

September 14, 2007

HONDURAS: CANADIAN MINING COMPANY (Yamana Gold) DISCHARGES CYANIDE INTO LARA RIVER

Local authorities say that at least 1,500 gallons spilled into the river. The mining company says that the population down river is not at risk. (diario@elheraldo.hn, 07-09-05, translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gil)

YAMANA GOLD (CANADIAN MINING COMPANY)

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(Tegucigalpa). The alleged discharge of cyanide-contaminated water into the Lara River, a tributary of the Higuito, has angered the people of Santa Rosa de Copán. Environmentalists have denounced the [Canadian] Yamana Gold Mining Company (Minerales de Occidente), for their discharges of August 28th.

The company suspended operations when they discovered that the ph levels exceeded the maximum permitted by international standards.

However, at least 1,500 gallons of cyanide-contaminated water were discharged into the river, and some 45,000 people in the municipal centre will have to suffer the consequences. The cyanide-contaminated water was discharged into the lagoon, or Basin Number 5.

According to information obtained by El Heraldo, in this basin alone, there are more than 19 million gallons of water. Environmentalists say that the discharge was stopped because of the intervention of independent experts who used their own equipment to assess the levels of contamination. They discovered that the ph level was 9.68 units. According to environmentalists, the international norm for ph levels is between 6 and 8.

Water with elevated alkalinity can cause serious damage to human health.

They therefore consider that it is a clear case of negligence that scientists from Defomin (Honduran Executive Department of the Promotion of Mining), which is under the Honduras Natural Resources and Environment Secretariat (Serna), came to the area to carry out the measurements with equipment that was in poor condition.

Yesterday, a group of local people who were upset by the situation occupied the San Andrés mine. They say that the company will have to discharge more contaminated water because of the rain that will be brought by Hurricane Felix.

THE MINING COMPANY'S POSITION

German Padilla, Environmental Director for the mine, insisted that the mine has the capacity to retain water, but he did recognize that a heavy rainfall could cause problems because not a single drop of water, even rain water, can leave the premises without being assessed. Padillo says that the high level of alkalinity in the water had been neutralized; however, to be sure, they have sent samples to laboratories in Canada and are awaiting the results.

He also confirmed that they had received authorization from Serna to discharge the water. In reaction to the demonstration at the mine, employees of the mine went to the police station in Santa Rosa de Copán to demand that the demonstrators be removed. One employee pointed out that the mine had undertaken important agreements to work "harmoniously" with three communities.

The worker said that the demonstrators were only a small group of people, who had been stirred up by religious leaders and by people who wanted to stop work at the mine. "We are asking the authorities to intervene and

remove the demonstrators immediately”, he said.

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WHAT TO DO:

- 1- Rights Action is leading an educational-activist delegation to the Siria Valley, Honduras, October 25-October 31, to investigate health, environment and human rights violations caused by the Goldcorp (formerly Glamis Gold) company. For more information, contact Sandra Cuffe: caminando27@yahoo.es.
- 2- write your letters of protest and complaint to the Yamana company (address above) and your politicians and media.

RIGHTS ACTION: is a tax-deductible organization (Canada and the USA) that funds and supports community-based development, environment and human rights organizations in southern Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and educates about and is involved in activism related to global development, environmental and human rights issues. [www.rightsaction.org]

- 3- Get on our e-mail and snail-mail lists: info@rightsaction.org;

- 4- DONATE TO INDIGENOUS, COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS designing and implementing their own development, human rights and environment project: Make tax-deductible donation to "Rights Action" and mail to: UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887; CANADA: 422 Parliament St, Box 82552, Toronto ON, M5A 4N8. CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: www.rightsaction.org.