meant for development of infrastructure.

Infrastructural expansion has become a complex task due to land cartels and gangs who strongly oppose upgrading initiatives. Social amenities put up by NGOs have also been grabbed and are being managed by powerful individuals at the expense of the citizens for whom those facilities were designed. "I had a kiosk, given to me by a company, to help improve my life," explains a disabled young man. "But it was grabbed and never given back. The man who took it threatened to have me arrested."

Since the launch of its Handbook "Making Human Rights Work For People Living in Extreme Poverty," in September 2015, FI has been promoting the tool and its rights-based approach among its partners on the field, developing training material and workshops to ensure its implementation as widely as possible. The workshops stress hands-on action planning and the development of concrete advocacy strategies by the participants. FI coordinated the first of these workshops in Mukuru on June 29th and 30th 2016.

Community members who attended the workshop included a large number of young people, vocal and committed to seeing change in their community, and several women who contributed important detail and assured their continuing involvement and follow-up. When asked about the main issue they were facing in Mukuru, participants chose to focus on the right to adequate housing, connected closely to security of land tenure. Following guiding questions from the Handbook, they explained how the right to own land opens the

road to bank loans, to opening small businesses, to constructing permanent homes. They noted the link between the outbreak and fast proliferation of diseases due to congested settlements, and the general insecurity that reigns as people fight for land after having been forcefully evicted. Following the discussion, workshop organisers and participants agreed that housing and settlement would be the main focus of ensuing action plans and advocacy strategies.

Solid action-plans came out of the sessions, with community leaders recognising how important it was to share information about land rights and raise awareness around the current cases of eviction and the responses from law enforcement. They listed their allies, primary and secondary advocacy targets, and started putting into place national and county-level lobbying processes. "This workshop on advocacy and human rights has made me understand how to better address human rights issues," commented one of the participants. "Issues of forced eviction are rampant in Mukuru, and we hope the Handbook can help us address them efficiently." Participants intend to meet and interact with concerned authorities and other relevant stakeholders in late August, through a second workshop planned in Nairobi.

FI's next planned workshops around the Handbook on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights are set to take place in Argentina at the end of July, and in the Philippines in mid-August.

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