

GOLDCORP Inc. in Honduras and Guatemala

BELOW:

Indigenous communities harmed by Goldcorp's open pit, cyanide leaching mine in Sipakapa, Guatemala, file petition with Inter-American Commission of Human Rights;
Juan Almeyda, of Madre Tierra in Honduras, criticizes Goldcorp's open pit, cyanide leaching mine closure plan in Honduras.

RIGHTS ACTION COMMENTARY

Not An "Anti-Mining" Position

Over the past years, Rights Action has focused considerable work on the global mining industry – from funding mining affected communities through to carrying out education work in North America on environmental and development harms and human rights violations caused by mining.

From different sectors, Rights Action has been criticized as being "anti-mining".

Our position is not "anti-mining". For over 25 years, Rights Action, and its predecessor organizations (Guatemala Partners, PEACE for Guatemala and Guatemala Health Rights Support Project) has supported a wide range of community development, environment and human rights organizations and struggles.

Rights Action is pro-community controlled development, pro-environment, pro-human rights.

As part of our community development, environment and human rights work, we document the environmental and development harms and human rights violations caused by global mining companies, and we work to hold these companies and their investors accountable for their actions.

2007 TAX-CHARITABLE DONATIONS

To make a tax-charitable donation creditable to 2007, see below. If you want on-off this elist: info@rightsaction.org. WHAT TO DO? See below.

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WAQXAQI'TIJAX PRESS RELEASE

(Thanks to Rosalind Gill for translating this to English for Rights Action)

Representatives of the Maya Sipakapa Community, with the support of various organizations and Mayan communities that form the Council of Organizations for the Observation and Verification of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala, along with various other representatives of indigenous peoples who continue to survive in Central America, have come together before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to denounce the situation experienced by the Maya Sipakapense community.

This community has been the victim of greed and the ambition to accumulate capital and increase power. No attention has been paid to the aggression and pillage that have led to the irreparable destruction of the ecosystems that have survived until now because of the good practices of the Mayan people, practices that are based on profound respect for all forms of life.

Given this situation, we declare:

That the State of Guatemala has a historical debt to its Indigenous Peoples, who have survived in peace and harmony with mother nature, despite the devastation caused by invasion, colonization, the creation of the national state and on-going oppression by the State.

That the State of Guatemala is a signatory to the American Convention on Human Rights of May 25, 1978. It also recognized the adjudicatory power of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on March 9, 1987.

That the State has committed to the premise of sustainable development, has signed accords with neighbouring States, and has also committed to human rights principles put forth by the United Nations, the Political Constitution of the Republic, ILO Convention NO. 169, the Municipal Code, the framework law of the Peace Accords and by the international law presently.

We therefore make the following denouncement:

We denounce the State of Guatemala to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for international violation of the human rights of the inhabitants of the Mayan Community of Sipakapa, as stated in the following Articles of the American Convention on Human Rights: Article 8.1. (the right to a fair trial), Article 11 (the right to privacy), Article 13 (the right to freedom of thought and expression), Article 21, (the right to property), Article 23 (the right to participate in government), Article 24 (the right to equal protection), Article 25 (the right to judicial protection), as well as Articles 1.1 (the obligation to respect rights) and Article 2 (the obligation to adopt measures to give full affect to rights and freedoms).

The following communities have suffered as a result of these violations: Tres cruces, Escupijá, Pueblo viejo, La estancia, Poj, Sipakapa, Pié de la cuesta, Chual, Quecá, Quequesiguán, and San Isidro, in the Municipality of Sipacapa, in the Department of San Marcos, in the Republic of Guatemala.

These violations of the human rights of indigenous people also violate Article No. 169 of the International Labour Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.

We therefore demand that the Government of the Republic of Guatemala:

Inform the public of the licenses and concessions that have been granted for reconnaissance, exploration and exploitation to international companies, given that these activities are harmful to the life of the people living in indigenous territories.

We ask the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to carry out an objective study of the situation and advise on what process should be put in place for protection of human rights.

Finally, we urge national and international human rights and indigenous organizations to express their solidarity with the Maya Sipakapense people and with the struggle of indigenous peoples to create a better world, a world in which more than lip service is paid to good intentions, a world in which good intentions become a reality.

Iximulew, Waqxaqi'Tijax
Guatemala, December 7, 2007

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PUBLIC LETTER: GOLDCORP INC. MORTAL CLOSURE PLAN OF THE "SAN MARTIN" MINE,
HONDURAS

By Juan Almendares, Madre Tierra (Mother Earth) Movement, Tegucigalpa, December 2007

Dear friends of Honduras and of the planet earth:

I am writing to you today regarding the closure operation of the San Martin Mine Project, owned by the Goldcorp Inc., which is operated by the subsidiary company Entre Mares, in the area of the Syria Valley, Francisco Morazán, Honduras.

I invite the readers of this letter to reflect, in a critical manner and to share in each home, school, university, church, governmental institution and nongovernmental, every social movement, union, organizations: indigenous, garífunas, campesinos, workers, students, teachers, environmental, civil and political; with the objective of analyzing and taking a dignified and ethical position regarding the mining industries.

The first consideration is that a closure plan should not be elaborated when the mining operations are going to cease, but prior to exploding it, what the industry is presenting its initial plan. [What Goldcorp presents now] is a post factum or post mortem plan, in other words, an after fact, when all the possible damages have been caused and it may not be possible to avoid or prevent, for many years, the acid drain that frees metals and toxic semi-metals; when consequences to health and to environment are already present and will be reflected in several generations of Hondurans, as well as in the waters, soil, forest, plants and animals.

The second consideration is that technicians of the company, however skilled, do not tell the truth; for example, during the [mining] process, more than 50 million tons of mineral were dug, over a period of eight years, and during all the years of mining, and according to the company, the air was never polluted.

The third consideration is that for Goldcorp Inc., pollution of metals and toxic semi-metals is natural and not a result of mining. This statement [is] obviously unbelievable and immoral.

The fourth point is that according to the company, they are absolute owners of the San Martin Mine, which is unconstitutional and reflects a conception of power which violates our [Honduran] sovereignty.

The fifth point is that this plan only [includes opinions of] the company; there [are] no claims from the community or the government. That reflects the fact that the company has managed itself in an absolutist way, though they say they will consult the government. According to the communities this fateful closure plan was put into operation before its formal and official approval.

The sixth point is that in this closure plan, the people who inhabit the Valley of Syria are nowhere present. The only things mentioned are the waste, the waste management and excavations, but there is no reflection of the diseases people have suffered and that will [manifest themselves] in future generations of the Syria Valley residents and nearby communities.

The seventh point is that for [Goldcorp Inc.], there is no damage to health and therefore there was no need to include, in the [mine closure] technical committee, any doctor or health worker. They express that the diseases in the Syria Valley are common, that they have always existed. Such poor arguments have not taken into account the frequency of the illness before, during the mining operations and after closure. Moreover, they have forgotten the millions of tons of water that during all the years of mining operations have been subtracted and also contaminated from the community.

Anyone in their right mind knows that if there is not enough water for bathing, after some time, the body itches and if they scratch with their hands dirty, due to a lack of water, the skin will be infected with fungi and bacteria. When water is available, mainly during rainy season, and they bathe in rivers and streams, where metals and toxic semi-metals have been [released], such as arsenic, cadmium, lead and others, there will be what the locals call "rasquiña" or itching.

The damages in health like in the eyes, skin, hair, in the respiratory system, in the nervous system and future illnesses caused by the metals accumulated in the body cannot be ignored; the most representative testimony are the sick persons of the Syria Valley.

The eighth point is that the losses caused to the Valley of Syria are enormous, but the solutions offered by the company are, as they are saying, a royalty or an act of generosity. The huge cyanide lakes will be filled with the tailings, toxic wastes that were bathed with cyanide and other substances and [on top of this] dangerous garbage, they are going to reforest the Valley of Syria.

The ninth point is the mockery to the communities of the Syria Valley and to the people and the government of Honduras, because when closing operations, the company is relieved of its legal and ethical responsibilities for the damages caused, of the compensation to the affected people, communities and environments.

The tenth consideration is that the company [presents itself as] generous because everything being done is a gift to the people of Honduras, where in reality, all of this should be the mitigation obligations they have never met.

The eleventh reflection refers to the fact that the company defined the impact area just [as the] municipality of San Ignacio and excludes the municipality of El Porvenir, the Playas river, and [various watershed] basins.

Twelfth reflection, Goldcorp Inc. makes complete omission of the natural beauty (aesthetics), the culture of the Valley of Syria and the impact produced by the technological invasion and massive and intensive processes against nature and culture as they are causes of physical and mental illness, which damages are irreparable to the history of the people.

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We invite the public and private universities, churches, government officials, private enterprises, magisterial organizations, social movements, trade unions, peasants, indigenous, environmentalists, not to be silent regarding this crime against humanity, because silence is a traitor to the history of our sons and daughters, to the present and future generations, to plants and animals and especially to our Mother Earth.

In this moment, when a new mining law is going to be adopted, lets repeal the mining concessions and we also must prohibit the metal mining industry in Honduras. Not doing it or denouncing it, is recognizing and participating in present and future crimes which have been going on for centuries, since colonial times, and which will continue polluting in the twenty-first Century, either by active or abandoned mines.

This position is based on truth, reason, love and solidarity. We should not be traitors to our own lives, to our sons and daughters, families and future generations. Every Honduran community should not allow mining companies because once installed they use all means, even violence, both of their security guards as well as the repressive bodies of the State.

I conclude this message with the words of Zygmunt Baumann in "Wasted Lives: Modernity and its pariahs": "Mining is a one-way movement, irreversible and irrevocable. The mining chronicle is a graveyard of veins and depleted wells, throwaways and abandoned. Mining is inconceivable without wastes and residues."

Let us embrace this fight for the derogation of mining concessions and respect for dignity, for human rights, for social and environmental justice, by prohibiting the metal industry, either cyanide based or underground.

Let us demand compensation for the Syria Valley region and the neighboring towns to Playas River for both the present and future diseases, of human beings and the destruction of biodiversity, pollution of the water, air and soil of Honduras, Guatemala, Latin America and of the entire planet Earth.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION about community based groups, in San Marcos (Guatemala) and the Siria Valley (Honduras): info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org

ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE ... EVERY DAY

Rights Action (a tax-deductible organization in Canada and USA) funds and works with community-based development, environment and human rights organizations in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and southern Mexico (Oaxaca, Chiapas); and educates about and is involved in activism related to global development, environmental and human rights struggles.

MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS for indigenous and community-based organizations (such as organizations in the San Marcos and Siria Valley regions, that are opposing environment and development harms and human rights violations caused by Goldcorp's open pit, cyanide leaching gold mine there) that are implementing their own development, human rights and environment projects. Make check payable 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.

CREATE YOUR OWN E-MAIL LIST: and re-distribute this and other information.

LISTEN: to the www.democracynow.org news program every day.

READ: Eduardo Galeano's Open Veins of Latin America; Naomi Klein's The Shock Doctrine.

COME: to Guatemala, Oaxaca or Honduras on Educational-Activist Delegations to learn more about struggles for global justice, equality and the environment.

JOIN: Rights Action's e-mail and snail-mail lists.

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EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT THIS MINE TO CANADIAN & COMPANY OFFICIALS:

Please write your own short note of protest and concern to Canadian and Goldcorp company officials. Send copies to the CPP (Canadian Pension Plan) and other major investors in Goldcorp. The main point to focus on is that while Hondurans want the mining to stop, because it is so harmful, they do not want Goldcorp to leave without providing a complete health, environmental and economic compensation program – one that needs to be independently agreed upon and verified.

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- Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources, House of Commons, Ottawa , Ontario, K1A 0A6, T: (613) 996-1119, Lunn.G@parl.gc.ca
- Josée Verner, Minister of International Cooperation, House of Commons, Ottawa , Ontario, K1A 0A6, T: (613) 996-4151, Verner.J@parl.gc.ca

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.