

## Rest In Peace, Lake Izabal (Guatemala)

*“Despite the risk of boring those who believe they are not affected by metal mining, I feel I have to keep raising the thorny issue of mining, in the crazy hope that we will wake up from our lethargy and do something about the pain and shame caused by this industry in Guatemala.”*



(CGN's "Fenix" nickel mine, El Estor, Guatemala, formerly owned by Hudbay Minerals and INCO, now operated by Solway Group/CGN.)

- What to do / How to support: see below

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### Rest In Peace, Lake Izabal

by Magali Rey Rosa, December 4, 2014

[http://www.prensalibre.com/opinion/q-e-p-d-Izabal\\_0\\_1260474189.html](http://www.prensalibre.com/opinion/q-e-p-d-Izabal_0_1260474189.html)

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### Death of Izabal is Announced

We are talking about the death of a lake, of the Dulce River and of the future of one of Guatemala's biggest departments. There is no doubt that the lake has been undergoing a process of ecological deterioration for quite some time now and this sad circumstance can be attributed to different governments, going back to the last century.

The final blow will be delivered by modern metal mining. In 1971, the (sadly) famous Canadian mining company INCO began its pyrometallurgy nickel exploitation on the biggest lake in our country. Like so many other mining towns, El Estor has ended up empty and depressed. INCO simply up and ran when the market brought prices down and profits plummeted.

Now, as collateral damage to what was already a really bad deal for Guatemala (given the corruption and violence that characterized INCO's Exmibal "operations"), we can add the metal contamination of Izabal Lake.

Besides leaving indelible footprints of destruction and irreversible contamination in the country, mining has caused the death of courageous Guatemalans such as Julio Camey and Adolfo Mijanos López. Rafael Piedrasanta and Alfonso Bauer Paiz miraculously survived. Their lives had been endangered for daring to call the mine into question.

A few years ago, the price of nickel rose and mining exploitation started up again, leading to the usual wheeling and dealing, as well as horrific and shameful events such as the expulsion of the Q'eqchi' communities from their lands that had been handed over by the Guatemalan government, and a lawsuit alleging rape filed by Mayan women against employees of the Canadian company Hudbay Minerals. Today it is the Russian company, Solway, that is contaminating Izabal, even on the spiritual level.

As well as the death of three Universidad del Valle students who lost their lives in strange circumstances that will probably never be clarified, on the property overlooking what is today the location of the mining operation, accidents have cost the lives of a number of Guatemalans run over on the highway that has been almost totally destroyed by heavy trucks transporting nickel and who knows what other materials to the port on the Atlantic.

Business is so good — for the small group involved — that the Pérez government is constructing a port exclusively for the mining companies.

The nickel mine was installed with blood and fire in the 1970's. Today, because of fear, indifference or an opium haze, nobody dares to openly oppose mining. And communities suffer the damages caused by an operation that will destroy all hope that Izabal can maintain descent, healthy living conditions for its citizens.

Another goal the mining companies have against the Guatemalan people is definitely to give the last mortal blow to Izabal Lake, and this is thanks to Mr. Pérez and his buddies.

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**More information** about criminal and civil cases against Hudbay Minerals /CGN for crimes and violations in and near the "Fenix" mine in Guatemala: [info@rightsaction.org](mailto:info@rightsaction.org)

**"Defensora"** documents the lives and vision of the Mayan Qeqchi people and their efforts to seek justice in Canadian courts against Hudbay Minerals/ CGN. Trailer/ Screenings /Information: [www.defensorathefilm.com](http://www.defensorathefilm.com)

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

To support Mayan Qeqchi efforts to defend their environment and community well-being and to attain justice for Hudbay/CGN caused harms and violations suffered, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- U.S.: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091
- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8
- Credit-Card Donations Can Be Made: <http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

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