

GOLDCORP IN GUATEMALA - IMPUNITY WATCH
Rights Action, July 11, 2011

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**DIODORA HERNANDEZ:
“NO TENGA PENA (DON’T YOU WORRY ABOUT IT),
I CONTINUE IN RESISTANCE TO THE GOLD MINE”**

By Grahame Russell, July 12, 2011 (Updated from earlier article)



(“Don't you worry about it,” (No tenga pena), Diodora Hernandez tells Javier de Leon (ADISMI), during a community radio broadcast, July 8, 2011, “I continue in resistance to the gold mine”. Photo: James Rodriguez, www.mimundo.org)

JULY 7, 2010

Diodora Antonia Hernandez Cinto (a Mayan-Mam campesina woman from the mountainous village of San Jose Nueva Esperanza) was shot point-blank in the head and left for dead by two local men (mine workers) who ran off into the night.

She was shot because she refuses to sell her plot of land to Montana Exploradora, Goldcorp's subsidiary operating an open-pit, mountain-top removal, cyanide-leaching gold and silver mine in the municipality of San Miguel Ixtahuacan, Guatemala.

The bullet went in her right eye, and exited behind her right ear. After a three month hospital stay, Diodora miraculously survived, and returned October 5, 2010 – with a prosthetic eye - to her hut and plot of land where she lives with her daughter, grand-daughter and husband.



(Diodora, in the Roosevelt hospital, Guatemala City, fall 2010)

JULY 8, 2011

On the first anniversary of her assassination attempt, I visited Diodora, along with James Rodriguez (photo-journalist, www.mimundo.org) and Jonathan Treat (American global justice activist living in Oaxaca, jonathantreat2002@yahoo.com). Just after the shooting, I had visited with her son and daughter, outside the Roosevelt hospital, when she was in intensive care. In January 2011, I visited her back in her home. This time, we visited with Diodora in the offices of ADISMI (Association for Integral Development of San Miguel Ixtahuacan), and then drove to her home in San Jose Nueva Esperanza.



(Diodora walks with Carmen Mejia, of ADISMI, outside their office in the community of Maquivil. Photo: Grahame, July 8, 2011)

After the attempt on her life, Rights Action sent a public letter (July 10, 2010, based on an urgent action from ADISMI) to the Canadian government and parliamentarians, to the Canada Pension Plan and other investors, concerning the attempt on the life of Diodora by local men who worked and/or used to work in Goldcorp's mine.

We heard nothing back.

In a letter to ADISMI and Rights Action (July 20, 2010), Goldcorp acknowledged that the two men detained and questioned about the attack, and then released, used to or still worked for Goldcorp:

"I understand that the two men who allegedly committed the assault have been identified and were detained by the police, but were subsequently released. However, I understand that the men have been ordered to appear before the Ministerio Publico in San Marcos to give statements regarding the incident. Both the men are residents of San Miguel Ixtahuacan. One of the two was employed by Montana, but his employment was terminated more than one year ago. The other man is employed by a contractor that provides underground mine development services to Montana at the Marlin Mine."

One year later, no justice has been done for this attempted killing.

THE COSTS OF GOLD

"I bought this plot of land to live on, not to sell it." This, Diodora explains, is why the men tried to assassinate her – because she would not sell her plot of land to Goldcorp.

Before and after the attempt, neighboring men – similarly poor, Mayan Mam campesinos, but who have jobs in the mine - hate her, they ostracize her. After the shooting, a number of them publicly wished that she had died.

Amongst the many environmental and health harms and other human rights violations caused directly or indirectly by Goldcorp's mine, the creating and stimulating of community divisions, hatred and violence is as devastating a result of the mining operation as anything else. Community members who resist company pressures to sell their plots of land are sometimes targets of threats and violence; some have had criminal charges laid against them for a list of trumped up charges.

Diodora appears amazingly well, for a woman who was shot point blank in the head and lost an eye. However, she suffers on-going harms: her right ear, where the bullet exited, is partially deaf; she regularly experiences dizziness and fatigue; around her right eye, she experiences sensitivity to the sun and the heat of their cook stove. She cried, explaining how she used to tend to her animals – sheep and goats – and was able to pasture them and keep them together. Now she gets frustrated and sad, because she is not physically capable of keeping them together – they wander.

She no longer lives in the small house where the attack took place, in the hamlet of Sacmuj. Rather, she lives with her daughter, grand-daughter and husband in a home closer to the main road, right by the mine. Half of the Sacmuj villagers have sold their

plots of land to Goldcorp and gone ... she does not know where. She will not sell either plot of land.



(On a bench in front of their home, Diodora sits with her grand-daughter and daughter Maria, who was an eye-witness to the attempted killing of her mother. Photo: Grahame, July 8, 2011)

A LIFE AT RISK

Now, she has a security guard living with her family, full-time, provided by the government. She lives in a state of constant threat from pro-mining neighbors and the unknown.

Diodora explains that the July 7, 2010 attempt on her life was the culmination of months of threats and acts of aggression committed by company officials or by her neighbors, against her, because she refuses to sell her lots to the company.

Her husband told her something that other men in the community had told him. These men, who work in the mine, explained that one week before her shooting, a company official told them in a meeting in the mine that there would be less work for them because Goldcorp couldn't expand the mine further into San Jose Nueva Esperanza because Diodora wouldn't sell her plot of land.

And then one week later: July 7, 2010. There is no doubt why she was shot.

JUSTICE? NONE

The two men suspected of the killing were released after being questioned and no charges have been filed, as far as I know. After the assassination attempt, officials from the Attorney General's office (Ministerio Publico) asked her daughter Maria questions about what happened. They assured Maria that when her mother was healthy enough, they would come and take her statement as well.

To date, there has been no follow-up on this case. To date, no one has spoken with Diodora. Apparently, the AG's office has also not spoken with Goldcorp about the two men, though Goldcorp has information about them.

In Guatemala, over 98% of all criminal cases go completely unaddressed; 2% get investigated; a tiny percentage get resolved. Everyone knows that the rule of law in Guatemala does not work; that impunity is the norm.

THE PRICE OF GOLD

In the 1990s, when Goldcorp did its initial mining feasibility study, the calculated cost of producing gold was set at approximately \$130 per ounce. They concluded that the project would be profitable if gold were selling at approximately \$270 per ounce, or more. Today, gold is selling at \$1500 ounce. Goldcorp is making almost 10 times as much money, per ounce of gold, that it had guess-timated in its wildest dreams.

The shooting of Diodora is one story about the real prices and costs of gold mining in Guatemala; this is the global "development" model at work.

"HERE I WILL STAY, LIKE A TREE"

Sitting in front of her house, with daughter and grand-daughter, we asked her if she would leave her home and plot of land. She smiled, shook her head: "Aqui me quedo, parado, como un arbol". "Here, I remain, standing, like a tree".

Esta lucha sigue. This struggle continues.

Thank-you Diodora; thank-you ADISMI.

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TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

for relief funds for the family of Diodora and for community based organizations resisting the harms and violations of Canadian mining companies, 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

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FOR MORE INFORMATION – WWW.RIGHTSACTION.ORG

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