

Rights Action
March 13, 2014
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March 13, 2014 ~ 32nd Anniversary Of One The Four Chixoy Dam/ Rio Negro Massacres

Today, we remember and honor. Today we continue the work and struggle for truth, justice and reparations for the victims of the Chixoy Dam/ Rio Negro massacres in Guatemala.

Action Needed: Contact your Senator and Member of Congress and urge them to pressure the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the government of Guatemala to implement the \$154 million Chixoy Dam Reparations Plan, as demanded by the 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act.



(On March 13, 2012, at the site of the Rio Negro massacre, a Mayan priest reads the names of over 440 Rio Negro villagers killed in four large scale Chixoy Dam massacres in 1982, to make way for the Chixoy dam project.)



March 13, 2014

U.S. Senators,
Members of Congress

Re: Concerns Regarding Lack of Implementation of Chixoy Reparations Plan in Guatemala

To whom it may concern,

On the 32nd anniversary of one of the four Chixoy Dam/ Rio Negro massacres, we write concerning new requirements in the 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act, which prohibit the Guatemalan Army from receiving funding until the U.S. State Department certifies that Guatemala is taking credible steps to implement the April 19, 2010 Reparations Plan for Damages Suffered by the Communities Affected by the Construction of the Chixoy Hydroelectric Dam.

The U.S. appropriations legislation also requires the U.S. Department of Treasury to report on the steps the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank are taking to ensure implementation of the plan 30 days after the passage of the bill and every 90 days thereafter.

The Guatemalan Government signed the Reparations Plan in 2010, and committed to individual and collective indemnization of approximately US\$154.5 million, to be disbursed between 2011 and 2020. Nevertheless, the Plan has not yet been implemented.

Last week, the Coordinating Committee of Communities Affected by the Construction of the Chixoy Dam (COCAHICH), which represents the 33 communities affected by the Chixoy Dam, released a statement (see below) criticizing the lack of progress in implementation of the Reparations Plan. COCAHICH states that the communities were not approached by the government in the 30 day period that followed the passage of the appropriations bill and were not informed by the government of any concrete steps taken to address the issue.

As organizations that have been accompanying COCAHICH and the dam-affected communities for many years, we are concerned by the Guatemalan government's response to the law—which included distracting personal attacks and did not include consultation or communication with the affected communities. We believe that the only legitimate "credible steps" will be those that begin with signing the executive accord, allocation of funds, and the initiation of the concrete steps laid out in the 2010 Reparations Plan to address and repair damages.

Further, we urge the U.S. executive directors to the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank to seek input and feedback from representatives of the affected communities as part of their evaluation process every 90 days. If the US does not seek input from non-governmental actors as part of this process, we risk re-victimizing the very communities the law is meant to support.

Finally, and most importantly, we ask that you continue to apply direct political pressure to encourage action from the Guatemalan government to implement the 2010 Reparations Plan. The U.S. Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 creates a historic opportunity to provide reparations to communities that have fought for justice for more than three decades.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue,

- Barbara Rose Johnston, Ph.D, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Political Ecology
- Lewis Gordon, Executive Director, Environmental Defender Law Center
- Kelsey Alford-Jones, Executive Director, Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA
- Monti Aguirre, Latin America Program Coordinator, International Rivers
- Annie Bird & Grahame Russell, Rights Action

Press release from COCAHICH (Coordinator of Chixoy Dam Harmed Communities)
February 22, 2014
(Translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gil)

Call For Action By U.S. Law-Makers:

The Government of Guatemala, World Bank (WB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) are failing to ensure implementation of Chixoy Dam Reparations Plan, as required by law.

The 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Bill was passed by the US Congress 30 days ago, but the government of Guatemala has still not taken any credible measures to implement the Reparations Plan to compensate communities harmed by the construction of the Chixoy dam.

COCAHICH makes the following statement to the national and international community:

This week, the deadline expires for the government of Guatemala to submit its report to the State Department and Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, as stipulated by the 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Bill, passed by Congress and sanctioned by President Barack Obama in January of this year.

We express our concern about this situation. To date, the Government of Guatemala, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank have taken no action to implement the Reparations Plan, which was approved on April 20, 2010.

We request that the government of the United States intervene, on the grounds that the WB and IADB have not complied with the 2014 Consolidated Appropriations Law by ensuring implementation of the Chixoy Dam Reparations Plan.

We advise the State Department and the Secretary of the Treasury not be deceived by any report submitted to them by the government of Guatemala, given that to date, the government has taken no credible measures to implement the Reparations Plan to compensate harmed communities. In this case, the only credible measure that should be taken is the creation of a Government Accord that would guarantee implementation of the Reparations Plan to compensate communities.

We are asking non-governmental and human rights organizations and the national and international community to monitor the situation and help ensure that the law is obeyed.

As well, we ask them to be vigilant for attacks against leaders of communities harmed by Chixoy dam. We are concerned about threatening and intimidating statements that have been made by the President and Vice-president of the Republic de Guatemala.

Letter Writing

Please send copies of this information, and your own letters, to your own Congresspersons, Senators, urging them to demand that the WB and IADB comply with U.S. law and ensure implementation of the Chixoy Dam Reparations Plan.

- Congress: <http://www.house.gov/> (info about your Congress person) and call: 202-224-3121
- Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/> (info about your Senator) and call: 202-224-3121

Background Information

Film: "Chixoy Dam Massacres and Evictions: No Reparations, No Justice, No Peace", by Lazar Konforti, August 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xF3YI7XMNEE&feature=youtu.be>

Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

To support surviving victims of the Chixoy Dam/ Rio Negro massacres, 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 (Canada & U.S.): <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

- Be a monthly donor (Canada & U.S.)
- To donate stock: info@rightsaction.org

Join Educational Delegations to Guatemala

- May 31-June 8, 2014: "Mining Injustice ~versus~ Community well-being and the Environment", in the context of on-going struggles for truth, memory and justice for the genocides and repression of the past. Hosted by Rights Action and SMAK (Sustainable Mining Alliance of the Kootenays), contact: info@rightsaction.org
- July 3-10, 2014: "Mayan Communities & Environmental Well-Being ~ versus ~ Large-Scale Mining And Hydroelectric Dam Projects, In An Unjust Global Economic Order", in the context of on-going struggles for truth, memory and justice for the genocides and repression of the past. Hosted by Rights Action and Mayflower United Church of Christ (Minneapolis), contact: info@rightsaction.org
- August 17-24, 2014: "Justice and Reparations for the Rio Negro/Chixoy Dam Massacres". Hosted by Nathan Einbinder, of The Rio Negro Project (<http://rionegroproject.blogspot.com/>), contact: nathaneinbinder@gmail.com.

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