

Rights Action – December 21, 2011

GOLDCORP IN GUATEMALA

More proof of environmental and health harms

Continuing impunity

BELOW: news article about recent water studies that again have documented water contamination near Goldcorp's mine

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MORE INFORMATION:

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WHAT TO DO: see below

HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF HEAVY METALS FOUND IN RIVERS

[Near Goldcorp's cyanide-leaching, open-pit/ mountain-top removal mine in Guatemala]

By Aroldo Marroquin, PRENSA LIBRE newspaper, December 10, 2011, translated for Rights Action by Rosalind Gill

COPAE (Pastoral Commission for Peace and Ecology), of the Diocese of San Marcos, has confirmed that the waters of the Tzalá and Quivichil Rivers that flow in the vicinity of [Goldcorp Inc's] Marlin mine, in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, contain high concentrations of potentially lethal metals.

Josué Navarro, of Copae, has confirmed that according to the Commission's fourth report on monitoring and analysis of water quality, the water from the rivers contains a high concentration of heavy metals, especially cyanide, arsenic, aluminium, magnesium and nitrate. He pointed out that it had been recommended to the State that they implement precautionary measures to suspend operations at the Marlin mine but the Government did not act on the order issued by the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights.

Navarro said that there is cause for concern because the presence of arsenic and cyanide indicates that metals are being discharged from the tailings pond at the mine. Meanwhile, a number of communities in the municipality are drinking contaminated water and this will certainly have repercussions for the health of these people. He added that Copae representatives had laboratory analyses performed on water from the rivers that flow in the vicinity of the mine.

Community member, Javier de León said that the Copae reports were accurate and that the Government should do something to prevent a tragedy. "There are people from San Miguel Ixtahuacán working at the mine and they are treating us like enemies because we are endorsing the Copae reports."

Amílcar Ruiz Téllez, departmental delegate from the Ministry of the Environment, stated that the results of these reports cannot be dismissed, because the report parameters can be used to deal with situations that arise in the future. "There is also the study carried out by the environmental monitoring group - Asociación de Monitoreo Ambiental Comunitario – which concludes that concentrations of metals do not exceed allowed limits. We will have to see what the repercussions will be – good or bad," said Ruiz.

Prensa Libre tried to contact the Marlin mine spokesperson Maritza Ruiz by telephone, but she did not wish to respond.

WHAT TO DO?

Since 1995, Rights Action has been funding and working to eliminate the underlying causes of poverty, environmental destruction, repression, racism and impunity in Guatemala and Honduras, as well as in Chiapas (Mexico) and El Salvador. The Canadian Rights Action Foundation, founded in 1999, is independent from and works in conjunction with Rights Action (USA) that was founded originally in 1983. Since 1995, Grahame Russell and Annie Bird have been co-directors of Rights Action. Grahame is founder and director of Rights Action (Canada).

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Sponsored by Rights Action, and lead by Grahame Russell (Rights Action co-director). For information: info@rightsaction.org

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RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"

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Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who"

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