

March 15, 2001

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[www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)

"Chixoy Dam / Rio Negro Massacres Reparations Campaign"  
-- Communique #15

Press Release from surviving victims of the Chixoy Dam / Rio Negro massacres

[Version en español abajo]

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PLEASE send letters, faxes and emails to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, concerning this Campaign. [See examples below]

Email us if you do not want to receive these emailings.

Please copy and re-distribute or publish this information.

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PRESS RELEASE, March 14, 2001

Campesino Association March 13<sup>th</sup> Río Negro, Rabinal Achí (ASCRA)

CHIXOY DAM AFFECTED PEOPLE -- SEEK REPARATIONS

On the international day of action, for rivers, peoples and life – March 14

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Pacux, March 14, 2001 – Today, on the occasion of the "International Day of Action for Rivers, Peoples and Life", we would like to express our solidarity with the more of 60 million affected peoples by large dams.

We, the Maya-Achí community of Río Negro, Rabinal, Baja Verapaz were affected by the Chixoy Dam, when our lands were flooded. We seek reparations for the damages and losses incurred by dam construction from the National Institute of Electricity (INDE), the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Of the flooded lands, we have received only a third of the lands we lost. We have been in extreme poverty for 18 years, and our community has been divided up in several places. We used to live well. We had our roots in our lands, and our life was peaceful. The Chixoy River

valley was fertile, and we harvested corn, peanuts, beans, tomatoes, sorghum, and we had fruit trees. Fishing was abundant and of high quality.

We had large amount of lands where our animals grazed free. We used forest resources -- such as firewood, hardwoods, palms, pine resins --, and hunting was good. We celebrated in *The Encuentros*, a sacred site of our ancestors, the meeting of many surrounding communities.

All of this, we lost when the reservoir was flooded.

When we expressed our right to remain in our lands, we were threatened. Taking advantage of the violence that permeated the country, INDE and the Government forced us to leave our place, and more than 400 people from our community were massacred.

The Chixoy Dam has not benefited us in any way. On the contrary the company demands that we pay high electricity rates, even though they have not complied with compensation for the damages and losses caused by dam construction.

In 1999, we presented our case before the World Commission on Dams (WCD) at the Latin American Public Consultation in São Paulo, Brasil. The WCD's final report delivered in London, November 2000, recommends to financing agencies, dam builders and governments the need for reparations for dam affected peoples. The mission of the WCD, comprised of 12 commissioners from the industry, government and NGO sectors was to analyze the dam performance and the social and environmental impacts of dams.

Before were able to take care of our families, because we had everything on the Rio Negro valley; we worked communally and fished in the river. It is there where our old people want to die. Now we don't have sacred sites to ask for God's permission.

We haven't forgotten our land. Why did the government authorize that dam that caused us so much damage?

We have formed ASCRA, the Campesino Association Thirteen of March – Río Negro Rabinal Achí, to work for the development of the survivors of the Río Negro massacres, and for seeking reparations for the damages caused by the dam.

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ASOCIACION CAMPESINA TRECE DE MARZO – RIO NEGRO RABINAL ACHI (ASCRA)

AFECTADOS POR PRESA CHIXOY BUSCAN REPARACIONES –  
DIA INTERNACIONAL DE ACCION POR LOS RIOS, PUEBLOS Y POR LA VIDA – 14 de Marzo

COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

Para mas información:  
Cristobal Osorio Sánchez, Presidente  
Carlos Chén Osorio,  
Antonia Osorio Sánchez  
Rosa Iboy Osorio  
(502) 979-7820 [en Guatemala]

Pacux, 14 de marzo, 2001. – Con motivo de la celebración del Día Internacional de Acción por los Ríos, Pueblos y por la Vida – 14 de marzo, nos solidarizamos con los mas de 40 millones de personas afectadas por la construcción de grandes represas en todo el mundo.

Nosotros, la comunidad Maya-Achí de Río Negro, Rabinal, Baja Verapaz fuimos afectados por la Represa Chixoy por medio de la inundación de nuestras tierras. Buscamos reparaciones de los daños y pérdidas de parte del Instituto Nacional de Electrificación (INDE), constructor de la represa, el Banco Mundial y el Banco Inter-Americano de Desarrollo, financiadores del proyecto.

De las tierras inundadas hasta ahora solo nos han entregado menos de la tercera parte de lo que hemos perdido, hemos pasado 18 años en extrema pobreza y nuestra comunidad se haya dividida en varias lugares.

Antes de la construcción de la represa vivíamos muy bien, teníamos nuestra raíz en esa tierra, nuestra vida era tranquila. Las vegas del Río Chixoy eran fértiles y cosechábamos maíz, maní, frijol, tomate, sorgo y teníamos árboles frutales; la pesca era abundante y de buena calidad. Además contábamos con grandes extensiones de tierra en donde nuestros animales andaban sueltos, aprovechábamos los bosques para la leña, las maderas, la palma, el ocote, y para la cacería. Celebrábamos en Los Encuentros, un sitio sagrado de nuestros antepasados la reunión de muchas comunidades de los alrededores. Todo esto los perdimos cuando fué inundada la represa.

Por manifestar nuestro derecho de no querer abandonar nuestra tierra fuimos amenazados y aprovechándose de la violencia, el INDE y el estado nos desarraigaron de nuestro lugar y mas de 400 personas de nuestra comunidad fueron masacradas.

La Represa Chixoy no nos ha beneficiado de ninguna forma, al contrario nos exigen el pago de altas tarifas de luz, aún cuando ellos no nos han cumplido con la reposición de los daños y pérdidas ocasionadas.

Después de sufrimientos por 23 años hemos logrado muy poco. En 1999 presentamos nuestro caso ante la Comisión Mundial de Represas (CMR) en la Consulta Pública Latinoamericana realizada en São Paulo, Brasil. El informe final de la CMR entregado en Londres, noviembre del 2000, recomienda a las agencias financiadoras, compañías constructoras y a los gobiernos la necesidad de reparar los daños ocasionados por las grandes represas. La CMR conformada por 12 comisionados de compañías, agencias de gobiernos y ONGs tuvo como propósito analizar el funcionamiento y los impactos sociales y ambientales de las grandes represas en el mundo.

En las vegas del Río Chixoy teníamos de todo para cuidar de nuestras familias, no se nos olvida nuestra tierra, trabajábamos colectivamente, pescábamos en el río, y es allá adonde nuestros ancianos quieren ir a morir, ya no tenemos lugar sagrado para ir a pedir permiso a Dios. Por que el gobierno autorizó esa represa que causó tanto daño?

Asociación Campesina Trece de Marzo – Río Negro Rabinal Achí (ASCRA) esta formada para trabajar por el desarrollo de los sobrevivientes de Río Negro y el resarcimiento por los daños causados por la represa.

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PLEASE SEND

letters, faxes, emails to the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, asking them to accept responsibility for their contributory role in the Chixoy Dam / Rio Negro massacres, and to make full compensation and reparations to the surviving Rio Negro community members.

Here are copies of 2 letters that were sent by Campaign supporters:

1-

Mr. James Wolfenshon  
President, The World Bank  
1818 H Street NW  
Washington DD,20433

Dear Mr. Wolfenshon:

I am writing to express my outrage at the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Banks refusal to acknowledge any responsibility for the massacres that occurred in Guatemala around the Chixoy Dam project. During my recent visit to Guatemala, which included a meeting with your representative Eduardo Somensatto, it was obvious that these massacres would not have occurred if not for World Bank and IDB financing which moved this Dam project forward.

The people of the Rio Negro community have suffered long enough. It is time to accept responsibility for this tragedy and begin the process of compensating survivors for land, and personal and community property lost to the dam. Victims must be compensated for the loss of their loved ones, suffering related to ongoing repression, psychological damage, lost family income over the past 17 years due to the lack of access to land among other things.

The Guatemalan Truth Commission has directly implicated the Chixoy Dam Project as a cause of the Rio Negro massacres.

I am calling on you to take immediate action to settle all claims related to this matter.

I would appreciate being informed of the World Banks position with respect to bringing closure to the survivors of the Rio Negro Massacre.

Sincerely,

Wayne Mundle, National Director  
Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

cc

Donna Dowsett, Director, Central America Country Management Unit  
Mario Marroquin, World Bank, Guatemala City  
Enrique V. Iglesias, President, Inter-American Development Bank  
Jairo Sanchez, Deputy Manager, Regional Operations - Department 11  
Peter Bate, Media Liaison

2- Another supporter wrote:

When you do business with repressive governments you shouldn't be surprised when atrocities occur.

When you do business with repressive governments and atrocities do occur you should be ready to take responsibility.

The following Campaign demands of the survivors of Rio Negro and Rights Action seem justified.

Demands:

- 1) compensation for land, personal and community property lost to the dam;
- 2) reparations for land and personal and community property stolen or destroyed;
- 3) reparations for loss of life and suffering related to the repression;
- 4) reparations for 17 years of lost income due to lack of access to land and personal and communal property;
- 5) reparations for lost family support due to murdered heads of household;
- 6) reparations for psychological damages.

Shame on you if you believe that development projects are more important than human rights.  
Shame on you if you do not take responsibility for the harm you have helped cause.

Signed ...

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WHO TO CONTACT:

-- WORLD BANK  
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#### INTERVIEWS

For interviews concerning the Chixoy Dam/ Rio Negro massacres Reparations Campaign, contact Rights Action:

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Grahame Russell. Tel: (416) 654-2074, info@rightsaction.org

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MORE INFORMATION about the Chixoy Dam Project and the Rio Negro massacres,

1- Go to the Rights Action website, [www.rightsaction.org](http://www.rightsaction.org)

2- Obtain a copy of the Witness for Peace report "A People Dammed". Contact: [witness@w4peace.org](mailto:witness@w4peace.org)

3- Go to the Advocacy Project website, [www.advocacynet.org](http://www.advocacynet.org)