

---

## **Pope Francis: Querida Amazonia, exploitation is “injustice and crime”. No to “colonialism”, “feel outrage” at “shameful past”**

“The businesses, national or international, which harm the Amazon and fail to respect the right of the original peoples to the land and its boundaries, and to self-determination and prior consent, should be called for what they are: injustice and crime”. Pope Francis wrote this in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “Querida Amazonia”, published today, where the Pontiff also recalled that “ever since the final decades of the last century, the Amazon region has been presented as an enormous empty space to be filled, a source of raw resources to be developed, a wild expanse to be domesticated”. And none of this recognizes “the rights of the original peoples; it simply ignores them as if they did not exist, or acts as if the lands on which they live do not belong to them”. “When certain businesses out for quick profit appropriate lands and end up privatizing even potable water, or when local authorities give free access to the timber companies, mining or oil projects, and other businesses that raze the forests and pollute the environment, economic relationships are unduly altered and become an instrument of death”, the Pope warned: “They frequently resort to utterly unethical means such as penalizing protests and even taking the lives of indigenous peoples who oppose projects, intentionally setting forest fires, and suborning politicians and the indigenous people themselves”. All this, Pope Francis went on to denounce, is “accompanied by grave violations of human rights and new forms of slavery affecting women in particular, the scourge of drug trafficking used as a way of subjecting the indigenous peoples, or human trafficking that exploits those expelled from their cultural context”. “We cannot allow globalization to become a new version of colonialism”, the Pope remarked, adding that we “need to feel outrage” at the “shameful past”.

Valentina Bombelli