

## **GUATEMALA: LANDSLIDES KILL DOZENS**

### **AS EXPECTED, THIS "DISASTER" HARMS THE POOR AND VULNERABLE**

(For more information: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org), [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org))

(To donate funds for emergency relief work: See Below)

On January 4, 2009, dozens of impoverished Mayan campesinos were killed by landslides. Some were survivors of Guatemala's western-back Genocide, during the "cold war"; some were survivors of the repression, massacres and forced evictions carried out in the early 1980s to help make way for the construction of the Chixoy Hydro-electric dam, a "development" project of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank (the mudslide occurred where the 25 kilometer long dam tunnel is); all were underpaid seasonal workers en route to work on the 'for export' coffee plantations.

#### **BELOW:**

- a report from The Advocacy Project about the devastating landslides
- an appeal for emergency funds that will be channeled to Rights Action's long-time partner groups in the region of the landslides

#### **RELIEF WORK**

Rights Action will channel emergency relief funds to COCAHICH & ADIVIMA (referred to below), two community organizations we have worked with for many years.

- Please re-distribute this info ... all around
- To get on/ off Rights Action's email list: <http://www.rightsaction.org/lists/?p=subscribe&id=3>
- What To Do: See Below

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#### **AdvocacyNet News Bulletin 172**

January 16, 2009 (<http://advocacynet.org/resource/1237>)

### **DEADLY LANDSLIDE ADDS TO THE MISERY OF GUATEMALAN MASSACRE SURVIVORS**

January 16, 2009, Rabinal, Guatemala: A deadly landslide in the mountains of central Guatemala has dealt another blow to indigenous communities that suffered massacres and mass displacement during the construction of the Chixoy Hydroelectric Dam in the early 1980s.

On January 4, more than 4,000 tons of rock and earth fell along a mile-long stretch of the only road linking two remote villages in the state of Alta Verapaz in central Guatemala.

The landslide on Los Chorros Mountain killed 38 coffee pickers who were commuting to work.

Victims of last week's tragedy were all members of the Coordinator for the Communities Affected by Chixoy Dam (COCAHICH), an umbrella group that is negotiating with the President of Guatemala for reparations [due to repression and forced evictions to make way for the Chixoy Hydro-electric dam, a "development" project of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, 1970s-1980s]

Twenty-eight communities were affected by the dam. One village, Rio Negro, suffered a series of massacres in 1982 after the villagers refused to give up their land for the dam.

Although the communities are encouraged by the government negotiations, the recent landslide underscores the lack of official interest in their well-being. Guatemalan Vice President Rafael Espada toured the region on January 10 and offered government support for the burial of victims. But COCAHICH reports that no aid agencies are yet working in the region to assist the families of the dead, or the displaced families.

COCAHICH is accepting donations of money, food, clothing, and bottled water through its sister organization, ADIVIMA, which represents survivors of the 1982 massacres. ADIVIMA is a partner of The Advocacy Project (AP), which is supporting the appeal. AP Peace Fellow Heidi McKinnon recently returned to the US from Guatemala, where she is volunteering with ADIVIMA, and wrote about the landslide in her blog.

The recent landslide is not the first to occur on the Los Chorros Mountain. Two people were killed in a landslide on December 14, 2008, prompting the Guatemalan emergency management agency, Conred, to post warning signs along the road and forbid auto traffic. However, as no other roads serve the area, many villagers were forced to use the stretch of unpaved highway to earn a living.

To date, 38 people have been declared dead and 16 bodies have been identified. Fourteen people are still missing and seven of the injured are still hospitalized.

The region lies near two geological faults, the Chixoy and Polochic. Distribution tunnels for the Chixoy Dam also run through the mountains close the site of the landslide, and geologists are testing for possible damage to the

tunnels.

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**MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS  
for ADIVIMA-COCAHICH's Mudslide Relief Work**

Make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

\* UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

\* CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: [http://www.rightsaction.org/Templates/donations\\_index.html](http://www.rightsaction.org/Templates/donations_index.html)

**EDUCATIONAL DELEGATION-SEMINAR – APRIL 12-17, 2009**

Join a Rights Action educational seminar trip to learn more about community and Indigenous development, human rights and environmental issues in Guatemala, with a particular focus on the harms caused by a large-scale gold mining project of Goldcorp Inc.

**WWW.RIGHTSACTION.ORG** - Based in Guatemala, Rights Action (with tax-deductible legal status in Canada and USA) funds and works with community-based Indigenous, development, environment and human rights organizations in Guatemala and Honduras, and also in Oaxaca, Chiapas, El Salvador, Peru, Haiti and Nicaragua; and educates about and is involved in activism related to global development, environmental and Indigenous and human rights struggles.