

January 18, 2007

GUATEMALA: More forced evictions and repression against impoverished Mayan Q'eqchi' populations occupying lands in Izabal, Guatemala, where the Canadian Skye Resources nickel company is hoping to mine.

BELOW, updated information (English and Spanish) from a lead human rights group in Izabal: the Defensoria Q'eqchi' (AEPDI).

The subsistence level, exploited communities have historical claim to much of the land in this region. Skye Resources – in collusion with Guatemalan police and army – is bulling ahead, causing increased suffering and grief to some of the poorest people and communities in Central America.

* Do you know where your investments are? Getting good returns on investments in the global mining industry? In the Canadian Pension Plan? *

* Where is the Canadian government? Where is the Canadian media? *

BARE MINIMUM DEMAND: Skye Resources should immediately call a moratorium to its forced evictions and to its entire mining operation in Izabal, to then initiate real discussions and negotiations with the affected communities.

The Bishop of Izabal is willing and able to host such discussions.

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[SPANISH BELOW]

On January 16, 2007, 200 Guatemalan national police, accompanied by 2 trucks of soldiers, went again to forcibly evict the 5 places that were forcibly evicted last week. [See attached article by Dawn Paley. See 10-minute video clip of the evictions, <http://www.rightsaction.org/video/elector>, and a photo essay, <http://mimundo-jamesrodriguez.blogspot.com>]

They were again accompanied by Carlos Rafael Andrade, of the attorney general's office of the municipality of La Tinta.

These forced evictions [dating back to November 2006 – see attached article by Grahame Russell] were requested by the CGN – Guatemalan Nickel Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Canadian Skye Resources nickel company.

In one of the 5 communities, Lote 8, the impoverished Mayan-Q'eqchi'

families fled into the forest, before the arrival of the police and soldiers, who then proceeded to burn and re-burn the simple huts of bamboo and thatched roofs – the remaining ones that had not been burned last week.

In the community of La Paz, the soldiers and police did not burn the huts, due to the presence of the Human Rights Ombudsman's office. In the communities of La Pista and Revoluci n, the people fled into the forest before the arrival of the soldiers and police.

In the Union community, just outside of the town of El Estor, there was a confrontation between community members and the armed forces. The armed forces shot tear gas canisters in to the living area, where women and children were overcome with the fumes. A group of the community, joined by alleged gang members from El Estor, knocked down an electrical post, blocking one of the entries to the Union community.

Shots were fired, but there is no news of people wounded or killed. The Town Patrollers – formed by the mayor of El Estor [Rigoberto Chub] – arrived on the scene in 3 pick-up trucks, firing their guns into the air and the community group dispersed. [The Town Patrollers is an illegal para-military organization]

In the evening, the police and soldiers retreated, leaving town security presumably in the hands of the mayor's Town Patrols. The government office of agrarian affairs informed that there had been threats to burn the offices of the Defensoria Q'eqchi' [AEPDI]. Based on a request from the Defensoria Q'eqchi', the district commissioner agreed not to have all the police retreat from the area, leaving the area with no official security forces.

Community members of the 5 communities have said they will not re-occupy their communities and are willing to participate in multi-party meetings headed by the Bishop of Izabal, Monse or Gabriel Pe ate.

[Information translated by Rights Action]

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From: Daniel J. Vogt [mailto:dvogt@intelnet.net.gt]
Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2007 9:08 AM

Desalojos 17 de enero

Estimados Colegas y Amigos:

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El día de ayer, un contingente de aproximadamente 200 agentes de la PNC y dos camionadas de soldados, en compañía del fiscal de La Tinta Carlos Rafael Andrade,†llegaron a los cinco lugares que habían sido desalojados la semana pasada por las autoridades a petición de la CGN, con el propósito de desalojar a las personas que habían reocupado estos terrenos.

En el Lote 8, los pobladores se huyeron antes de que llegaran las autoridades y los policías procedieron a quemar las casas que no habían sido quemadas la semana pasada así como unas estructuras rísticas nuevas.

En la comunidad La Paz, debido a la presencia de representantes de la PDH (que estaban en el área debido a otros compromisos), no hubo quema de casas ni desalojo.

Según las informaciones recibidas, en las comunidades Las Pista y Revolución, los pobladores se huyeron antes de la llegada de las autoridades y no hubo capturas.

En la Unión, en las afueras del pueblo de El Estor, hubo un enfrentamiento entre pobladores y los policías.† Según las informaciones recibidas, la PNC lanzó bombas de gas lacrimógeno entre las casas donde habían mujeres y niños, algunos de ellos que después quedaban intoxicados por los efectos del gas.† Una turba se formó, conformada por algunos pobladores de la Unión con otros jóvenes (presuntos mareros) y botaron un poste de energía eléctrica tapando la entrada y salida hacia el oeste de El Estor.† Hubo disparos, pero no hay reportes de heridos ni detenidos.† Los Patrulleros del Pueblo, conformado por el Alcalde de El Estor, se reunieron y armados llegaron al lugar de los hechos disparando al aire desde 3 pickups y la turba se dispersó.

Los PNC que llegaron para el desalojo se retiraron en horas de la noche del pueblo, dejando la seguridad en manos de los Patrulleros, presuntamente. Desde la Secretaría de Asuntos Agrarios nos informaron que habían planes de quemar las instalaciones de la Defensoría Q'eqchi' durante la noche.† A petición de nosotros, se solicitó a la Comisaría Distrital que no hubiera una salida de todos los policías, para mantener el orden y no dejar la comunidad sin protección policial.† Esta petición sí fue atendida y la noche pasó sin mayor novedad.

En horas de la mañana de hoy, los líderes de las comunidades expresaron que no van a reocupar los terrenos y esperan la reunión programada para el día de mañana propiciada por el obispo de Izabal, Monseñor Gabriel Peñate, dando un plazo de 15 días para que hubiera algún resultado.

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