

March 2009
Siria Valley, Honduras

A CHRONOLOGY OF INDIFFERENCE:

The lack of response by the governments of Honduras and Canada and Goldcorp Inc. to the Siria Valley population's health problems

The Siria Valley Environmental Defense Committee prepared this chronology. This Committee was founded by community members from the Siria Valley who have suffered from health and environmental harms and human rights violations caused by the "San Martin" open-pit, cyanide-leeching gold mine, operated by Goldcorp Inc., a Canadian-US mining company, via their Honduran subsidiary "Entremares".

After a lack of explicit consultation with the population in the affected municipalities and after not having received the consent of the local populations, Goldcorp Inc. started their mining operation in Honduras in 2000.

Since then, the Siria Valley Environmental Defense Committee has struggled to demand compensation for the diverse environmental and health damages, human rights violations, and to detain the company's expansion into other municipalities.

Since 2002-2003, Rights Action has been supporting and struggling in solidarity with the Committee. Rights Action assisted with this "A Chronology of Indifference: The lack of response by the governments of Honduras and Canada and Goldcorp Inc. to the Siria Valley population's health problems."

FOR MORE INFORMATION: contact Grahame Russell at info@rightsaction.org.

To get on/ off Rights Action's email list:

<http://www.rightsaction.org/lists/?p=subscribe&id=3>

WHAT TO DO: see below

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After the Siria Valley population's multiple public denunciations of the surface and subterranean water contamination and environmental impacts caused by Goldcorp Inc.'s mining activities, the Specialized Prosecutor's Office for the Environment conducted an inter-institutional meeting in April 2006 to address the problems.

It concluded that environmental monitoring in the mining region and surrounding areas was needed. It was agreed that a scientific study would be conducted with the aim of establishing the origin of the Siria Valley population's illnesses (skin problems, hair loss, respiratory problems, body aches, eye problems, and including animals' unexpected death) and their relationship with the existence, in dangerous quantities, of heavy metals related to mining: arsenic, cyanide, aluminum, mercury, and lead.

This study would also include medical and physical evaluations to determine the state of health of the population and people at risk within these communities, and the taking of

blood and urine samples to determine levels of lead, arsenic, cyanide, aluminum, and mercury.

On 2 August 2007, samples were taken from 30 people from Siria Valley communities who had placed the denunciation and from 32 people, also from these communities, to be used as a scientific counter-reference. The samples were sent to two laboratories in Colombia—the Bogota Public Health laboratory and the Bogota Forensic Toxicology laboratory.

On 22 January 2008, in public declarations at a meeting between the Prosecutor's Office for the Environment and Siria Valley inhabitants who underwent the medical and toxicology analysis, the Special Prosecutor for the Environment, the lawyer Aldo Santos, stated that:

“the preliminary results of the analysis conducted in Colombia, from the exams taken from the Siria Valley inhabitants, indicated the presence of arsenic, lead, and mercury in the evaluated persons.”

On this, on 23 January 2008, the Prosecutor's Office for the Environment requested a hearing with the Public Health Minister, Dr. Elsa Palau, with the objective of discussing the Siria Valley population's health problems.

This meeting between Dr. Carlos Roberto Aguilar, then Vice Ministry of Public Health, the Prosecutor's Office for the Environment, and the Siria Valley population, took place on 30 January 2008. In this meeting, the health problems and sanitary aspects that overwhelm the valley's population were presented.

This meeting reached an agreement to form an inter-institutional and inter-sectarian work commission to draft an intervention plan, write epidemiology studies, and incorporate health and environmental aspects into the mine's closure plan.

After two and a half months, and facing the noncompliance of the agreements acquired by the government and the Public Health office, on 15 April 2008, the General Prosecutor's Office for the Environment sent new correspondence to the Secretary of State and the health offices expressing its concern about the lack of response to and compliance with the agreements acquired by the government in the case of Goldcorp Inc. and its gold mine in the Siria Valley.

The Prosecutor for the Environment demanded that the Health Secretary take responsibility, in accordance with the law, and promote collaborations with the administrative bodies concerned with the population's health.

Faced with the negative response on the part of the Health Ministry to give immediate attention to the Siria Valley population's health conditions, the Special Prosecutor's Office for the Environment sent, on 27 June 2008, a note to the Secretary of State in the Office of Natural Resources and Environment, Mr. Tomas Baquero, so that it be the Secretary of State who would convene a meeting to address the health problem and define the necessary measures for the adequate closure of the mine.

To date, there has been no response from the Secretary of State.

Given the indifference and negligence from these two Secretaries of State (ministries), on 29 July 2008, the Special Prosecutor for the Environment lawyer Aldo Santos sent a letter, via official communication FEMA N 516-08, to the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights (lawyer Sandra Ponce). This letter states: "faced with the Health Secretary's refusal to comply with his responsibilities, it is requested that the Special Prosecutor for Human Rights summon and call upon the State Secretary in the Public Health office for being in violation of duties related to his position, particularly for not taking actions that would benefit the Siria Valley inhabitants' health."

The Special Prosecutor for Human Rights has not summoned or called the Minister, nor - in her absence - summoned the new Minister Dr. Carlos Aguilar.

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This chronology aims to demonstrate the human rights violations that the Siria Valley population have suffered due to Goldcorp Inc.'s open-pit cyanide mine, as well as due to the State that denies them the fundamental right of adequate medical assistance and the right to receive information on more than 60 community members' current health conditions.

Article 145 of the Constitution of the Republic establishes:

"The right to health protection is recognized. It is everyone's duty to participate in the promotion and preservation of personal and community health. The State will preserve an adequate environment to protect people's health."

Faced with the Goldcorp and the Executive Branch's indifference, the Siria Valley inhabitants, lead by the Siria Valley Environmental Defense Committee, filed a request for legal protective measures, on 11 September 2008, in the Supreme Court of Justice.

This request for legal protection asked for urgent medical attention on the part of the Health Secretary and also asked that the Secretary of State be summoned for the violation of duties related to his position, particularly his failure to adopt actions in benefit of the Siria Valley inhabitants' health.

To date, there has been no response to the filing of the request for legal protective measures.

We demand that the Health Minister, Dr. Carlos Aguilar, fulfill his commitment and Constitutionally-established responsibilities to provide immediate medical attention to Siria Valley inhabitants.

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The Siria Valley Environmental Defense Committee, conscious of their historic responsibility, composed of dignified and honest men and women, informs the national and international communities:

That, faced with the negligence and indifference of Goldcorp Inc. and of public health authorities and the Special Prosecutor's Office for the Environment, in their refusal to publically present the results of the health studies of the Siria Valley population affected

by Goldcorp's open-pit, cyanide-leaching mining operation;
That 22 months have passed since said toxicological exams were taken;
That the inhabitants, who underwent the health studies, have the right to know the results;

That the Special Prosecutor's Office for the Environment has been negligent in the investigative process, despite the existence of a law which obliges them to let the affected communities know of the results;

We hold responsible the Honduran State institutions that are in collusion with the highest Goldcorp executives represented in Honduras for not letting these results be known, since the enormous health damages that this company is causing has been repeatedly established.

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WHAT DO TO

Find lots of info at www.rightsaction.org ... including a link to "All That Glitters Is Not Gold", a one hour (by Steven Schnoor) about Goldcorp's "San Martin" mine in Honduras: <http://www.rightsaction.org/video/gold/>

DELEGATION TO GUATEMALA, APRIL 12-17, 2009

Rights Action is leading an educational trip to Guatemala and the Goldcorp Inc-mining affected regions. To join this delegation and for more information: 1-860-352-2448, info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org.

SPEAKING TOUR IN ONTARIO, QUEBEC & EASTERN CANADA, APRIL & MAY, 2009

On May 22, 2009, Goldcorp Inc. will hold its annual shareholder's meeting in Vancouver, Canada. Leading up to this meeting, Rights Action is organizing a speaking tour: "GOLDCORP Inc's Open Pit Cyanide Mining In Honduras and Guatemala - Versus - Community Development, Environment & Human Rights Well-being of Indigenous and Local Populations in Guatemala & Honduras", with invitees: Carlos Amador, a community leader and member of the Siria Valley Environmental Defense Committee (Honduras), and Francois Guindon, a **Quebecois** activist living in Guatemala and working for Rights Action on issues related to mining affected communities in Guatemala and Honduras. To host educational events in your community: 1-860-352-2448, info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org.

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There is no magic formula to holding North American corporate investors, shareholders and governments fully accountable for the environmental and health harms and human rights violations occurring in many countries around the world where our corporations and investors are operating.

US and Canadian citizens should write to -- and keep writing to -- their own politicians and media, making them aware of these situations, demanding that our governments prioritize global human rights and environmental concerns over global business interests, demanding that our governments pass criminal and civil laws to help hold our corporations accountable if/ when they violate human rights and/or cause environmental and health harms.

US and Canadian citizens should write to -- and keep writing to -- their own Pension Funds and Investment Brokers, to find out what types of corporations and businesses they are investing in, to demand that our investors prioritize global human rights and environmental concerns over profits, to insist that investments be withdrawn if/ when profits are being made at the expense of environmental and health harms and/ or human rights violations.

This is slow, long-term work. We need to make our governments, corporations and investment firms accountable to us and to the highest standards of environmental protection and human rights, in all facets of global economic relations and policies.

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TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS for Indigenous and community-based organizations in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Peru and southern Mexico that are resisting the harms caused by large-scale "development" projects (mining, tourism, hydro-electric dams, etc) and implementing their own community development projects (schools and scholarships, health clinics, solidarity economy productive projects, etc), human rights and environment projects, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- * UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887
- * CANADA: 552 - 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: http://www.rightsaction.org/Templates/donations_index.html

TO JOIN Rights Action's email list and/or quarterly newsletter list: info@rightsaction.org

CREATE YOUR OWN E-MAIL LIST and re-distribute this and other information

DAILY NEWS: Watch & listen to www.democracynow.org; Read

www.upsidedownworld.org, www.dominionpaper.ca

READ: Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"; Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States"; Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine";