

# **Defend the Sacred Alliance**

## ***Concept Note for Potential Partners***

### ***Context***

The crises that we are witnessing as a civilization are not simply economic or political or ecological or simply related to the latest global pandemic. These are all symptoms of a greater polycrisis rooted in our separation from the natural world and expressed through a dominant culture that is sick at its very core.

The response from those entrenched in power has been to reassure the public that more economic growth will alleviate our problems. The response from “progressive” factions, including the large majority of activists, has been to fight back with anger, facts, and action. But what if part of the crisis is how we, as activists, are responding to the crisis? As many elders remind us, it is our best thinking that has gotten us into this mess.

Standing Rock showed the world that a different type of activism is possible: an emergent form of prayer and action, guided by eldership and the convergence of local and global communities. The Defend the Sacred Alliance (DSA) was born from the notion that other ways of knowing, being and acting are possible when certain configurations of people come together to recognize and bear witness to the essential relationship of care for this Earth, for each other and to the challenges of our time. This is our way of contributing to the possibility of what wants to be born and lived.

### ***Background of the DSA***

In 2017 activists, community leaders, Indigenous youth and elders from around the world gathered at the [Tamera Peace Research and Education Center](#) in Portugal – in solidarity to what was initiated by the #NoDAPL movement at Standing Rock and to resist fossil fuel extraction in Portugal. This initial group has evolved in both form and function. As the circle broadens in terms of people, lineages, cultures and geography, there is also a widening of intellectual and spiritual exchange; vision-building; global north-south and south-to-south community building; and building on shared strategies for systemic change.

Through three annual gatherings (2017, 2018, 2019) we have witnessed the emergence of an evolving practice of sacred activism in service of global system change. As leaders of Indigenous communities, social movements and systemic alternatives, we are coming together in a planetary community of trust and solidarity and for deep healing, as we are learning to be in practice together. The alliance is still in its formative stage, and this upcoming year is crucial to the cohesion, resonance, and deepening solidarity of the group.

## ***Who We Are***

Defend the Sacred is an emerging global alliance united in prayer, mutual support, culture-to-culture healing and shared action. We come together to contribute to the growing practice of sacred activism, to catalyze regenerative systems change, and to protect the sanctity of all Life.

See the appendix below for a list of current alliance members.

Here are our evolving operating principles:

1. Wherever we are, we stand up for Life because we believe all Life is sacred.
2. We anchor ourselves in the source of the sacred through our connection to the Earth and to universal powers of healing.
3. We believe that a system change requires both political action and a commitment to the evolution of consciousness.
4. We are rooted in and honor the diversity of our cultural and religious traditions while transcending identity politics to unify as a global community.
5. We engage in nonviolent action as we believe peace holds the power capable of bringing about global systems change. We strive to think, speak, and act in a way where peace arises within us and around us (to paraphrase Peace Pilgrim).
6. We acknowledge that every place is already home to uncountable beings. We ask for permission before entering space, interacting with beings or removing something from its place. We strive to leave each space at least as beautiful as we found it.
7. We recognize that we can only affect as much healing and transformation in the world as we have achieved within and among us.
8. When speaking amongst each other, we lead with truth, transparency and curiosity rather than defensiveness, sensitivity or judgment. We stand in solidarity with each other and we send trust ahead.
9. We understand that the clearer we are in our visions for a healed planet, the more powerfully these visions will manifest in reality.

## ***Prayer In Action***

Beyond our annual gatherings, we have collaborated on a series of projects together over the past three years. This includes our successful resistance against offshore oil drilling in Portugal. We organized and carried out aerial art actions in [2017](#), and [2018](#), bringing in international solidarity and spiritual support, which were critical in stopping the fossil fuel expansion off the Portuguese coast. We built on this national momentum to bring awareness to lithium mining and its impact in Serra da Estrela and Portugal at large (August, [2019](#)). This action received wide coverage in the national media and was crucial to amplifying the popular resistance.

Internationally, we supported a joint action led by activist John Quigley in Mount Sinai, Egypt to mark 100 years after WW1 and to send a global peace message (November, 2018). We have also supported the Rojava community and Kurdish resistance during the recent incursion of the Turkish military. You can view the publication of our joint statement in The Guardian: [“We stand in solidarity with Rojava, an example to the world”](#) (November, 2019).

Through the alliance, various self-organized culture-to-culture exchanges have occurred, building solidarity amongst the network. For example, one of our Brazilian elders visited the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó to help with critical accompaniment work (February, 2019). Also, Tamera’s youth group organized a visit to Standing Rock to connect with their youth community (November, 2019).

We have also collectively published a book entitled [“Defend the Sacred: If Life Wins, There Will Be No Losers”](#) (Verlag Meiga, 2019) in English, Portuguese and German, with contributions from various members of the alliance.

After our August 2019 alliance gathering at Tamera, we collectively hosted a [conference with over 300 activists from around the world](#). Some of the key topics included: the role of sacred activism in global systems change; the climate crisis as a calling for regenerating ecosystems and spiritual transformation; and building communities of trust.

Throughout the time of the Coronavirus pandemic we continued to deepen as an alliance and work together. Since March 2020 we met bi-weekly online throughout the year as we strengthened our relational network.

As we met and listened to how each member and their communities were navigating the pandemic, we listened for how best we could support and live in solidarity. The DSA Solidarity Fund was one such effort. We collectively raised and channeled over \$50,000 to various alliance members to support needs and projects in their communities.

In our practice around sacred action, we also co-created and published statements of support to acknowledge and raise visibility about various crises affecting members of the alliance in [Colombia](#) and [Cameroon](#).

As a consequence of covid-related restrictions we were unable to meet in-person for our fourth global gathering in 2020. Instead, in August 2020 we held a week-long, decentralized ceremony from our various locations around the world, and began and completed our time together online. We've continued to hold joint ceremonies from our various locations each solstice and equinox.

DSA members in the Fertile Crescent were able to hold four local, intimate DSA gatherings in Palestine - Israel. Our holistic inquiry encompassed our connection to Earth, honoring each other's lineages, dreams, and traumas, our political and social realities, the meaning of sacred action, and our connection to the Global Alliance.

In the spring of 2021 [our honourable elder sister crossed over to the other side](#) – the woman who provided the founding impulse for our alliance. In the protocols of the Lakota tradition from which she hails, a fourth gathering is necessary to complete the cycle. The alliance is honoring this tradition by holding an in-person gathering in October 2021 in the same location as our previous gatherings – the healing biotope of Tamera in Portugal. This gathering will include ceremony & prayerful listening, deepening of the relational fabric of the alliance, visioning of future actions to manifest, and a rooting into a shared and transformative purpose.



*The Lakota Star Quilt Commissioned for our Honorable Sister*