

GOLDCORP IMPUNITY WATCH
Rights Action, February 4, 2011

“EVEN THE COWS ARE BEING KILLED BY GOLDCORP’S MINE IN GUATEMALA”

Back from a fact-finding trip in Guatemala to both the Mayan-Qeqchi communities negatively affected by Canadian nickel mining companies (namely HudBay Minerals) and Mayan-Mam communities negatively affected by the Canadian gold mine company Goldcorp Inc., Grahame Russell (Rights Action) files this first report.

The deaths of these cows are added to the list of environmental and health harms, human rights violations and community divisions occurring in and around Goldcorp’s mine in western Guatemala since 2003.

SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC PROFIT, LONG-TERM HARM

With the price of gold near \$1,400/ ounce, North American investors, shareholders and governments are profiting handsomely, even as the impunity with which one more Canadian company – this time Goldcorp – operates contributes to a further worsening of living conditions in the mining affected communities and a worsening of Canada’s reputation and long-term interests.

Claims of respect for the rule of law and democracy aside, with the gutting of the “Canadian Roundtables” process and recommendations, with the rejection of the relatively weak Bill C-300, and with the on-going lack of support for pending Bill C-354, this impunity is deeply a Canadian issue, as well as an international and Guatemalan phenomena.

For more information: info@rightsaction.org, 860-352-2448.

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EVEN THE COWS ARE BEING KILLED BY GOLDCORP’S MINE IN GUATEMALA

By Grahame Russell, February 4, 2011

Goldcorp’s open-pit, cyanide leaching mine is also killing cows in village of the municipality of San Miguel Ixtahuacan (department of San Marcos, Guatemala), and getting away with it with impunity.

On July 24, 2010, a local farmer Faustino Mendez (a Mayan-Mam man from the village of San Jose Ixcanique) came across two of his cows, dead. They had drunk water from a small creek flowing out of, and below Goldcorp’s “San Martin” mine, and fallen dead in the river.





(Photos: ADISMI, July 24, 2010, village of San Jose Ixcanique, San Miguel Ixtahuacan)

This is not the first time this has happened near Goldcorp's mine in Guatemala, but it is the first time it has been documented.

The leading grassroots group in the Goldcorp-harmed communities of San Miguel Ixtahuacan is ADISMI (Association for the Integral Development of SMI). ADISMI produced an excellent 9 minute news report, in Spanish, documenting this story: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMLQoz31zzk>.

In the report, Faustino Mendez explains how he has been a farmer for 35 years, tending to his cows all that time, and this has never happened. When Goldcorp officials came upon the dead cows, just below their mine, there was a discussion about paying Faustino 2,500 quetzales (over U\$300) per cow.

The report then documents an extraordinary conversation between a veterinarian who works for the Goldcorp-funded Sierra Madre foundation, that presents itself as a local NGO. The vet is trying to explain to the campesinos, who have gathered by the dead cows, that these

deaths have nothing to do with the drinking of the water; that these diseases have been around for 1,000,000 years; that the campesinos should get vaccinations for their cows, etc.

Beyond being dumbfounded by the words of the veterinarian, in the pay of Goldcorp, another campesino explains that he has lived and worked there for 50 years and that – like Faustino – has never seen anything like this. No one gathered there believes Goldcorp's vet, but they treat him with respect.

MODUS OPERANDI: DENIAL, IMPUNITY, ... & A LITTLE MONEY

The modus operandi of Goldcorp is the same as with well-documented health and environmental harms that have occurred repeatedly since they began mining: send in supposedly independent experts (this time paid by Goldcorp) to deny any causal link between the issue (this time dead cows, who drank water from a creek flowing just below Goldcorp's mine), and then, separately try and offer the victims a bit of money for their loss!

A NORTH AMERICAN PROBLEM OF IMPUNITY & UNJUST ENRICHMENT

Unless real pressure is brought to bear on Goldcorp from the Canadian government and politicians, and Canadian and American shareholders and investors, there will be no end in sight for the accumulating health and environmental harms and other human rights violations that the local Mayan-Mam people and communities are suffering.

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WHAT TO DO: