

September 18, 2005

GUATEMALA: HUNDREDS OF Q'EQCHI' MAYANS PROTEST SKYE RESOURCES NICKEL EXPLORATION LICENSE

Rights Action re-distributes this information from the Defensoria Q'eqchi:
defqeqchi@intelnet.net.gt.

Please write to Skye Resources Inc., and your elected Canadian officials, to support the needs of the local Mayan communities being harmed by Canadian interests.

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HUNDREDS OF Q'EQCHI' MAYANS PROTEST GUATEMALA'S GRANTING SKYE RESOURCES NICKEL EXPLORATION LICENSE

Today, September 13, nearly a thousand Q'eqchi' Mayan women and men marched through the town of El Estor and to the headquarters of CGN, Skye Resources Guatemalan subsidiary, protesting the government of Guatemala for having granted the company a license to explore for nickel in an area of nearly 300 km² inhabited by twenty indigenous communities.

Skye's Fenix Project hopes to reinitiate mining in the former Exmibal installations and property, since acquiring them from Inco in December 2004.

To that end it has begun exploratory drilling in property it claims to own, but has encountered resistance from because property lines have not been clearly marked to the acceptance of the communities. In other cases, the company has reclaimed lands leased to indigenous villages for their corn crops, and the communities claim that they have been inadequately compensated and left without alternatives for their food security. Furthermore, the drilling has caused erosion runoff that has polluted

and
damaged several communities' drinking water supplies, according to the
community leaders.

However, the protesters today called on the Guatemalan government to
suspend
the exploration license it granted to Skye not only for the problems
already
encountered with the company, but also because their right to have
been
informed and consulted about the project prior to the license being
granted
was violated. To date, no consultations have been undertaken, and the
company itself has begun a campaign to convince the communities of the
benefits of their project. The Q'eqchi' Mayans consider the mining
licenses
to be unpatriotic and racist, given that as Guatemalan citizens, they
do not
enjoy the privileges, rights and contacts granted to the Canadian
firm.

The five kilometer long march beginning in the town of El Estor and
ending
at the mine's offices took place in 35f C heat and under a fierce sun.
Protesters gathered for the march at 3:00 am and temporarily blocked
the
road between the town and the company's installations at 5:00
disrupting the
company's shift change at 5:30-6:00. The mine cancelled its
operations for
the day, and the company's workers did not have any contact with the
protesters. The protest ended at midday.

Approximately 150 police and soldiers along with 15 police vehicles
from
several neighboring jurisdictions were called in to reinforce Skye's
private
security force, although no incidents were reported. To understand
the
context of this show of force, it should be noted that normally only
six
police and two vehicles have the security responsibility for the whole
El
Estor township and its 45,000 inhabitants!

Daniel Vogt, AEPDI, El Estor

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Please re-distribute this information To get on-off this elist:

info@rightsaction.org.

The Mayan Q'eqchi people and communities of Guatemala need lots and lots and lots of attention and support. For more information, at www.rightsaction.org you can read: "Maya-Q'eqchi Resistance in Guatemala to Skye Resources Mining Company".