

October 2, 2005

GUATEMALA: This urgent action deals with recent repression possibly related to opposition to the harmful mining operations of Skye Resources Inc., a Canadian nickel mining company.

Please send your emails of concern to the addresses and offices below.

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

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On September 27, at midday, the offices of CTC (Central de Trabajadores del Campo) the umbrella organization of FTCC (Federaci n de Trabajadores del Campo y la Ciudad) were attacked and robbed by six armed men. According to CTC employees, files were rifled, a computer stolen and several cellphones stolen, too.

The attack occurred during a visit by a group of nearly twenty women including a foreign press correspondent, and that group was ordered lie on the floor while their phones were stolen and the offices searched by the assailants. The General Secretary of CTC and FTCC, Miguel Angel Lucas G mez, was pistol whipped during the incident.

BACKGROUND:

On March 15, 2005, the FTCC along with its local partner organization, the Defensor a Q'eqchi, filed a complaint ("representation") under Article 24 of the Constitution of the ILO (International Labor Organization). The government of Guatemala is charged with having violated the rights of the Q'eqchi' Mayan villagers who live in an area of nearly 260 square kilometers in El Estor that were granted under mining exploration license to Canadian owned Exploraciones y Explotaciones Mineras de Izabal, now called Compa a Guatemalteca de N quel, a subsidiary of Skye Resources, Inc. in December 2004.

The nineteen Mayan Q'eqchi' communities (Esperanza, Sarabia ChacaltÈ, Tambul SegumÙ, Lote 4 Agua Caliente, Nueva JerusalÈn, El Chorro, Sem'c Lote 5, Searanx, San LuÌs Chakpaila, Lote 9 Agua Caliente, Santo Domingo, Sex·n, Rìo Sauce Sex·n, Selich, Semuy, Sechina, Las Nubes, Sakaril· y Nueva Sakaril·), whose lands were granted to Skye Resources under this license, were not consulted prior to the license being granted, as required by ILO Convention 169, and they staunchly oppose any mining activity on their lands.

Due to financial and contractual constraints with the mine project's former owner, the Canadian based INCO Limited, Skye is operating on a very tight timeline and seeks to finish exploratory activities during 2005 and apply for a mine exploitation license for nickel this same year.

Its operations have been suspended on various occasions and presently have been halted in one area due to communities blockading mine roads and warning mineworkers not to continue in the area.

On September 13 this year, nearly a thousand villagers marched to Skye's El Estor headquarters and demanded the company withdraw from the region and abandon its mine exploration activities. FTCC and the Defensorìa Q'eqchi' have conducted workshops with the communities informing them of their rights and have supported land titling and registration processes in the region.

Presuming the outcome of the ILO complaint will result in Guatemala's government being found in violation of Convention 169, the case stands as a legal precedent for further legal proceedings in Guatemala to have the mining license nullified. Likewise, it would serve as a precedent regarding the dozens of mining exploration licenses granted over the last five years without local indigenous communities being informed or consulted previously.

Nonetheless, the Guatemalan central government continues to press mining as pillar for future economic development.

Additionally, CTC and FTCC are leaders in movements to increase the minimum wage in Guatemala and to protect workers from the effects of the recently signed CAFTA.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Call for concern for the security of Miguel Angel Lucas Gúmez and the staff of CTC due these violent and intimidating acts.

Call for authorities to take immediate precautionary measures to protect him, in accordance with his own wishes.

Call for authorities to protect and guarantee the rights of the nineteen Q'eqchi' Mayan communities in El Estor whose lands and livelihoods are threatened by the nickel mining project under reactivation.

Call for the Ministry of Energy and Mines to suspend the exploration license granted to Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel, pending the outcome of the case presented before the ILO.

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.

SKYE RESOURCES, Suite 1203, 700 West Pender Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6C 3P1, t: 604-602-9500, F: 604-602-9510, www.skyeresources.com, info@skyeresources.com, Matthew Johansen: mpj@skyeresources.com.

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www.rightsaction.org.