

Rights Action – March 18, 2011
Goldcorp Impunity Watch

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- Congressional letter sign-on initiative, from OXFAM: Asking U.S. legislators to sign a letter to Guatemalan President to suspend Goldcorp Inc's mine in Guatemala
- Article by Sandra Cuffe: "Violent development: communities defending lands and resources face ongoing repression in Guatemala"
- Goldcorp May 18th AGM education and activism in Vancouver: How to get involved

FOR MORE INFORMATION / QUESTIONS ...

about environmental and health harms and other human rights violations caused by Goldcorp Inc's open-pit, cyanide leaching gold mines in Guatemala and Honduras, and ...

about how to fund and support community based organizations working to stop and remedy the harms and violations, contact: info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org

- Please forward this information and re-post
- To get on/off Rights Action's listserv: www.rightsaction.org

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URGENT ACTION – More Threats Against & Possible Attempted Kidnapping of Crisanta Perez (Gregoria Crisanta Perez Bamaca)

From: Javier de León López, ASOC-ADISMI [nimjavier@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, March 17, 2011

Subject: Attempted kidnapping of Crisanta Perez (Gregoria Crisanta Perez Bamaca)

FREDEMI (San Miguelense Defense Front) advises the national and international community:

ONE: It is well known that for our struggle in defense of territory and rights over the past years, we have suffered threats and acts of repression. For example, the July 7, 2010 attempted killing of Diodora Hernandez; the February 28, 2011 attack on Miguel Bamaca and other acts of repression [against peaceful protesters]. Furthermore, recent paid ads, accusing peaceful protesters of acts of aggression, evidence the power that lies behind the acts of repression against us.

TWO: Over the past few days, unknown people have been looking for Gregoria Crisanta Perez Bámaca, pretending to be supporters of her. On March 16, 2011, at 4pm, unknown, unidentifiable persons arrived at Crisanta Perez' home, various times, asking for her. They arrived in a grey Hallux (Toyota), double-cabin pickup, with darkened windows. They were asking for her, and waiting outside her home for over 3 hours. Feeling the threat to herself and her family, they all spent the night – along with other community members – in the offices of ADISMI (Asociacion de Desarrollo Integral de San Miguel Ixtahuacan).

THREE: Given all this,

1. We again denounce efforts by those people who want to silence the voices of those who are working to defend collective rights;
2. We again ask the Human Rights Ombudsperson (procuraduría de los derechos humanos) and other government offices to carry out a proper investigation as to who are involved in and behind these on-going threats and acts of repression;
3. We again ask for on-going international human rights solidarity and accompaniment and follow-up investigations into these threats and acts of repression;

San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos, 16 de marzo del 2011

FREDEMI - Frente de Defensa de San Miguel Ixtahuacan, y
Comunidades Rurales en Resistencia y Defensa del Territorio - "ADISMI"

MORE INFORMATION:

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CONGRESSIONAL LETTER SIGN-ON INITIATIVE, From OXFAM:

On behalf of Rights Action's partner groups in San Miguel Ixtahuacan (ADISMI & FREDEMI) and Mayan Mam communities in resistance to the harms and violations caused directly and indirectly by Goldcorp's open-pit, cyanide-leaching mine in Guatemala, Rights Action encourages U.S. citizens to go to the links, below, and sign on to this Oxfam effort.

From OXFAM:

Dear all,

We are asking constituents to urge their legislators to sign a letter asking the Guatemalan President to suspend operations at the Marlin mine.

SUSPEND THE MARLIN MINE

It has been more than ten months since the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights ordered the temporary suspension of the Marlin Mine in Guatemala. The presence of the Marlin mine continues to contribute to social conflicts between neighboring populations, and when indigenous women of the community peacefully demonstrated against the continued operations, they were attacked for their protests.

Right now, Congress is circulating a letter asking the Guatemalan President to suspend operations at the mine. Please ask your legislator to sign onto this important letter. We can help ensure that these communities have the quality of life they deserve – but we need to put pressure on our leaders.

Please see the links below:

<http://actfast.oxfamamerica.org/index.php/issues/business>

<https://www.facebook.com/oxfamamerica>

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VIOLENT DEVELOPMENT: COMMUNITIES DEFENDING LANDS AND RESOURCES FACE ONGOING REPRESSION IN GUATEMALA

by Sandra Cuffe, sandra.m.cuffe@gmail.com, UpsideDownWorld.org, March 17, 2011
<http://upside-down-world.org/main/guatemala-archives-33/2959-violent-development-communities-defending-lands-and-resources-face-ongoing-repression-in-guatemala>

On February 28, 2011, organized action by Indigenous community members was once again met with violence in Guatemala.

The action was organized by local community organizations in the municipality of San Miguel Ixtahuacan, where Goldcorp's Marlin mine is located, in the highlands of San Marcos, Guatemala. The goal of the demonstration was to pressure the Guatemalan government to comply with precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in May 2010, and particularly the temporary suspension of the Marlin mine.

"The action consisted in peacefully blocking the main routes used by the company in a way that respects the Constitution of our country, in which we have the right to protest," reported the San Miguel Ixtahuacan Defense Front (FREDEMI) in a public statement issued on February 28th, shortly after the group's extrajudicial detention.

"As the protest was disbanding, pro-mining community members from San Jose Ixcaniche, Siete Platos and Salitre assaulted the protesters, detaining some against their will until they agreed to sign confessions and pay those who were holding them," states background information released as an addendum to a public letter signed by 21 non-governmental organizations from North America and Europe, addressed to both Goldcorp and Guatemala's Presidential Human Rights Commission (COPREDEH).

"When the protesters left, the bus they were traveling in was stopped and the protesters were forced to get off the bus and were beaten and robbed. Some protesters were taken from the group and attacked individually," Amnesty International explained in an urgent action published on March 3, 2011.

"Miguel Bamacá, who the IACHR has already requested the Guatemalan government protects, and Aniceto López were singled out. Aniceto López was reportedly taken to the office of the local mayor where he was beaten in the face, robbed of his documents and possessions, and threatened with death," states Amnesty International.

Information circulated in both English and Spanish by both Goldcorp and wholly-owned subsidiary Montana Exploradora deny the involvement of company employees. Goldcorp and its subsidiary Montana have circulated the version of events contained in the alleged agreement signed by local San Jose Ixcanichel community authorities and the protesters.

"There is investigation happening here [in Guatemala]," local community organizer Javier de León told Upside Down World in an interview via telephone, pointing out the differences between company statements and those of community residents who were present on February 28.

"There are forensic exams, and witness statements have been presented to the authorities," added de León, explaining that the detained protesters signed the purported 'agreement'

under extreme duress, while subject to extrajudicial detention and threats of physical violence.

"Representatives of the communities against mining explained that they do not have an in-depth understanding of the problem, that they are willing to reach an agreement, and that the differences within the communities can be sorted out," states the agreement signed on February 28, 2011. The document also includes details of payments to be made by Aniseto López and others to workers and families affected by the blockade.

"The [community] mayor received it," said de León of the payment, adding that alleged recipients voiced their refusal to accept the money because they did not blame the protesters or the blockade for their losses.

"The demonstrations were presumably instigated [promovidas] by the individuals [sic] Aniceto López," states a March 1st media release by Goldcorp and subsidiary Montana, circulated in Spanish in Guatemala.

"Goldcorp's statement repeatedly singles out Aniseto López as leader of the protest. This is not the first time Mr. López has been targeted. As he testified to the IACHR during a hearing on environmental defenders in October 2010, Aniseto was formally accused of assaulting a man in San Marcos during an Earth Day demonstration, despite being seven hours away in Guatemala City to attend a meeting," continues the Background to Events Taking Place February 28th 2011 document.

"We're saying that there are no precautionary measures here," Javier de León told Upside Down World during a break from a meeting with Guatemalan authorities from the District Attorney's office (Ministerio Publico).

In 1996, Peace Accords officially ended decades of conflict in Guatemala; however, underlying issues of systemic racism, institutionalized poverty, and exclusion did not disappear with the signing of the accords. Furthermore, a series of Strategic Adjustment Programs (SAPs), privatizations, and undemocratic policies on lands and resources – including the mining legislation of 1997 – have continued.

"The municipality of San Miguel Ixtahuacán has a population of 39,000, most of who are Mam Maya peasant farmers who depend on subsistence agriculture to live," reported MiningWatch Canada in its Goldcorp Analysis report, published in 2007. "Before production at the mine began, there were numerous protests and vocal opponents: two people were killed and a number injured."

Repression and violence against communities organized against mining have continued unabated during the production phase of the Marlin mine. In June 2010, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples James Anaya visited Guatemala to investigate Indigenous rights violations in the country, including a particular investigation into the rights of communities affected by Goldcorp's Marlin mine. An advance unedited report in Spanish was submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights by Anaya on March 4, 2011.

"Guatemala is currently experiencing a climate of significant social instability and unrest with regards to activities in the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples, which has serious impacts on the rights of Peoples and endangers the governance and economic development of the country," explains Anaya in the Spanish advance unedited report. To

date, the Spanish version is the only official document; no official UN translation into English has been published.

“The difference has to do with the historical roots of the country, particularly how the country was constructed and how these populations continue to be excluded from the development that exists in a few small regions in the country,” explained Pastoral Commission organizer Vinicio López Maldonado in a 2007 interview with Rights Action in the mine-affected municipality of Sipacapa, following a community-led consultation process in another municipality of San Marcos.

“In a country that thought of itself as an exporter of prime material, principally an agro-exporter of prime material, these kinds of activities are being driven by the government, but without seeing them in the context of a sustainable future. In fact, these activities are completely unsustainable,” added López, who has worked for years with farmworkers and communities in San Marcos facing corporate and State repression related to both industrial agriculture and mining.

“In 2006, Goldcorp predecessor Glamis [Gold] paid for workers from its Marlin mine to participate in pro-mining demonstrations,” notes the MiningWatch Canada Goldcorp Analysis report.

Local community organizations report the involvement of Marlin mine workers in the violence and detention against blockade participants on February 28, 2011. Javier de León told Upside Down World that “it was planned by the company,” stating that mine workers and engineers have come forward to community organizers to explain that mining company employees of higher rank encouraged them to “teach [the protestors] a lesson.”

In background information accompanying an urgent action published on March 3, 2011, Amnesty International highlights that UN Special Rapporteur Anaya “received testimonies alleging that there had been harassment and attacks against community leaders, and that the testimonies imply that the security forces and private companies could be behind such incidents.”

The public letter by 21 NGOs – including MiningWatch Canada, Rights Action, NISGUA, and many others - requesting that the Guatemalan government comply with the IACHR precautionary measures emphasizes the potential risk posed to local human rights defenders by singling them out. The letter also highlights the ability of Goldcorp to respect the IACHR measures ordering the temporary suspension of the Marlin mine. Goldcorp has stated that there is no basis for the suspension under Guatemalan law, and that the suspension would have adverse impacts for people in the region.

“To the extent that a temporary suspension of the Marlin mine would have an adverse affect on employees, suppliers and communities, the company is fully capable of sustaining the costs of such a suspension and to ensure that others who might be affected do not suffer undue hardship as a result,” states the NGOs' joint public letter. “According to Goldcorp's financial statements for 2010, the Marlin mine was the company's second largest source of earnings in 2010. Indeed, the company's total assets in 2010 now exceed the GDP of Guatemala.”

Only four days earlier, in a February 24 press release, Goldcorp announced that the Board of Directors authorized an 11% increase in the annual dividend, following its doubling in October

2010. Among the company's shareholder are many of the Directors themselves, along with diverse mutual funds and pension plans across Canada and the United States.

"Goldcorp is one of the world's fastest growing senior gold producers. Its low-cost gold production is located in safe jurisdictions in the Americas and remains 100% unhedged," concludes the press release.

In an interview with the Business News Network following the announcement, Goldcorp President and CEO Charles Jeannes was asked about the company's activities in Latin America. "[Goldcorp believes] that we have a very strong geopolitical risk profile, and – meaning a low risk profile – as we've worked very hard to maintain that," explained Jeannes.

Mining and resource extraction activities continue to face organized opposition in San Marcos and all over the country. Furthermore, as in the case all over the world, mining is only one of many industrial activities facing organized opposition in Guatemala. Community struggles around the country are also subjected to violent repression and militarization on an ongoing basis.

National Indigenous and farmworker federation CONIC has denounced a series of violent evictions in 2011 in Sekokpur and Yalkobe, two communities in the Alta Verapaz department in eastern Guatemala. Despite the communities' government land title documentation dating back fifty years, the communities' lands are now part of the Laguna Lachuá National Park.

Despite claims of environmental protection, the links between the militarization of the area, the region's wealth of natural resources, and the involvement of various security forces – including park rangers – in the evictions has been denounced by CONIC and many others. Details on the most recent violent evictions of March 11, 2011, are still unclear, but attempted rape of community women, the destruction of subsistence crops, and violent attacks against community leaders have all been reported in evictions earlier this year.

"Since efforts to develop the region economically began in the 1960s, the department has seen a boom in activity such as oil drilling, ranching, and agro-fuel production, and it has also become a stronghold of organized campesino and indigenous resistance," wrote researcher Simon Granovsky-Larsen about the communities and the Alta Verapaz department, in a recent article published on the NACLA website.

Reporting on the repression against organized communities in eastern Guatemala, NACLA Research Associate Susana Fitzpatrick-Behrens explained that "the Guatemalan government is responding by criminalizing peasant leaders, militarizing regions slated for development projects, and using environmental "protected areas" to exclude indigenous people. This combination of ingredients has become the core of Guatemala's new civil conflict."

Communities confronted with resource extraction and other industrial projects affecting their lands and territories continue to organize despite ongoing repression and militarization. Indigenous community-led consultation processes, mobilizations, and grassroots community and movement building are happening every day in different regions of Guatemala.

"It is possible to change this economic model that is revealing itself to be a disaster: the neoliberal model, which has shown that it has not been the panacea that they sold us in the 1980s. People are now quite aware of that. In the end, that's what it is: money can't be eaten, and dignity is being salvaged. That is where I see hope, and I think that the message to these institutions is clear," concluded Vinicio López.

[Polished by UpsideDownWorld.org: <http://upside-downworld.org/main/guatemala-archives-33/2959-violent-development-communities-defending-lands-and-resources-face-ongoing-repression-in-guatemala>. Sandra Cuffe, sandra.m.cuffe@gmail.com)

GOLDCORP's annual Sharehold meeting

Vancouver BC, May 18, 2011

To get involved: Jason Tockman, tockman@riseup.net

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