

Rights Action  
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## **MORE MINING & REPRESSION LIKELY IN HONDURAS 'Murder Capital Of the World'**

Grahame Russell, January 24, 2013

As predicted after the June 28, 2009 coup in Honduras, the military-backed regime now in power is passing a new, corporate-friendly mining law that will usher in a new wave of mining exploration and extraction in what has become the 'murder capital of the world' and is the most repressive country in the Americas.

This is in part what the 2009 military coup was for.

If and when global companies again start mining operations, this will result in repression and other human rights violations, and in health and environmental harms. Violations and harms are predictable and inevitable in this undemocratic, repressive country wherein the rule of law is manipulated and corrupted in favour of the powerful economic sectors. There is no way to engage in large-scale business activities in the Honduras of today without contributing to and benefiting from harms and violations, corruption and impunity.

In 2008, the government of President Zelaya placed a moratorium on granting new mining licenses, acknowledging that the previous mining law was inadequate. This followed upon a 2006 Supreme Court finding that over a dozen articles of the previous mining law were unconstitutional. The moratorium grand-fathered in Goldcorp Inc. that, since 2000, had been operating its "San Martin" mine, infamous for water contamination and depletion and for causing devastating health harms in local communities.

By May 2009, the government of Honduras had prepared a new draft mining law that was to increase mining related taxes, prohibit mountain-top removal / open-pit mining (such as Goldcorp's "San Martin" mine), prohibit the use of chemicals such as cyanide and mercury, and – very importantly - require a formal, transparent community consultation process before the approval of mining concessions.

## **HONDURAS SINCE JUNE 2009 – “MURDER CAPITAL OF THE WORLD”**

The June 28, 2009 military coup, planned and carried out by Honduras' oligarchy and military elites, brought an end to this process. The post-coup regime was soon 'legitimized' and then supported by the U.S. and Canadian governments. All along, the global (mainly Canadian) mining industry was waiting for a new, mining-friendly law that would lift the suspension on some 400 mining concessions already granted.

Since the coup, Honduras has become the 'murder capital of the world' and is the most repressive country in the Americas. Hundreds of civilians, involved in the pro-democracy movement, have been murdered (some with signs of brutal torture). Repression has reached levels comparable to the worst years of U.S.-backed military repression in the 1980s.

In January 2012, the Miami Herald published an editorial “Central America's Free-Fire Zone”:

*“[Honduras] is quickly turning into a disaster zone. ... To make matters worse in Honduras, there are indications that elements of the U.S.-backed government are complicit in the violence and criminality. ... The murder rate of 82.1 per 100,000 residents ... gives Honduras the highest homicide rate in the world.”*

### **Honduras As The Murder Capital Of The World:**

- McClatchy Newspapers, January 20, 2012: <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2012/01/20/136474/crime-booms-as-central-americans.html>
- NACLA, January 21, 2012: <http://nacla.org/news/graft-greed-mayhem-turn-honduras-murder-capital-world>
- New York Times, January 27, 2012: [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/27/opinion/in-honduras-a-mess-helped-by-the-us.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/27/opinion/in-honduras-a-mess-helped-by-the-us.html?_r=2)
- NPR Radio, February 11, 2012: <http://www.npr.org/2012/02/11/146668852/in-honduras-police-accused-of-corruption-killings>

### **Journalist Killing Capital:**

- Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, U.S. Congress, Testimony of Rev. Ismael Moreno Coto, July 26, 2012:  
<http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2012/moreno260712.html>

### **LGBT Killing Capital:**

- Miami Herald, January 17, 2012:  
<http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/01/17/2593984/honduras-is-test-of-new-us-policy.html>

### **Inmate Killing Capital:**

- BBC World News, February 15, 2012:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-17038259?print=true>
- The Real News, February 24, 2012:  
[http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=7979](http://therealnews.com/t2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=74&jumival=7979)

### **Lawyer Killing Capital:**

- United Nations, April 11, 2012:  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=41745&Cr=latin+america&Cr1>

## **HONDURAN PEOPLE UNDER A PERMANENT COUP D'ETAT**

In late 2012, the violence, repression, impunity and corruption continued unabated.

- The Nation, October 12, 2012, “How Low Can Honduras Go?”:  
<http://www.thenation.com/article/170543/how-low-can-honduras-go>
- OFRANEH (Garifuna People’s Organization), December 13, 2012, “Honduran People Under A Permanent Coup D'etat”:  
<http://rightsaction.org/action-content/honduran-people-under-permanent-coup-detat>
- CBS News, December 31, 2012, “Inside The World's Deadliest Country: Honduras”:  
[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202\\_162-57561301/inside-the-worlds-deadliest-country-honduras/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-57561301/inside-the-worlds-deadliest-country-honduras/)

## **NEW MINING LAW**

According to the courageous Honduran “Coalición nacional de redes ambientales” (Coalition of National Environmental Networks), many of whose members have suffered repression, the new mining law will:

- Exclude local populations from any real and binding decision making processes
- Hand to global companies complete control over huge swathes of land through long-term concessions
- Provide unlimited access to water, causing the depletion and contamination of scarce underground and surface water sources
- Permit open-pit mining
- Permit the use of dangerous chemicals (like cyanide)

### **GOLDCORP’S “SAN MARTIN” MINE**

The fears of Hondurans are not theoretical. From 2000-2008, Goldcorp Inc. operated a mountain-top removal / open-pit cyanide leaching mine in the Siria Valley. Widely documented are: forced relocations of homes and villages; contaminated water sources; dried up water sources; cracked houses due to explosives; repression against community leaders; etc. Goldcorp’s San Martin mine is most infamous for devastating and deadly health harms that continue today, 5 years after closure.

- 2008, “All that glitters isn't gold”, 10 minute version of full length film: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tmqXc5rX8s>
- 2008, “The real costs of gold mining: Goldcorp in Honduras”, 9 minute film: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhV9lgZT4qg>

In 2008, Goldcorp suspended mining, saying it has no further mining interests in Honduras. Few people in Honduras believe them. (Further documentation available on request.)

### **SUSPEND ENACTMENT OF THE NEW LAW**

The Coalition of National Environmental Networks is demanding the suspension of all proceedings related to a new mining law, given that there has been no public process related to the contents of the law, and that the law does not provide for binding and enforceable protections against and accountability for environmental and health harms, human rights violations, and for full respect for community rights to free and prior

informed consent. The Coalition calls on the Honduran people to use any political and legal tools available to defend their lives, communities and territories, and to insist on full public participation in the drafting and passing of a proper mining law.

## **NORTH AMERICAN RESPONSIBILITY**

A majority of mining companies waiting to begin exploration and mining are Canadian; a majority of investors in the Canadian mining industry are private and public American funds.

The **U.S. and Canadian governments have** blood on **their** hands given **their** role legitimizing and doing business with the repressive regime. Recently, the Canadian government has actively supported the re-writing of this new corporate friendly mining law. (Mining Watch report “Canada’s Development Aid Dollars At Odds With Communities”: <https://www.miningwatch.ca/article/canada-s-development-aid-dollars-odds-communities>).

North Americans – tax-payers, voters and investors in private funds and pension funds – must say no, we will not allow our governments to openly support and our companies and investors to do ‘business as usual’ with a repressive military-backed regime that came to power through a coup and then fraudulent repressive elections.

*(Grahame Russell is a non-practicing Canadian lawyer, author, adjunct professor at the University of Northern British Columbia and, since 1995, co-director of Rights Action. <[info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)> Feel free to re-post and re-publish this information)*

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## **WHAT TO DO?**

Please send and keep on sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to your elected officials (MPs, Congress members and Senators) and to your own media, insisting on no more ‘business as usual’ with repressive, undemocratic regimes.

## **GET INFORMED / GET INVOLVED**

- **SPEAKERS:** Contact us to plan educational presentations in your community

- JOIN A DELEGATION: Form your own group or join one of our delegation seminars to Guatemala and Honduras to learn first hand about community development, human rights and environmental struggles
- BALANCED DAILY NEWS SOURCES: [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org) / [www.therealnews.com](http://www.therealnews.com) / [www.upsidedownworld.org](http://www.upsidedownworld.org) / [www.dominionpaper.ca](http://www.dominionpaper.ca) / [www.rabble.ca](http://www.rabble.ca) / [www.fsrn.org](http://www.fsrn.org) /
- GOOD READING: Eduardo Galeano "Open Veins of Latin America" / Howard Zinn "A People's History of the United States" / James Loewen "Lies My Teacher Told Me" / Ronald Wright "Stolen Continents" / Naomi Klein "The Shock Doctrine" / Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who" /

**TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS (in Canada and the U.S.)**

In support of pro-democracy, community based organizations in Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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

CANADA: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS can be made (in Canada and U.S.):

<http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

- be a monthly credit card donor (Canada and U.S.)
- to donate stock, contact: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

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