

Rights Action
November 8, 2011

Goldcorp Cover-up of Health Harms in Honduras, #1

**COVER-UP #1 - Report by Dr. Juan Almendares:
GOLDCORP (ENTRE MARES) & THE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS HIDE
INFORMATION ABOUT POISONING OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS**



(Lesly Yaritza died at the age of five, on September 25, 2010. Lesly, from the community of Nueva Palo Ralo, had blood levels of 173 mg/dl of lead and 263 mg/dl of arsenic. From birth, Lesly suffered from progressive and increasing acute motor paralysis in the lower limbs. Photo 2007, by Gwendolyn Meyer, while on Rights Action delegation to Siria Valle, Honduras)

BELOW: Report by Dr. Juan Almendares, translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gill.

BACKGROUND

- 10 minute film, by Steven Schnoor, about health and environmental harms caused by Goldcorp in Honduras' Siria Valley, "All that glitters isn't gold - a story of exploitation and resistance": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tmqXc5rX8s>
- In May 2011, Rights Action published two articles about this "cover-up". Background articles available on request.

NEEDED

Funds for health relief and demands for comprehensive reparations and compensation, paid for by Goldcorp and the government of Honduras, for the Goldcorp harmed communities of the Siria Valley. (See below)

WHAT TO DO: see below

MORE INFORMATION

Grahame Russell, info@rightsaction.org, 860-352-2448, and Dr. Juan Almandarez, almandarez.bonilla@gmail.com.

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COVER-UP: GOLDCORP (ENTRE MARES) & THE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS HIDE INFORMATION ABOUT POISONING OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS

By Dr. Juan Almandarez, September, 2011
(former Dean of the Faculty of Medical Sciences and former Vice-President of the National Autonomous University of Honduras)

As a doctor, physician and scientific researcher, as a member of the Medical College of Honduras and as a believer in the principle of a science with social and ethical conscience, I present our analysis of the conclusions of the Forensic Report on the levels of metal and other substances in the blood and urine of a part of the population of the Siria Valley, Honduras, resulting from the operation of the Goldcorp Inc. (Entre Mares) gold mine.

The Forensic Report, commissioned by the Honduran Government, is based on blood and urine analyses carried out by the Government itself in 2007. It was not until four years later that the Government started releasing the results.

1- OBJECTIVE

Analyze the Forensic Report (Number 4046-2007, Crime and Forensic Sciences Laboratory, Number 1669-2007, Chemical Toxicology Laboratory of the Government of the Republic of Honduras) based on laboratory data from 61 people of the community of El Pedernal, and one person from the community of Nueva Palo Ralo, in the Siria Valley, Honduras, all of whom were exposed to cyanide-based open-pit industrial mining – the "San Martín" mine, owned by Goldcorp Inc. (Entre Mares).

2- INTRODUCTION

Mining exploration and exploitation in the Siria Valley (municipalities of San Ignacio, Cedros and El Porvenir), began in 1995 and intensified after Hurricane Mitch (1998). The General Mining Law was approved on November 30, 1998, one month after Hurricane Mitch. It was published in the official "la Gaceta" on February 6, 1999 and came into force in 2000.

This General Mining Law was approved without any public participation or debate, in a special session of the Congress of Honduras during the crisis caused by Hurricane Mitch.

The mining operation in the Siria Valley, the "San Martín" mine, was originally owned by Glamis Gold Ltd. Subsequently, it was taken over by Goldcorp Inc. In Honduras, the San Martín mine (intensive open-pit, cyanide-based, mining exploitation) is registered under the name of Entre Mares Honduras Ltd, a subsidiary of Goldcorp Inc. The mining concession contract was signed on January 10, 2000.

Clause #10 of the San Martín mining concession states the following:

"This contract will be cancelled under the following circumstances: Any effect on or harm to water, air quality, flora, fauna, the community and the national ecological system will be considered sufficient grounds for the Dirección de Fomento a la Minería to deem the present Mining Contract cancelled."

The area conceded to Goldcorp (Entre Mares) consists of 23,000 hectares in the Siria Valley, which includes the municipalities of San Ignacio, El Porvenir y Cedros.

ONE OUNCE = 20 TONS OF ROCK AND SOIL

To extract an ounce of gold, mining moves 20 tons of rock and soil; it uses between 200 and 320 gallons of water per minute. In its operations, the company has used up to 60 thousand gallons of water daily. This has caused contamination of water and scarcity of water in neighbouring communities, negative impact on human and animal health and increased poverty.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

In 2004, arsenic poisoning (as determined by a study carried out by the government DEFOMIN office regulating mining, 2004) was detected in Nueva Palo Ralo, over a period of four years. The poisoning was traced to a well providing water for human consumption. Local community members had been consuming water containing levels of arsenic that significantly exceeded levels set by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Nueva Palo Ralo is a community that had been relocated by Goldcorp (Entre Mares); as part of the forced relocation of Nueva Palo Ralo, Goldcorp had constructed this well. Some 4 or 5 years later, the company simply closed the well without notifying the community.

A 2006 analysis of water used for human consumption in the community of El Pedernal (study done by F. Bianchini, 2006) produced the following data on levels of metal:

Arsenic 330 mg/L (WHO acceptable level = 10 mg/L)
Lead 160 mg/L (WHO = 10 mg/L)

Hexavalent chromium 220 mg/L (WHO = 50mg/L)

Lead and arsenic were also found in the blood of 10 people in El Pedernal and Nueva Palo Ralo. 100% of these cases presented levels considered dangerous by the WHO.

One girl from Nueva Palo Ralo had blood levels of 173 mg/dl of lead and 263 mg/dl of arsenic. (F. Bianchini 2006). The child was suffering from progressive and increasing acute motor paralysis in the lower limbs. She died at the age of five on September 25, 2010.



(Lesly Yaritza died at the age of five, on September 25, 2010. Lesly, from the community of Nueva Palo Ralo, had blood levels of 173 mg/dl of lead and 263 mg/dl of arsenic. From birth, Lesly suffered from progressive and increasing acute motor paralysis in the lower limbs. Photo 2007, by Gwendolyn Meyer, while on Rights Action delegation to Siria Valle, Honduras)

In September 2006, in response to studies carried out by Bianchini, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (SERNA) officially confirmed that the Siria Valley was contaminated.

On July 25, 2007, as per administrative ruling 30-R 2007, SERNA fined Entre Mares (Goldcorp) for one million Lempiras, for contaminating the environment.

As well, in 2008, water samples studied by the Government (Water Quality and Chemical Contaminant Laboratory (CESCO)) in January, February and March of 2008, and by Caritas (Catholic Church) indicated the existence of higher than acceptable levels of lead, cadmium and calcium in water used for human consumption in El Pedernal and in Escanito. There was no analysis of arsenic levels.

THERE HAVE DENOUNCEMENTS OF THE CONTAMINATION AND HEALTH PROBLEMS SINCE THE SAN MARTIN PROJECT WAS APPROVED

Since the San Martin mining Project was approved, the Siria Valley Environmental Committee, and a number of Honduran organizations, have protested against it through activism and formal complaints to the National Congress, the Public Ministry, the Secretary of Health, the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Environment (SERNA); however, the complaints have been ignored and no information has been supplied on the poisoning of human beings and the contamination of the environment.

Since 2004, Rights Action and other international organizations have denounced the various harms to the environment and the health of the community to Goldcorp Inc., Goldcorp stockholders and investors (including the Canada Pension Plan), the press and the Canadian Parliament, as well as officials from former Canadian governments; in these cases as well, the denouncements have been ignored.

THE STUDY CARRIED OUT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS – 2007

In 2007, pressure from the national and international community concerning the impact of mining on health and the environment forced the Honduran Government to carry out a study of 62 people ... but the results of these analyses would not be revealed to the victims until April, 2011!

In February 2008, Goldcorp (Entre Mares) announced its Mine Closure Plan, and formalized the process in April without taking into account the opinions of the communities with regard to harms to the environment and health of community members; as well, Goldcorp ignored the results of the study the Government of Honduras had carried out in 2007 – these results were covered up until 2011.

(Even though the Mine Closure Plan had been widely discussed, almost everyone believes that in 2008 and to this day, Goldcorp (Entre Mares) wants to continue mining in Honduras and in the Siria Valley.)

The way the Mine Closure Plan was implemented was strongly criticized in November 2008, when the mining impacted area was visited by Dr. Paul Younger, Professor of Geochemical Engineering at the University of Newcastle, England. Professor Younger declared that dangerous acid drainage produced by Goldcorp (Entre Mares) was causing heavy metal contamination that would last for more than a century.

3- SYNTHESIS OF THE FORENSIC REPORT – 2007

On October 16, 2007, Luis Vidal Ramos Reina, Director of Forensic Medicine at the Criminal and Forensic Sciences Laboratory, released a Forensic Report on the analysis of blood and urine samples of 61 people of El Pedernal and of one case from Nueva Palo Ralo. The study aimed to determine levels of heavy metal contamination and other chemical substances.

The analyses were carried out on August 16, 2007 and ... results were not given to the people examined until four years later.

The analysis indicated the presence of dangerous concentrations of: cyanide, mercury, lead and arsenic. Two groups were identified for the purposes of the study:

The "case" group, or people showing clinical symptoms of illness, and the "reference" group, or those showing less serious symptoms.

The data was based on samples from 61 "case" and "reference" people from El Pedernal and one person from Nueva Palo Ralo. A total of 62 people were studied – 67% of whom were children (girls and boys). Adults (men and women) represented 33% of the population of El Pedernal. Some levels of lead in children were found to be higher than 30 mg/dl.

We are providing data on lead only, as this was the only metal studied in blood samples. We do not know why arsenic and mercury levels were not analyzed.

In both groups, concentrations of lead exceeded WHO acceptable levels by 10 mg/dl (see figures 1 and 2 below).

FIGURE NO. 1
Results of samples taken from children (Pedernal)

Number of samples taken: 41 (20 boys, 21 girls)
Number of "cases": 18 (8 boys, 10 girls)
Number of "references": 23 (12 boys, 11 girls)

CATEGORIES AVERAGE LEVEL OF LEAD IN THE BLOOD, MG/DL

"Cases"	13,61
"References"	12,97
Girls	14,08
Boys	12,38
Girls/Cases	14,17
Boys/Cases	12,90
Girls/References	13,99
Boys/References	12,04

FIGURE NO.2
Results of adult samples (Pedernal)

Total number of samples taken: 20 (6 men, 14 women)
Number of cases: 14 (5 men, 9 women)
Number de references: 6 (1 man, 5 women)

CATEGORIES AVERAGE LEVEL OF LEAD IN THE BLOOD, MG/DL

"Cases"	12,47
"References"	11,47
Women	11,33
Men	14,12
Women/Case	11,30
Men/Case	14,56
Women/Reference	11,39
Men/Reference	11,87

In samples taken from Palo Ralo (authorization has been given to provide this information), levels of lead in the blood are 13.4 mg/dl; however, levels in previous studies had been deemed dangerous to health according to WHO acceptable levels for both lead and arsenic in the blood. (F. Bianchini 2006).

The clinical evaluation of Palo Ralo samples found cases of hyperpigmentation, coordination difficulties, and pins and needles, which are indicative of chronic arsenic and lead poisoning.

The Forensic Report made the following conclusions with regard to lead:

"The average level of lead detected in the blood of the "case" group is 13,33 mg/dl, and this is not significantly different from the level found in the blood of the "reference" group, which showed an average level of 12,38 mg/dl."

"Some patients in both groups surpassed the levels of external references, according to their age and other conditions."

"Reference levels quoted by the Forensic Report include those of the Centre for Disease Control in the United States and those of the WHO for adults."

4- OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FORENSIC REPORT

There is no baseline study of the concentrations of heavy metal, semi-metals and other chemical substances in the Siria Valley before Goldcorp (Entre Mares) began its mining exploitation.

Both the DEFOMIN (state body regulating mining) and the CESCO (state-run centre for the control of pollutants), as well as studies by F. Bianchini and the Forensic Report (2007) in question, provide evidence of the presence of heavy metals in water used for human consumption, as well as in the blood of people exposed to the mining industry in the Siria Valley. These levels of heavy metals exceed limits set by the WHO and are harmful to the health of local people.

The Forensic Report only analyzed the level of lead in the blood samples and that of arsenic and mercury in the urine samples. However, the technical criteria for the report included analysis of mercury and arsenic in blood samples and of other metals such as cadmium magnesium, chromium and nickel, which had previously been detected in drinking water.

The fact that cyanide, metals and semi-metals were not detected and that there was no follow-up on the health of the affected people indicates that the sample testing was inadequate and as well, that the Government and Goldcorp (Entre Mares) have been irresponsible with respect to human life and the environment.

Above and beyond the irresponsibility, they participated in a cover-up. For four years, they hid this information, further aggravating the bad health of the people affected by the Goldcorp mining operation.

Our own clinical studies, carried out over the last 10 years in communities affected by Goldcorp's gold mining operation, have revealed serious skin and hair loss problems, respiratory track, nervous system and eye problems – all of which can be attributed to

contamination by heavy metals that are dangerous to the health of the present and future generations.

Goldcorp's Mine Closure Plan was implemented post factum, in other words, after the mining disaster that had lasted for almost ten years. The results of all preceding studies were ignored. The results of the government's 2007 study were ignored (and concealed). There was no consultation with the Siria Valley Environmental Committee nor with health and ecological professionals.

Apart from all of the above, national and international scientists all agree that there is acid drainage caused by the mining company and if not rectified, it will affect the Siria Valley for more than a century, as more heavy metals are released into the environment.

Nonetheless, Goldcorp (Entre Mares) was fined a million Lempiras (just 50 thousand dollars) for pollution by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment. But the company was exempted from paying by the Supreme Court because DEFOMIN did not provide evidence of pollution! This is a clear indication of corruption on the part of both the company and the State institution.

THE PAINFUL COVER-UP OF THE LABORATORY DATA

Recommendations made by the CDC and the WHO indicate that the data on lead levels was sufficient to warrant a more serious, responsible study and follow-up on the cases, above all on those of children, who are still growing and more vulnerable to exposure, especially to lead.

5- CONCLUSIONS

The Forensic Report, according to recommendations of the CDC and the WHO, indicates that the people from Pedernal who were examined have serious lead poisoning.

The Government's failure to carry out blood sample analysis of mercury, arsenic and other metals and semi-metals is incomprehensible and appears to be intentional negligence – it is urgent that these studies be carried out.

The Government of Honduras and Goldcorp are socially, judicially and ethically responsible for concealing information for almost four years from people who were subjects of laboratory examinations.

Based on previous laboratory and clinical studies, and given the existence of acid drainage, it is evident that there has been serious harm to the environment and human health and that the harms will be more severe with time.

6- RECOMMENDATIONS

Carry out an epidemiological and ecotoxicity study of the population and the environment of the Siria Valley, measuring levels of heavy metals, semi-metals and other chemical substances in surface as well as underground water and in wells. As well, there should be systematic monitoring of the inhabitants of San Ignacio, El Porvenir and Cedros and areas that have been affected by mining.

Carry out a longitudinal epidemiological study to evaluate harms to physical and mental health caused by lead, arsenic, and other metals and semi-metals.

Investigate the premature death of the little girl from Nueva Palo Ralo who presented high levels of lead and cyanide.

On behalf of Goldcorp Inc., compensate the population of the Siria Valley for harms to their health and to the flora and fauna of the valley, as well as for other social, environmental and economic harms. The compensation plan must be a combination of economic compensation to harmed families and communities and a short and long-term medical attention plan, based on symptoms and medical, psychological and social needs of every person and family affected.

By Dr. Juan Almendarez, September, 2011
almendarez.bonilla@gmail.com

TO MAKE TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

To provide funds to health harmed people in the Siria Valle, and to support demands and struggle for complete reparations and compensation, 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: www.rightsaction.org
In Canada: <https://www.canadahelps.org/DonationDetails.aspx?cookieCheck=true>
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FOR DONATION OF STOCK: Stock donations can be done anonymously. Have your stockbroker contact info@rightsaction.org)

WHAT TO DO – A “CANADIAN” PROBLEM

Please keep on sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to your local media, to Canadian politicians and government officials, and to Goldcorp that – like most North American resource extraction companies around the world – is operating with the full support of North American governments.

Please send copies to pension funds across North America – like the Canada Pension Plan – that are invested in Goldcorp and in most North American resource extraction companies around the world, with no concern for environmental, health or human rights concerns.

MORE INFORMATION:

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