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Toronto March 1, 2016

The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Re: The creation of the Office of Ombudsperson to oversee the overseas activities of Canadian companies in the extractive sector

I write as the director of Canadian Jesuits International (CJI), an international development organization founded by the Jesuits in English Canada which for over 60 years has supported the work of the Jesuits in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the areas of education, social services, pastoral care, agricultural development and defense of human rights.

The Jesuits and the communities with which they work have witness firsthand the often deleterious and dramatic effects of the work of extractive industries, including Canadian companies, on the lives of the people they work with, resulting in violence, displacement, illness and sometimes even death. The Jesuit institutions with which we work can provide many concrete examples of this reality.

It is out of this experience and to give voice to their demands, that I write to you today about the creation of the Office of Ombudsman to oversee the overseas activities of Canadian companies in the extractive sector. I understand that an announcement from your government on this matter is imminent.

I congratulate you for taking concrete steps towards the creation of this office, which has been requested by many people in Canada for many years. However, for the Office of Ombudsman to respond to the concrete needs and reality faced by our partners, it is important that it be characterized by a number of features without which it will be ineffectual. These include:

- the office will be independent from government and industry
- company participation in the process will be mandatory
- the ombudsperson will undertake independent investigations
- the process will be transparent
- it will feature public reporting, including reports on ombudsperson investigations
- the ombudsperson will publish a final report for each case that includes recommendations on prevention of harm and on remedy (this can include recommendations for the Canadian government)
- the ombudsperson will monitor compliance with recommendations
- companies that do not comply with recommendations will become ineligible for several forms of government support

The characteristics and mandate of Canada's Office of Ombudsman will be important in safeguarding Canada's international reputation, but most of all to respect and defend the fundamental rights of people globally to which we have repeatedly expressed a commitment as a nation.

Mr Trudeau I thank you in advance for your careful consideration of these essential elements for the creation of this office, without which the office will lose credibility.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Cafiso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jenny Cafiso
Director

cc. The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Trade
Francois-Philippe.Champagne@parl.gc.ca