**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Issue:**The question of Indigenous rights in Latin America

**Author:** Maria Josefina Gorlero

**Position:** Deputy President

**Introduction**

Indigenous people are known to be the most affected by the change that has brought us to where we are; Urbanization has meant the unethical trespassing and disrespect in detriment of Indigenous tribes all over the world. Moreover, the massive genocide and slavery of native tribes was seen by the European Nations as a means to an end to fulfill ambitious dreams of colonization and exploitation. This still takes a toll nowadays, as a study conducted by the United Nations (2021) has determined that there are 476 million indigenous people living in 90 countries around the world, which corresponds to 6.2% of the global population; this is alarmingly low. Now, with past crimes being brought to light, societal movements, such as the MMIWM (Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women Movement) have reemerged too. For example, in an article written by Honderich (2021), a BBC reporter, it is spoken about the 215 children’s bodies found in a Canadian Indigenous School. This article was posted in 2021 yet the Canadian government hasn't spoken about it and still remains under investigation.

Latin America has been ahead of its time in recognizing land and forest rights for indigenous with policies and national constitutions. However, difficult economic times have forced many governments to adopt stances hinting towards the creation of industries that threaten these lands. Indigenous peoples in Latin America have long been subject to discrimination, exploitation, and violence. Despite significant progress in recent years, indigenous rights are still not fully respected in many countries in the region.

**Issue Overview**

Historically, indigenous peoples in Latin America were colonized and oppressed by European powers, resulting in the loss of their lands, languages, and cultures. Even after achieving independence, many Latin American countries continued to marginalize and discriminate against their indigenous populations.

In recent years, however, there have been significant efforts to recognize and protect indigenous rights. Many countries in the region have ratified the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, which sets out standards for the protection of indigenous peoples' rights, including their right to land, natural resources, and self-determination. Several Latin American countries, including Bolivia and Ecuador, have even enshrined the rights of indigenous peoples in their constitutions, recognizing their autonomy and right to participate in decision-making processes. These countries have also implemented policies to promote indigenous languages, cultures, and traditional knowledge. Furthermore, many indigenous communities in Latin America are facing threats to their lands and natural resources from extractive industries, such as mining and oil drilling. These industries often operate without the consent of local communities and can cause significant environmental damage.

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However, despite these positive developments, indigenous peoples in Latin America still face many challenges. Many continue to suffer from poverty, lack of access to basic services, and discrimination in education and employment. Indigenous women, in particular, are often subject to multiple forms of discrimination, including gender-based violence.

The causes of this issue vary greatly, yet it is easy to track the origin of Indigenous based conflict. Firstly, the cultural clash dating back from colonialism era caused Colonizers to believe that Indigenous people were beneath them and weren't as intellectually developed as them; They used violence that Indigenous cultures were not used to as a means to conquer these lands. This led to a dispossession of Indigenous lands, resulting in the loss of almost 99 percent of Native lands, moving tribes into economically less valuable areas and farther from their Ancestral and Sacred lands, as the Science Organization (2021) states in an article. Also, present day Indigenous lands have 24 percent fewer gas and oil resources and are therefore less valuable. Moreover, many communities have reported to have been guaranteed citizenship and rights, but haven’t received them and had physical violence used against them in State Discrimination as seen in the First People’s Organisation website. This website also condemns the exploitation of intellectual property, this being cultural and religious assets often merchandised by the government.

As a consequence of this careless displacement of their land, the indigenous nations lose a great portion of their culture and identity, additionally losing any chances they may have of entering the energy economy with their natural resources. Moving on, forced migration has extinguished various of different Indigenous tribes and has significantly affected the development of these communities, having subjected them to a totally different environment. Their lack of say in the modern market has caused an uprise of poverty, stating in the previously mentioned source that they make up to the poorest demographic in all Latin American countries and that “living conditions on Canadian Indian reserves are at the same level as in a country with a ranking of 78 on the UN Human Development Index. Canada as a whole ranks #6”. This poverty also causes an increase in illegal workforces, such as sex trade in Asia where more than 40 percent of Indigenous girls and women are sex exploitation, with women from Indigenous communities being the majority in trafficking rings. In addition, alcoholism, drug related addictions and increased violence are highly related to these living conditions. Lastly, as the FPO (n.d.) expressed “Cultural norms collapse when a community is stripped of its assets, displaced from its homeland and denied access to its sacred places. As Indigenous Peoples are forced to assimilate into the dominant culture, we lose the essential cultural practices that preserve our well-being and make us who we are.”; this statement refers to the massive loss of culture as in language, clanship, traditional knowledge and religion that is maintained only when it's profitable, like in tourist attractions or in retrograde stereotypes in the media. Correspondingly, these factors complicate the average Native Indigenous form of living and isolate these communities from other races.

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**Major parties involved**

**Mexico**

Mexico has the largest indigenous population in Latin America and has been working to address indigenous human rights issues for many years. The Mexican government has recognized the rights of indigenous peoples in its constitution and has established a National Institute of Indigenous Peoples to promote and protect their rights.

**Guatemala**

Guatemala has a significant indigenous population that has faced discrimination and human rights violations for many years. The country has been working to address these issues through legal reforms and the establishment of institutions to promote indigenous rights.

**Peru**

Peru has a large indigenous population and has been working to address indigenous human rights issues through legal reforms and the establishment of institutions to promote indigenous rights. The country has also ratified the International Labour Organization's Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, which sets standards for the protection and promotion of indigenous peoples' rights.

**Bolivia**

Bolivia has a majority indigenous population and has taken significant steps to address indigenous human rights issues in recent years. The country has adopted a new constitution that recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples and has established institutions to promote and protect those rights.

**Ecuador**

Ecuador has a significant indigenous population and has adopted a new constitution that recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples. The country has established institutions to promote and protect those rights and has worked to address issues related to land rights and cultural preservation.

**Brazil**

There still is a great variety of native people in Brazil and the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 recognizes and accepts the rights of Indigenous peoples to their lands, cultures, and languages. The government has established Indigenous territories, protected areas, and other conservation

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initiatives to protect Indigenous peoples and their lands. However, there are still issues with displacement and environmental degradation along with discrimination and violence.

**Timelines of events**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Description of Event** |
| **1492** | Columbus makes landfall in the Bahamas on |
|  | October 12. |
| **1542** | Bartolome de las Casas pushed "New Laws" |
|  | to reform treatment of Indians. |
| **1810-1825** | Various Latin American countries gained |
|  | independence from Spain, but the new |
|  | governments largely continued the pattern of |
|  | exploiting indigenous labor and resources. |
| **1910-1920** | The Mexican Revolution led to some |
|  | improvements in indigenous rights, including |
|  | land reform and recognition of indigenous |
|  | languages. |
| **1925** | The First International Indigenous Congress |
|  | is held in Mexico City, bringing together |
|  | indigenous leaders from across the Americas |
|  | to discuss common issues and concerns. |
| **1940s-1950s** | The idea of "indigenismo" gained popularity in |
|  | some Latin American countries, promoting |
|  | the valorization and protection of indigenous |
|  | cultures. |
| **1960s-1970s** | The rise of leftist and indigenous movements |
|  | across Latin America leads to increased |
|  | activism and demands for indigenous rights |
|  | and autonomy. |
| **1980s-1990s** | Many Latin American countries adopt new |
|  | constitutions that recognize indigenous rights |

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|  | and cultures, and indigenous leaders gain |
|  | greater representation in politics and other |
|  | arenas. |
| **1994** | The Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico |
|  | draws attention to ongoing issues of |
|  | indigenous rights, land rights, and social |
|  | justice in the region. |
| **2000s** | Indigenous movements continue to organize |
|  | and advocate for their rights, often facing |
|  | resistance and violence from governments, |
|  | corporations, and other actors. |
| **2007** | Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous |
|  | people |

**Possible Solutions**

One way to solve this issue is for governments to improve Native Reservations’ healthcare and education, because of the previously shown statistics that utter how Indigenous people are affected in those areas and how it is to blame for the government’s negligence. Furthermore, ancestral land should be returned to native tribes in a way to honor and respect their religious identity, as well as identifying them as rightful citizens and taking Brazil’s example in the matter and their treatment. Governments that fail to become indigenous-friendly should be punished more thoroughly by the United Nations, as there has been little action on the issue in the last years. Lastly, native indigenous cultures should be taught at schools and universities as a subject in History classes in order to understand the true roots of the country, even though these inhabitants no longer reside among us. The world should part its euro-centrist view of the world and indulge a more open and accepting view to fully understand the potential inside ourselves, therefore adopting more environmentally friendly tactics in daily life and aiding .

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