

GOLDCORP Inc. IN GUATEMALA – VIOLATION OF THE RIGHT TO HOUSING
(November 15, 2009)

BELOW:

- Press Release: More proof that Goldcorp Inc's open-pit cyanide bonding gold mine in Guatemala is violating the basic right to housing of local Mayan-Mam families, amongst other environmental harms and indigenous and human rights violations
- News Article: Cross border (El Salvador-Guatemala) opposition to operation of a new Goldcorp Inc. mine

(Photos: Grahame Russell. Distant shot of Goldcorp's open-pit "Marlin Mine")

RIGHTS ACTION COMMENTARY: IMPUNITY, LOCAL-TO-GLOBAL

Below, a report from COPAE (Pastoral Commission for Peace and Ecology, of the San Marcos Catholic Diocese), a leading social justice group working in western Guatemala, working to hold Goldcorp Inc and the government of Guatemala accountable for multiple violations of human rights and environmental harm caused by Goldcorp's open pit, cyanide bonding gold mine.

Since 2006, Mayan community based groups, in the mining affected communities, and social justice and human rights groups in Guatemala, Canada and the USA, have been denouncing the violation of the right to housing (and other harms and violations).

Since 2006, Goldcorp Inc. has denied any harms or violations are being caused by its operation.

Despite years of well documented human and indigenous rights violations and environmental harms, Goldcorp continues to act with impunity. There is no legal remedy available for the victims in Guatemala, at the international level, and in Goldcorp's home country – Canada.

The World Bank made a profit off its US\$45,000,000 investment in this gold mine. The Canadian Pension Plan continues to have Cdn\$349,000,000 invested in Goldcorp. Across North America, multiple pension funds and private equity funds make profits ...

Until Goldcorp Inc. is held accountable in Canada – legally, politically and by its profiteers (shareholders and investors) -, it will continue to act with impunity in countries like Guatemala.

- How to support? More information? What to do? = See at bottom
- Please re-distribute this information all around
- To get on/ off Rights Action's email list:
<http://www.rightsaction.org/lists/?p=subscribe&id=3/>

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COPAE Press release, November 11, 2009

Dear friends,

Today, COPAE and UUSC present in Guatemala City the results of an investigation, after two years of monitoring by a team of engineers:

“DAMAGED BUILDINGS NEAR THE MARLIN MINE: Preliminary Investigation and Analysis of Building Damage in the Villages of Agel, El Salitre, San José Ixcaniche and San José Nueva Esperanza, in the Muicipalities of San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa, department of San Marcos, Guatemala.”

The publication states that the most probable cause of the cracked houses near the Marlin Mine, a project of Montana Exploradora, subsidiary of the Canadian Mining Company Goldcorp Inc., are the explosions and heavy transport used by the company.

Full documents in pdf: <http://resistance-mining.org/english/?q=node/147>

(Now unlivable house in Mayan-Mam community of Salitre)

CRACKED HOUSES IN SAN MIGUEL IXTAHUACAN: THE MARLIN MINE INFLUENCE

San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos. More than one-hundred houses have suffered damages since the mining activities began in the municipalities of Sipacapa and San Miguel Ixtahuacán. Everything indicates that the blasting and heavy traffic from the mine have caused the cracks and splits, according to a technical report by United States engineering team and COPAE (the Pastoral Commission for Peace and Ecology of the San Marcos Catholic Diocese).

Since the Marlin Mine started operations in 2005, several families from San Miguel Ixtahuacán who live near the open pit mine have denounced damages to their

houses. More than a hundred adobe and block houses have cracks and splits in the walls, large and small from floor to ceiling.

In 2007, COPAE asked for the support of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) from Massachusetts (USA) to investigate on the causes. UUSC is an organization that works to monitor human rights in diverse parts of the world.

For two years, a qualified engineering team (mining, structural, civil and geotechnical), monitored the cracks in 33 houses around Montana´s Marlin mining project, a subsidiary of Goldcorp Inc. Today, they present a clear and concise report, describing the methodology they used for their research.

The name of the report is "CRACKED HOUSES AROUND THE MARLIN MINE: Preliminary analysis and research of the damage in houses of Agel, Salitre, San Jose Ixcaniche and San Jose Nueva Esperanza villages, from San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa, San Marcos, Guatemala".

BLASTING AND HEAVY TRUCK TRAFFIC

Teresa Fuentes, from the legal department in COPAE, explains: "The engineering team monitored houses in villages far from the mine, in the villages of Escupija and Chininguitz. It was discovered that they don´t have any signs of cracks or splits like those seen in the houses around the mine.

UUSC engineer Robert Robinson: "The possibility of the damages caused by mudslides, tremors, subsidence, superficial or underground water were ruled out, as well as swelling clay soils. An inadequate construction of the houses is not the probable cause either. Our engineering team eliminated all the possible causes except one."

"Investigating the soil vibrations, caused by the blasting and the heavy truck traffic from the mine, we realized the significant relationship between the two of them. The cracks are mostly produced in the walls facing the source of vibrations. Adobe and block houses are not built to resist this impact."

MONTANA EXPLORADORA IS RESPONSIBLE

Engineer Robert Robinson confirmed, "Montana Exploradora didn´t do a survey of the houses near the open pit before starting operations. Therefore they cannot refute the statements of the property owners, which affirm that the cracks appeared after the mine started its operations."

"Research shows us that the mining activity is the most likely cause of the cracked houses. Therefore Montana Exploradora should be held responsible for the reparation and restoration of the houses to their original condition. Also they should modify their operational procedures to prevent any further damages."

[...]

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GOLDCORP Inc's "CERRO BLANCO" MINE (IN GUATEMALA)

October 24, 2009, prensalibre.com newspaper (Guatemala), Translated by Rosalind Gill

Under pressure from Salvadorian and Guatemalan citizens regarding the impact on their lives and on the environment of mining exploitation in Asunción Mita, Guatemala has forced the governments of both countries take up the case of the Cerro Blanco project, according to the Diario Co Latino.

In fact, a Salvadorian-Guatemalan Bi-national Commission has been created to study the impacts of metal extraction in the above mentioned Guatemalan municipality, which is near Güija Lake. The Ministers of the Environment of both countries will study the impact of mining exploration on Asunción Mita and on the Lempa y Ostúa rivers.

In Guatemala, some 39 communities are affected by the mining, while in El Salvador, some three million people are affected.

As the Vice-Presidents from the two countries were preparing to sign the agreement to create the Bi-national Commission in Apaneca, Ahuachapán, Guatemalan and Salvadorian social movement organizations gathered outside the hotel where the meeting was taking place. They demonstrated peacefully, carrying placards, and prepared a letter to be given to the Vice-Presidents to make them aware of the impact of granting the exploitation license.

David Pereira, one of the Coordinators of the CEICOM (Investment and Commerce Centre) said that the letter underlines that the Cerro Blanco mine is located in an area that has been designated as an "ecological reserve" by the Trifinio Plan. "We are mounting a petition to demand that the process be put in place to close the mine", said Pereira. The Cerro Blanco mine, which is 14 kilometers from Güija Lake, would contaminate the water in the Ostúa rivers in Guatemala. These rivers flow into Güija Lake, as well as into the Lempa River in El Salvador. Campesino and indigenous communities in Asunción Mita, Jutiapa, Guatemala and in the municipality of Metapán, El Salvador, would be affected.

According to Pereira, a Canadian company known as COMERCE Group is behind this exploitation. [Actually, it is Goldcorp Inc. that is the owner of the Cerro Blanco mine] They plan to extract one million, two hundred thousand ounces of gold from the area. This will require daily, six thousand tons of cyanide, a toxic substance that impedes the flow of oxygen from the lungs to other organs in the human body.

Brother Armado González Villatoro, leader of the anti-mining movement in Guatemala, has already organized three peaceful demonstrations this year to demand that the government of his country put a halt to the mining projects,

especially the Cerro Blanco project. He stated that citizens will bring pressure to stop the metal extraction project in Asunción Mita, as it would affect both Guatemalans and Salvadorians. "This Project must be cancelled because it would cause grave harm to our brothers in El Salvador", said Brother Armando.

Representatives from both countries entered the room where Vice-President Salvador Sánchez Cerén of El Salvador and Vice-President Rafel Espada Luego of Guatemala were meeting. After the letter from the social movement groups was submitted, Sánchez Cerén assured the representatives that the water would not be polluted and that the government would ensure that vital water sources remain clean. "These projects will be analyzed from the point of view of sustainability", said the Salvadorian Vice-President. The Cerro Blanco Project is the only one with an exploration license and it has been in operation [exploration and preparation phases, but not yet mining] since 2006. The Vice-President of Guatemala stated that the government "is keeping a very strict eye" on this project.

Espada said that if the Cerro Blanco project does not comply with "strict environmental regulations", their exploration license will be repealed. The Bi-national Commission that will study the problem will be chaired by the Vice-Chancellor's Offices of both countries. As well, in El Salvador, it will come under the Vice-Ministry of Integration and Economic Promotion, Carlos Castañeda.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION - about and/or how to get involved in efforts in the USA and Canada, to hold Goldcorp Inc, investors in Goldcorp (like the Canada Pension Plan, and numerous pension funds across North America) and other global companies and investors accountable for the harms and violations caused by their companies: info@rightsaction.org, www.rightsaction.org

TO DONATE FUNDS - to indigenous and campesino groups resisting the harms and violations of mining &, hydro-electric dams, make tax deductible donations 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://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

Upon request, Rights Action can provide a proposal of which community organizations resisting the harms and violations caused by mining in Guatemala and Honduras we are working with and channeling your funds to.

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- JOIN our quarterly newsletter list: info@rightsaction.org
- CREATE YOUR OWN email list and re-distribute this and other information
- DAILY NEWS: Watch, listen to and read: www.democracynow.org / 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"; Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"; Dr. Seuss's "Horton Hears a Who";

