

June 24, 2005

GUATEMALA: Community consultations versus global mining companies

***** PLEASE SIGN-ON THIS DECLARATION *****

Saludos. Many thanks to all of the organizations who responded to the previous urgent release, calling for support for the legitimate community consultations in Sipacapa. Despite all of the obstacles placed in their way, the consultations took place on Saturday, June 18th, the response of the population in 11 of the 13 community districts of the municipality being a resounding rejection of mining activities in their territory.

One of the next concrete steps in the process is for community and municipal authorities to present the results to national government authorities, demanding the cancelation of all mining licenses in Sipakapense territory. They will be taking the decision of the people of Sipacapa to the National Congress for this purpose on June 28.

To demonstrate our continued support for the struggle of Sipacapa for their Indigenous rights and community-controlled development and environmental well-being, we distribute this release (please circulate widely) prepared in Sipacapa after the municipal assembly of June 21 and ask that organizations sign on by sending a message with the organization's name (and country) to: solidaridad_sipacapa@yahoo.es

The list of adhering organizations will be compiled for June 28th, when representatives from Sipacapa will present their demands to the National Congress of Guatemala.

Rights Action

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If you want on-off this elist: info@rightsaction.org

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THE PEOPLE OF SIPACAPA REJECT MINING ACTIVITIES IN THEIR TERRITORY. WE DEMAND THAT THEIR SOVEREIGN DECISION BE RESPECTED

On June 21, 2005, the Sipakapense population gathered in the central plaza of Sipacapa, San Marcos, to present to the municipal authorities the results of the community consultations that took place on June 18th in 13 districts of the municipality regarding the population's acceptance or rejection of mining activities in Sipacapa, and to demand that the sovereign decision of the Sipakapense people be respected.

When people from various communities and districts of the municipality arrived, they found a considerable police force, requested by the municipal mayor, in the entrance to the Municipal Administration building, in the plaza and in the town streets. The assembly was carried out without any significant problems once the local and community authorities demanded that the police, an unnecessary provocation, withdraw. The auxiliary mayors and other local leaders maintained order throughout the event.

On June 18, the consultations took place in community assemblies, according to the communities' decision-making processes, an action supported by various national and international legal instruments. On the 21st, local authorities presented their communities' legal acts to the Municipal Government Council in the presence of the population, representatives of the Human Rights Prosecutors' Office (PDH) and national and international observers. Eleven of the thirteen districts rejected mining activities in all of its forms (prospecting, exploration and exploitation) in the territory of Sipacapa, one district accepted them, and another abstained.

The Municipal Government Council had tried to suspend the consultations the day before their realization and withdrew from the entity convoking the event, without consulting neither the community authorities nor the Political and Technical Commissions of the COMUDE (Municipal Development Council), which were in charge of the coordination and organization of the consultations.

Despite these complications, on June 21, the Municipal Government Council made commitments to stand behind the population's decision, to accompany the community authorities in their demands, and to take the actions necessary to guarantee that they be respected.

It is important to note some of the demands contained in point number four of Municipal Act #16-2005, drawn up in the municipal assembly: "According to the petitions of the municipalities' inhabitants it is established that the municipal authorities should establish the territorial limits of our municipality, recognize and delimit municipal lands, that Montana's offices withdraw from this municipality this very day ... that all community teachers financed by Montana be withdrawn ...".

For all of the above, the national and international organizations signed below express our support of the Sipakapense population and the resounding decision taken in their legitimate community consultations, and demand:

1. Of the Municipal Government Council, that they fulfill the commitments made on June 21, as well as the petitions of the municipalities' inhabitants.
2. Of the Ministry of Energy and Mines and national government authorities, that they cancel all mining licenses (prospecting, exploration and exploitation) within Sipakapense territory, and that they not grant any further mining license that may affect the municipality.
3. Of Montana Exploradora, subsidiary of the Canadian transnational company Glamis Gold Ltd., that they withdraw immediately from the municipality.

Sipacapa, San Marcos, June 21, 2005.

ADHERING ORGANIZATIONS:

Please sign on by sending a message with the organization's name (and country) to: solidaridad_sipacapa@yahoo.es.

