

RIGHTS ACTION REPORT (available at www.rightsaction.org):

ÌA BACKWARDS, UPSIDE-DOWN KIND OF DEVELOPMENT: GLOBAL ACTORS, MINING & COMMUNITY-BASED RESISTANCE IN HONDURAS & GUATEMALAÎ

SUMMARY

There is increasing international interest in local resistance to metallic mining activities, particularly in the opposition of indigenous communities in the department of San Marcos, Guatemala, to Glamis Gold Ltd's Marlin project. This interest and concern was stimulated by news of the murder of indigenous demonstrator Raul Castro Bocel by State security forces, when the Guatemalan government sent in the army and police to repress protests in Los Encuentros and ensure the safe passage of a convoy of mining equipment belonging to Glamis Gold.

This report focuses on the current situation in Guatemala and Honduras, as regards metallic mining activities, transnational companies and community-based responses. The current situation, however, cannot be discussed only in terms of mining in Guatemala and Honduras; the current situation is a product of recent legislation and regulatory framework changes, which, in turn, are the product of a 'development' model devised, promoted and carried out by the same global actors profiting from the unjust and exploitative neocolonialist global system.

Diverse global actors are involved in the mining industry around the world. The World Bank Group, via its private sector entities the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), is directly involved in financing and insuring transnational mining corporations, as well as its involvement as a direct shareholder in several mining projects. The World Bank and its sister institution, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have also been involved in mining legislation and policy reforms - benefiting companies at the expenses of local peoples and communities - in dozens of countries worldwide.

Canadian government entities such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and the Export Development Corporation (EDC), have played similar roles in promoting and implementing legislation and policy, financing and insuring mining projects and promoting the industry - using public funds - to support Canadian mining companies. The United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) and the Export-Import Bank are engaged in the same activities as their Canadian counterparts. United Nations agencies and private security/military companies promote and protect an industry that disproportionately affects indigenous peoples, as do the regional and bilateral 'Free' Trade Agreements that protect investors and further establish the neoliberal agenda.

Both with long histories of natural resource exploitation dominated by foreign control, persecution and genocide, Guatemala and Honduras have both been the sites of an onslaught of transnational mining company activity. Over one third of Honduras and one tenth of Guatemala are covered by mining concessions and licenses, many of which, in the case of Guatemala, are located in indigenous territory.

This upsurge in metallic mining activity is the product of mining legislation reforms in the late 1990s, when global actors saw a 'window of opportunity' to pursue their 'development' agenda with the signing of the Peace Accords in Guatemala and Hurricane Mitch in Honduras. Dozens of Canadian and US companies are operating in the region.

A 'leader' in Central America, Canadian/US company Glamis Gold Ltd is currently involved in an arbitration case against the US under the North American Free Trade Agreement for protective measures taken by previous Californian governmental institutions to protect First Nations sacred sites from the damages of open pit mining.

The same company operates the San Martin gold mine in the Siria Valley, Honduras, where devastating impacts include illnesses, water shortage, contamination, failed crops, and many others. Charges were laid against a representative of Glamis subsidiary Entre Mares for a number of environmental and other crimes; however, these cases lie 'dormant' in the Honduran 'justice' system, symptomatic of the global impunity in which transnational mining companies and other global actors operate.

Glamis Gold is also the owner of the Marlin project in Guatemala, where indigenous communities' rights and demands have been completely ignored and violated, as the January 11th murder of an indigenous demonstrator has shown.

From San Marcos to the Siria Valley to numerous communities and organizations around the world, community-based resistance is not the product of foreign anti-development agitators or ignorance, as mining companies and international institutions claim. In the face of the imposed 'development' model and regulatory framework that is at complete odds with their interests and local community development initiatives, communities are struggling to defend their lands, territory, water, resources, food sovereignty, environment, health and needs from the invasion of destructive mining activities operating amidst impunity and strong support from global actors. Despite this incredible power imbalance, several communities in Central and Latin America have successfully detained mining activities - at least temporarily.

While it is important to support the struggles, priorities, demands

and needs of local communities, it is crucial that international solidarity initiatives address the global 'development' model of which mining is but one example. A global justice movement dealing with mining issues in Honduras and Guatemala must confront the unjust and oppressive global system and the global actors profiting from the continued exploitation.

In the interests of encouraging activism on these and related issues, a few ideas on how to get involved and some suggestions on where to look for more information are included.

SEMINAR-DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA and HONDURAS, JULY 2005

Join Rights Action's delegation to:

- Investigate actual cases of human rights (HR) and indigenous rights violations in Guatemala (and possibly Honduras), applying the full understanding of HR (economic, civil, social, political, cultural) and the full understanding of which actors can and violate human rights (governments, inter-state institutions [such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, etc.], global companies, banks, etc.)
- Learn about community development and Indigenous organizing, and political and legal efforts to address and remedy the violations, including South-North alliances and work for global equality and justice
- Investigate the responsibilities of, and how to hold accountable "global actors" (other governments, companies, "development" institutions such as the World Bank, etc.) for HR and Indigenous rights violations

Information: 860-352-2152/ info@rightsaction.org

FINANCIAL DONATIONS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK

To support grassroots organizations in Honduras and Guatemala, working to implement community-controlled and designed development projects, resisting the imposition of exploitative and harmful mining operations, make TAX-CHARITABLE DONATIONS payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- UNITED STATES: 1830 Connecticut Av, NW, Washington DC, 20009.
- CANADA: 509 St. Clair Ave W, box73527, Toronto ON, M6C-1C0.

Donate on line: www.rightsaction.org

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info@rightsaction.org.