



SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD  
**NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER**  
*Rise Up AND Act for Justice*

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## **Stop the Destruction of Sacred Land. Save Oak Flat. *Keep China from Accessing this Copper Mine***

“Sacred Apache, Yavapai, O’odham, Hopi and Zuni land in Arizona, Oak Flat in Tonto National Forest, is in imminent risk of destruction. The popular destination area is slated to be swallowed up by a copper mining project that would create a sink hole as long as the Golden Gate Bridge and three times as high as the Empire State Building,” said Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director of the National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

The land, also known as Chi’chil Bildagoteel, is on the National Register of Historic Places as a Traditional Cultural Property because for centuries it has been the site of religious and cultural ceremonies, a burial ground, and a place for tribal members to find medicinal plants, food, and water.

“This past week, for the first time in 30 years, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, Baha’is, Hindus, Buddhists and Indigenous nations celebrated Ramadan, Passover, Easter, Vaisakhi, Mahavir Jayanti, Theravada New Year and the Gathering of Nations at the same time. And this week we celebrate both Easter Week and Earth Day.

“The National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd notes the confluence of these events and calls for a recognition of the religious freedom rights of our Indigenous brothers and sisters to preserve their sacred land. We respect all faiths and beliefs and we urges Congress to pass legislation to save Oak Flat and stop its desecration,” said Eskin-Royer.

As Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si’*, “it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions... For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, they themselves care for it best.”

In addition, the ownership and ‘profiteers’ of this mining proposal require closer scrutiny. The Bank of China and other Chinese-backed businesses hold a 30% stake in the mining company, Australian Rio Tinto, which is the primary owner of the local company, Resolution Copper LLC. Should China profit from America’s copper and from the obliteration of indigenous sacred land? Shouldn’t we all recognize that land and its contents are more than just commodities? Let us learn from Native Americans and the care, love, and respect they have for the natural world.

At this especially holy time, Congress must act.

[The National Advocacy Center](#) educates and advocates on social justice issues for the transformation of society to the benefit of all people reflecting the spirituality, history and mission of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. NAC advocates at the Federal level for people living in poverty, immigrants, survivors of human trafficking, survivors of domestic abuse, and other vulnerable populations.

The National Advocacy Center reflects the spirituality, history and mission of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (better known as the Sisters of the Good Shepherd). The sisters and their agencies work in solidarity with the disenfranchised – particularly families, women and children – who often are forgotten, left-behind or dismissed.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd was founded in France in 1835 and are in 70 countries on 5 continents and have had a presence in the United States for over 175 years. With a presence in 22 states and 1 U. S. Territory, the Sisters and their Lay Mission Partners have dedicated themselves to serving girls, women and families who experience poverty, exploitation, vulnerability and marginalization.

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