

Rights Action
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Repression & Corruption Work After Extreme Violence, KCA (Kappes, Cassiday & Associates) Proceeds With Mine In Guatemala

By Grahame Russell, February 26, 2015

From January 28 – February 8, 2015, Rights Action travelled with a Canadian journalist and students from the University of Guelph (Canada), to meet with Mayan and campesino communities suffering environmental and health harms, repression and other human rights violations caused by the Canadian-led mining industry in Guatemala. Rights Action provides grassroots funding to the community and environmental protection and human rights promotion work of the people we met with.



From a spot up the road from “La Puya” (near Guatemala City), one sees where KCA – with military and police “protection” – has begun developing their gold and silver heap-leaching mining operation, in one of the driest regions of Guatemala. Our group could get no closer to the mine, blocked by Guatemalan security forces. This work began in earnest after violent State repression in May 2014, mentioned below.

Three Years of Community and Environmental Protection Struggle

On March 1, 2015, local farmers and citizens from San Jose del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc will celebrate the 3rd anniversary of their peaceful and courageous community and environmental protection struggle at a place known as “La Puya”, by the entrance of a mine illegally acquired and developed first by the Canadian company Radius Gold and now the American company KCA.



(As our group of University of Guelph students sat with local women and men at their permanent “La Puya” encampment, company trucks drove in and out of the mine entrance guarded by a permanent contingent of anti-riot police.)

Internationally recognized hydrologist and geo-chemical expert, Robert Moran, studied KCA’s improperly submitted EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) and concluded it was one of the worst EIA he had studied in over 40 years of work in the field of mining.

<http://www.plazapublica.com.gt/content/entrevista-robert-moran-estudio-impacto-ambiental>

No matter, licenses were “duly provided by the authorities”.

Three Years of Repression on Behalf of KCA and Radius Gold (original developer of mine)

Both when Radius Gold was first developing the mine, and now with KCA, police and soldiers have carried out waves of repression against local farmers and citizens.



(May 2014)

Today, as the mine moves towards being operational, the companies – and their government and investor supporters - have shown again just how repression and corruption enable mining in Guatemala.

Since 2012, Rights Action and many groups have regularly denounced the mining-related repression – attempted assassinations, false charges and imprisonments, beatings, tear-gas attacks, shootings – to the Canadian and American embassies, elected politicians and government officials ... to no avail.

Legal System a Further Tool of Repression for Mining Industry

In a numbingly repetitive, yet still stunning fashion, the Guatemalan “authorities” are now seeking five-year jail sentences for four “La Puya” community leaders, for a series of trumped charges relating to their community and environmental protection work.

<http://noticias.emisorasunidas.com/noticias/nacionales/este-viernes-dictaran-sentencia-contralideres-comunitarios-puya>

These same “authorities” cannot find the two assassins who fired 3 bullets at community member Yoli Oqueli in June 2012 (while Radius Gold was trying to illegally develop the mine). While Yoli miraculously survived the assassination attempt, one bullet remains lodged perilously close to her spinal column. Neither can the “authorities” find any wrong-doing in the actions of anti-riot police that, on at least three occasions, opened fire with tear-gas canisters and rubber bullets on peaceful protesters, sending dozens to local medical clinics and hospitals.

“Each Blow Gives Us Strength”



In May 2014, an anti-riot police officer fired a tear-gas canister directly at Felisa Muralles, from close range.



On February 4, 2015, Felisa spoke to the University of Guelph students, explaining that “every blow gives us strength” to do what we need to do to peacefully protect our community and environmental well-being.

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