



UNITED NATIONS
**HUMAN RIGHTS
TREATY BODIES**

HAUT-COMMISSARIAT DES NATIONS UNIES AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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19 January 2026

Excellency,

I write to inform you that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“the Committee”) received information under its early warning and urgent action procedure in relation to the implementation of Plan Sonora in the State of Sonora, Mexico, and its impact on the Indigenous Peoples of the region, particularly the Eight Traditional Yaqui Pueblos.

According to the information received:

- Under the Plan Sonora for Sustainable Energies, announced in 2022, the Government has authorized large-scale development initiatives in the State of Sonora, including lithium and copper mining, infrastructure expansion, and the construction of solar and liquefied natural gas facilities. These projects pose serious threats to the environmental and water resources that are essential to the survival and cultural integrity of the Eight Traditional Yaqui Pueblos and other Indigenous Peoples of Sonora.
- At least five lithium mines are planned under Plan Sonora, including the Bacanora Lithium Mine, located near the feeding waters of the Rio Yaqui, an area of ancestral significance to the Yaqui Pueblos. The Yaqui have not been informed of the project, which threatens their access to clean water and traditional way of life. Similarly, the Puerto Peñasco solar farm was built on sacred salt flats of the Tohono O’odham Nation, and the Guaymas-Nogales train line proceeded despite warnings from the National Institute of Archaeology to reroute it to protect Indigenous communities and historical sites.
- These projects risk turning their lands, waters, health, and ways of life into sacrifice zones in the name of climate mitigation and national development. Since the Government nationalized lithium in 2022, it bears direct responsibility. Plan Sonora’s impact extends beyond the Yaqui territory, affecting the Opata Nation and Lipan Apache, both of whom have been denied proper consultation.
- The Yaqui Pueblos reportedly first became aware of Plan Sonora during the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) when it was announced by the

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State Party and the United States of America as a climate change mitigation project, despite mining activities related to the Bacanora Lithium Mine having reportedly been ongoing since at least 2010 without notice or consultation. Despite operations being halted due to international arbitration, the potential impact of the Bacanora Lithium Mine on clean water access and Yaqui cultural survival remains a concern.

- Although legal instruments, including the Decreto Cárdenas (1937–1940), the Plan de Justicia Yaqui (2021), and the Plan Hídrico Sonora (2023–2053 and 2024–2030), recognizes the land and water rights of the Yaqui Pueblos, the Government has not formally consulted with Yaqui Traditional Authorities regarding the Plan Sonora or its associated mining activities, nor has it obtained their free, prior and informed consent.
- Indigenous Peoples, including the Yaqui, are already experiencing forced relocation and hazardous living conditions as a direct consequence of extractive activities. Moreover, individuals who have spoken out against Plan Sonora have faced threats. Lipan Apache leaders have filed complaints with the Sonoran government over the destruction of homes and threats to life.
- The proposed lithium mining under Plan Sonora through open-pit methods in the region threatens scarce groundwater and risks contaminating remaining sources with toxic substances, posing long-term health and environmental risks, and undermining the objectives of the Plan de Justicia Yaqui, which seeks to restore water access to the Eight Yaqui Pueblos. The Yaqui Pueblos have already reported rising cases of cancer, birth defects, and other health issues linked to environmental contamination.
- Since March 2025, the Government has accelerated the implementation and international promotion of Plan Sonora, including partnerships with foreign governments and institutions. Infrastructure projects, such as the Puerto Peñasco solar array, liquified natural gas terminals, and new transportation corridors, are advancing rapidly, further threatening Indigenous lands and sacred sites.
- Yaqui representatives have repeatedly raised concerns and sought dialogue with the Government, including at the 59th Session of the Human Rights Council and under the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but have received no response. On 18 August 2025, Traditional Authorities from Huirivis invited the Foreign Ministry to discuss Plan Sonora, followed by a letter sent on 24 August from traditional midwives raising urgent health concerns. Both appeals remain unanswered.

The Committee is concerned that the allegations regarding Plan Sonora and the related development projects near the Yaqui River basin in the ancestral lands of the Eight Traditional Yaqui Pueblos, if verified, would infringe the rights of the Yaqui and other Indigenous Peoples of Sonora protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Specifically, the Committee is concerned about the reported adverse impacts on the rights to life, to health, to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as well as to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources. The Committee is concerned about the reported lack of effective and meaningful consultation with the Yaqui and other



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Indigenous Peoples to obtain their free, prior and informed consent with regards to these projects which directly impact the enjoyment of their human rights. The Committee is further concerned by reports indicating that Indigenous Peoples and individuals have been forcibly removed from their lands and territories as a direct result of extractive activities, and that those who have publicly opposed such projects have faced threats.

In this regard, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations concerning Mexico ([CERD/C/MEX/CO/22-24](#), paras. 15–22) and its [general recommendations No. 23 \(1997\) on the rights of indigenous peoples](#) and [No. 37 \(2024\) on equality and freedom from racial discrimination in the enjoyment of the right to health](#).

In accordance with Article 9 (1) of the Convention and Article 66 of its Rules of procedure, the Committee requests the State party to provide information on the above-mentioned allegations, particularly the reported lack of consultation or free, prior and informed consent by the Yaqui and other Indigenous Peoples regarding Plan Sonora and related projects and other alleged violations of the human rights of the Yaqui and other Indigenous Peoples, by 17 April 2026.

Allow me, Excellency, to reiterate the wish of the Committee to continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Government of Mexico with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that appears to read "Balcerzak".

Michal Balcerzak

Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination