

July 21, 2005

GUATEMALA: San Miguel Ixtahuac announces community consultations concerning open pit mining and the global mining industry

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Dear friends, Rights Action has not been sending emails recently, as we are all in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, carrying on with various aspects of our work: funding community based development, environment and human rights projects; providing human rights accompaniment to 'at risk' community leaders; being involved in education and activism work related to the negative impacts of policies and actions of northern governments, global mining companies, and northern 'development' institutions such as the World Bank, etc.

#### MINING versus COMMUNITY DESIGNED & CONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT

Below, Sandra Cuffe (Rights Action) writes of upcoming community based consultations in the very municipality where the Canadian-US Glamis Gold company is already building a large mining operation. There never were open and proper consultations with the local Mayan communities (Sipakapense and Mam) concerning whether or not they wanted mining in their communities and municipalities.

Over the next months, Rights Action, along with partner groups, will be involved with, supporting and reporting on the San Miguel region's right and need to participate openly in their own consultation process.

**SUPPORT NEEDED:** Contact Rights Action for more information, to make tax-charitable donations in Canada and the US for this community development work, to host education and activism events in your community, etc: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org) / 416-654-2074.

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If you want on off this elist: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org). Please re-distribute

and re-publish this info far and wide.

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July 20, 2005

CONSULT THIS!:

**SAN MIGUEL IXTAHUACÍN ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS & SIPACAPA  
COMMUNITY  
LEADERS FACE ONGOING REPRESSION**

On Monday, July 18, the Community Mayors (Alcaldes Auxiliares), Community Development Council (COCODE) members, representatives of local organizations and the Municipal Mayor of San Miguel Ixtahuacán unanimously decided to carry out community consultations regarding mining activities in their municipality, located in the department of San Marcos, Guatemala.

The decision was made exactly one month after the people of the neighbouring municipality of Sipacapa overwhelmingly rejected open pit mining activities in their territory, in an open and democratic process of community consultations.

These legitimate community consultations – in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Sipacapa, along with other communities in the departments of San Marcos, Sololá, Totonicapán, etc – are supported by International Labour Organization (ILO) Covenant 169, the Municipal Code, and the Law of Development Councils. Thus, they should be found to be legally binding.

There could be significant ramifications to the consultations in San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa, as both municipalities are directly affected by Canadian transnational mining company Glamis Gold's Marlin Project, a gold and silver project under construction. As well, the same company, by way of its wholly owned subsidiaries Montana Exploradora and Entre Mares, has been granted further mining licenses for prospecting and exploration in the region.

The communities of San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa, the vast

majority of which are indigenous Maya (Mam and Sipakapense, respectively), have repeated denounced the fact that no consultations by Glamis Gold nor by the Guatemalan government have taken place concerning the project, despite the fact that the licenses were granted long after ILO Covenant 169 was ratified by Guatemala. Regardless, the Marlin Project has enjoyed the full support of the World Bank, through a 45 million dollar loan from the International Finance Corporation to Glamis Gold, as well as that of the Canadian Embassy in Guatemala.

In a recent release announcing the community consultations in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, the organization 'Instancia Maya MAM AJPOP' explains that the population of the municipality gradually found out about the mining licenses through "the construction of the mining company's installations, the total destruction of the mountainside, the massive deforestation, and the drilling of a well," which will allow the company to draw over 250 Liters of water per hour directly from the aquifer.

#### REPRESSION

Aside from the human rights and environmental abuses inherent in the open pit metallic mining process, there have also been several incidents of grave human rights violations associated with the mining project, including the murders of Alvaro Benigno Sánchez on March 13 by a private security agent of the Golan Group, contracted by Glamis Gold to provide 'security,' and of Raúl Castro Bocel by State 'security' forces on January 11. In both cases there has been total impunity for those responsible.

In Sipacapa, where communities are still waiting for a response concerning the consultation results from the Ministry of Energy and Mines, community leaders are facing ongoing repression. Many, including those working with

Sipa Estereo, a community radio station that was instrumental in promoting and accompanying the consultation process, have been receiving death threats over the phone ever since the beginning of the consultation process.

On July 5th, Sipakapense community leader and former municipal mayor Mario Tema was on his way to Huehuetenango with his wife when they were followed by a green pickup truck with no license plates. Several community members have informed Tema of conversations they have overheard in which unknown individuals proclaim their intention to get rid of him in the same way as his father, who was killed in 1987.

There are also concerted efforts to criminalize and delegitimize the community leaders who have been at the forefront of the struggle in Sipacapa for consultations and who have maintained a clear position against mining activities in the municipality. There are at least three false accusations, mainly of threats and possession of weapons, against community leaders Mario Perfecto Tema Bautista, Horacio Bamaca Mejía, Santos Arnulfo Lúpez, Sergio Carrillo Tojil, and Eliseo Bamaca.

As in many other cases in which communities are struggling against powerful economic interests, the frequent manipulation of the legal system, threats and other acts of repression strive to intimidate community leaders, organizations and communities and to deter them from continued action.

As is made clear by the decision of San Miguel Ixtahuacán to carry out community consultations – despite the heavy presence of private and public repressive apparatus in the municipality – the communities' need for a locally controlled process to determine what activities are carried out in their own territory is more powerful than the attempts to derail the process.

[Stay tuned ... ]

(The author, Sandra Cuffe, works with Rights Action in Honduras, but sometimes wanders a little north. Feel free to circulate and

redistribute  
this message.)

For more information, to get involved in issues related to the global  
mining  
industry and global impunity, or to make tax deductible donations in  
support  
of community-based organizations struggling for community-controlled  
development, the environment, indigenous rights and territory and  
justice in  
the face of repression, contact Rights Action: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org),  
[www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org), 416-654-2074

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