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## MINING WIRIKUTA

*Document presented by Frente en Defensa de Wirikuta Tamatsima Wahaa*

### Executive Summary:

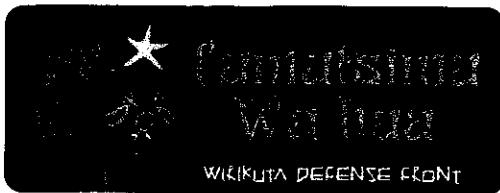
**Wirikuta** is one of the most important sacred natural sites of the Wixarika (Huichol) indigenous people. The Wixarika are native of the Western Sierra Madre. They are recognized in Mexico and Latin America because they have preserved and continue to practice their cultural and religious ancestral customs to a greater degree than virtually any other indigenous group in the Americas. In Wixárika cosmogony, Wirikuta is one of the five cardinal points from which the gods emanated. It is visited annually by various communities of Wixárika people as they recreate the route that their ancestors walked to give birth in the world.

Wirikuta was declared a Protected Area in 1994 by the government of San Luis Potosi. It is in the north of the state, in the region around the town of Real de Catorce. This area is a part of the Chihuahuan desert, which is a semi-desert area that is recognized as one of the top three desert areas in the world in terms of biodiversity. It is native habitat to the Golden Eagle, the national symbol of Mexico, which is at the top of the list of national animal conservation priorities.

Mining activity in Catorce started in the last decades of the eighteenth century and extended to the early decades of the twentieth century. The mining was carried out by various groups, including Spanish, Creole, Mestizo and English mining companies. These companies exploited the resources found in the hills around Real de Catorce, the very hills that are sacred to the Wixarika people. Between 1970 and 1990, activities were undertaken to obtain the remaining silver left in the debris of previous mining activities.

Currently, the Canadian First Majestic Silver Corporation has released an implementation plan to mine the Real de Catorce area. This includes the sacred area Wirikuta, which encompasses almost the entire Sierra de Catorce. Every stone, every tree, and the very integrity of the mountains in this area carry with it a story about the birth of the world. Cerro Grande and Cerro del Quemado are in Wirikuta, and are the sites where the annual Wixarika pilgrimage ends and where the final offerings to the ancestors are left.

First Majestic Silver, under the guise of Minera Real Bonanza, SA de CV and Minera Real de Catorce SA de CV, has purchased at least 22 concessions for the exploitation of silver and other metals. These concessions were granted by the Mexican State over the past hundred years. Some concessions have been approved in recent years, but at no point have the Wixarika people been consulted. This violates current Mexican law. This action has been denounced by the authorities of traditional agricultural Wixarika communities in the states of Jalisco, Nayarit and Durango.



So far, mining is the only development option proposed by the authorities for the Wirikuta area. Presently, the company is discussing the use of the method of flotation, using highly polluting chemicals are used such as xanthates. This method would affect and pollute the aquifers that supply the communities around Real de Catorce. According to the use of water in similar mining activities, this method could consume up to 10,000 gallons of water per ton of material extracted. Thus, the mining by First Majestic Silver Corporation threatens both the territorial rights of indigenous peoples, and the right to water, health and the environment of the people living in the area around Wirikuta.

Given these facts, we request:

1. That the protection of Wirikuta by UN - UNESCO, as a part of the Global Network of Sacred Natural Sites, be respected.
2. That any and all mining activity in Wirikuta be canceled, and that any administrative permissions that would be necessary to undertake said mining activity not be granted.
3. That no new mining concessions be granted around Wirikuta.
4. That Wirikuta be declared a Federal Natural Protected Reserve.
5. That the area north of Sierra de Catorce be declared a Cultural Route.
6. That Wirikuta be registered in the Convention on the Protection of World Cultural Heritage Sites by UNESCO.
7. That the Wirikuta environment be rehabilitated from previous mining activities.
8. That preventive actions be undertaken to ensure the health of the Wirikuta inhabitants.
9. That resources be allocated to implement federal and state programs aimed at improving the quality of life of rural populations living in the semi-desert plateau of San Luis Potosi.



**Frente en Defensa de Wirikuta Tamatsima Wahaa (Wirikuta Defense Front)** is a group of communities, organizations and citizens committed to protecting the area comprising the mountains known as Sierra de Catorce and the surrounding area. These areas were granted as mining concessions, threatening the local population, the ceremonial sites of the Huichol culture, and the biodiversity of the area.

Frente en Defensa de Wirikuta Tamatsima Wahaa is comprised of:

1. San Sebastian Teponahuactlan and its annex Tuxpan, of the municipalities Mezquitic and Bolaños, Jalisco
2. Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlan of the municipality Mezquitic, Jalisco
3. Bancos de San Hipolito of the municipality Mezquitic, Durango
4. San Andres Cohamiata - Wixarika Union of Ceremonial Centers
5. Jalisco Association of Indigenous Groups AJAGI
6. Mexican Environmental Law Center CEMDA
7. Masacalli
8. Frente Amplio Opositor (Broad Front in Opposition to Mining San Javier, FAO)
9. Authorities of the Ejido of Las Margaritas
10. Pueblo Magico de Catorce A.C.
11. Organi-K
12. Nierika
13. Ameyaltonal
14. Wixarika Research Center
15. La Tierra Respira (The Earth Breathes)
16. Ricardo Zavala University Caravan
17. Playeras con Causa (T-Shirts for a Cause)
18. Vision Council - Guardians of the Earth
19. Rainbow Peace Caravan
20. Native American Church of North America