

URGENT ACTION FOR THE “GOLDCORP 7”

Goldcorp Inc., a Canadian-US Gold Mining Company, Seeks Imprisonment of Mam-Mayan Farmers Negatively Impacted by Goldcorp’s Open Pit Gold Mine in San Marcos, Guatemala

====
Please re-distribute this info far and wide. If you want on-off this elist: info@rightsaction.org WHAT TO DO: see at bottom.
====

THE “GOLDCORP 7”: USING THE LEGAL SYSTEM AS A TOOL OF REPRESSION AGAINST LOCAL, INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

The trial of 7 Mam-Maya indigenous farmers, whose communities neighbor the Goldcorp Inc. open pit gold mine in San Marcos, Guatemala, and who have charges laid against them due to Goldcorp Inc., begins today.

BACKGROUND

On January 9, 2007, representatives from the Mam-Mayan villages that neighbor the Marlin mine in San Miguel Ixtahuacan, San Marcos, Guatemala, operated by Goldcorp Inc’s wholly owned subsidiary Montana Exploradora, visited the mining company office. They presented a petition to Goldcorp Inc. requesting a resolution to a number of problems suffered due to mining operations.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS INCLUDE: the extremely low payments made to local families for lands acquired, according to testimonies, under false pretenses and in some cases through coercion; destruction of dozens of homes due to the use of explosives; water contamination resulting in health problems of people and livestock; an apparent lowering of the regional water table resulting in the drying out of wells and natural springs, and some crop failure (ex: fruit trees).

On January 10, community representatives returned to the Goldcorp offices for the response to their petition. According to testimonies, company representatives not only denied all responsibility for the problems, but also insulted them.

Upon leaving the companies installations, the community representatives met up with some community members and began walking to their homes. About two kilometers from the mine entrance, members of Goldcorp’s private security company attacked the campesinos throwing rocks at them and firing guns, and attempted to force one man into a company car.

The men defended themselves as best they could. Though they suffered some injuries, they escaped and called the police. The police came but did not properly take testimonies or initiate the necessary investigation into the actions of Goldcorp’s security company.

That afternoon, upon hearing the response of the company to their petition, approximately 600 members of communities that neighbor the mine (Agel, San José Nueva Esperanza, Salitre and San José Ixcaniche, of the municipality of San Miguel Ixtahuacán, and Tzalem of the municipality of Sipacapa) peacefully blocked roads to the company installations.

According to testimonies, on January 11, in the midst of the growing protest, community representatives, accompanied this time by the Human Rights Procurators Office (PDH), visited the company offices again to solicit dialog with the company in relation to the damages suffered. The Canadian security manager insulted them (calling them trash, murderers, etc.), and threw them out of the offices.

That day anti-riot forces of the National Civil Police and between 300 and 500 Guatemalan Army soldiers arrived.

In spite of the overwhelming security forces, and the history of repression in Guatemala, the communities maintained the road blockades for more than 10 days. On January 22, the company agreed to negotiate, establishing the date of January 26 to begin dialogue in the Diocese of San Marcos. The communities lifted the road block. On January 24, the General Manager of Goldcorp's Montana Exploradora subsidiary sent a letter to the PDH and the Diocese of San Marcos saying that he could not participate in the agreed upon negotiations.

VIOLENT, ILLEGAL DETENTIONS

The company never had any intention of dialog with the communities. On January 22, the company initiated penal charges against 22 residents of communities neighboring the mine. Arrest warrants were issued for 7 of the 22.

On February 13 (the same day that more than 10,000 residents of the neighboring municipality of Concepción Tutuapa rejected mining development projects in a municipal referendum), National Civil Police officers, transported in Goldcorp/ Montana Exploradora vehicles (!), violently detained two community leaders. They illegally entered the men's homes at 5:20 am, breaking locks, throwing things, turning over beds with sleeping children.

They captured two men, took them to the police station in San Marcos, where they spent two days in prison.

The legal proceedings against the other 15 remain open; the charges and possible detention remain as a threat to the communities.

Following the initial two illegal arrests, the other five accused voluntarily presented themselves and all were on bail, pending trial.

On September 11, the trial was officially opened and on September 26 the trial began. The next phase, the presentation of evidence is scheduled for October 8, 2007.

The communities continue to seek remedy for the damages they are suffering. The communities are extremely concerned about information disseminated by Goldcorp Inc's public relations department in which they announce plans to release water with residues from processing gold, a process in which cyanide, arsenic and other toxic chemicals are used, into the Tzalem river, a tributary of the Cuilco river.

The communities have no recourse for their concerns since the Guatemalan justice system has demonstrated bias in favor of the politically powerful mining company and is inaccessible to indigenous communities.

TAKE ACTION

Please send your letters of concern to Goldcorp President and CEO Kevin McArthur, Canadian government officials and the Canada Pension Plan (a major investor in Goldcorp), to demand that the malicious legal charges against the Goldcorp 7/22 be dropped and that Goldcorp negotiate in good faith with the communities related to all the harms and damages.

Kevin McArthur, President and CEO
Goldcorp Inc.
Park Place
Suite 3400-666 Burrard Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6C 2X8
Tel: (604) 696-3000; Fax: (604) 696-3001; info@goldcorp.com;

directors@Goldcorp.com

COPIES TO:

Peter MacKay
Minister of Foreign Affairs
509-S Centre Block
House of Commons
Ottawa , Ontario K1A 0A6
(T) 613-992-6022
(F) 613-992-2337
mackay.p@parl.gc.ca

David Emerson
Minister of International Trade
House of Commons
Ottawa , Ontario
K1A 0A6
Telephone: (613) 943-0267
Fax: (613) 943-0219
EMail: Emerson.D@parl.gc.ca

Gary Lunn
Minister of Natural Resources
House of Commons
Ottawa , Ontario
K1A 0A6
Telephone: (613) 996-1119
Fax: (613) 996-0850
EMail: Lunn.G@parl.gc.ca

Josée Verner
Minister of International Cooperation
House of Commons
Ottawa , Ontario
K1A 0A6
Telephone: (613) 996-4151
Fax: (613) 954-2269
EMail: Verner.J@parl.gc.ca

Your MP and local media.

The Canadian Pension Plan (most employed Canadians are, by law, contributors to and beneficiaries of the CPP, a major investor in Goldcorp): Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, csr@cppib.ca, 416-868-4075, Toll Free: 1-866-557-9510

Please forward responses to Rights Action: info@rightsaction.org

===

WHAT TO DO:

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, (including the mining affected regions of San Marcos) and educates about and is involved in activism related to global development, environmental and human rights issues. [www.rightsaction.org]

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

DONATE FUNDS 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.