

Bullets fired at Hondurans rallying against illegal gold mine “owned” by Canadians

Canadian “owners” label community members “terrorists”

Rights Action update

<https://mailchi.mp/rightsaction/bullets-fired-at-hondurans-rallying-against-illegal-gold-mine-owned-by-canadians>

In this 5 minute iphone coverage (presented on the “Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y La Justicia” facebook page) witness the tense stand-off April 5, 2018, between community members in the Copal Abajo community of Choluteca, an extraordinarily dry region of southern Honduras, as they rally to pressure mining company personnel to leave the area. Shots are fired apparently from people inside the mining pickup trucks; rocks are thrown at the trucks; no one is hurt, this time.

- View: https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1668015713292321&id=896060573821176

In this 2 minute news report (Conexihon TV), shot February 22, 2018, community members protest against the “Aguila Dorada” (golden eagle) mining company (incorporated and operated by Canadians) trying to illegally operate a gold mine in Copal Abajo, Choluteca. The Canadian “owners” call them “terrorists”.

- View: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=OglW-mR-EIY

Below, a full article setting out the short history of yet one more illegal, widely opposed Canadian mining operation in Honduras.

Will the corrupt, repressive Honduran State (fully backed by the U.S. and Canada) soon carry out pro-mining repression local community members – “terrorists” – who are desperately trying to protect their meager water sources and community well-being?



(Copal Abajo community members protest illegal mining operation in their rural, very dry region of Choluteca, southern Honduras.)

'Copal Abajo' Community Gives Canadian Mining Company 60 Days to Leave

By Conexihon, February 22, 2018

<http://www.conexihon.hn/index.php/dh/582-comunidad-copal-abajo-da-60-dias-para-que-minera-canadiense-se-retire>

(Translated by Rights Action)

Copal Abajo, Choluteca - Conexihon) -- A giant gold processing mill stands just meters from the school, the ravine and the very heart of the Copal Abajo community, in the southern department of Choluteca. Its installation has caused considerable opposition among the population who gave them an ultimatum last February 18 in a community general assembly, demanding they leave the area and remove the machinery.

The "Aguila Dorada" company (Golden Eagle), owned by Canadian capital, operates without permission, according to case number 05-2017 at the Honduran Institute of Geology and Mines ([INHGEOMIN](#)).

The Aguila Dorada S.A. de C.V. mining company began its operations without environmental permits and a mitigation agreement.

In September 2017, the community had a town hall meeting coordinated by the mayor's office in Choluteca. In this meeting 371 community members voted decisively 'no' to the mining facility.

Nevertheless, ignoring good practices, Honduran Law and the will expressed by the community at the Town Hall meeting, the company installed the mill to process gold and other precious metals.

"We totally oppose any mining operation. We don't want it here because it will contaminate everything. In the community there is a ravine that barely has any water left in it, using it to wash gold is just too much", lamented one of the community members at the assembly.

The few existing water sources are in danger due to their close proximity to the gold panning facility.

Despite the fact the case clearly establishes that they cannot operate, on February 15, Canadian businesspeople lashed out at the population who came to the mining company's offices.

"You are all terrorists, your government already gave us permission and I can be here" one of the North American owners of the machinery screamed at the population, while briefly adding that the town hall meeting was "illegal".

Watch news report (2 minutes, Conexihon TV) ~ Canadian mining company "Aguila Dorada" tries to illegally operate gold mine in Copal Abajo, Choluteca. Community members protest peacefully. Canadian "owners" call them "terrorists": https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=OglW-mR-EIY

A community member from the area, Otto Vilchez, who owns the lands where the mining company operates, told the local media that "it is creating employment in Copal Abajo and surrounding areas, and that the work plant isn't to extract precious metals (gold) from the ground but from the produced mineral materials brought there from El Corpus, for which they use sufficient water."

They water they need is from special ponds and they use it to extract the precious metal, and recycle it many times. They are abiding by the country's laws, he stated.

According to Denia Castillo from the Network of Lawyers Defending Human Rights in the Southern Zone, "the company began to hire people and train them. There is a very tense situation in the community."

The Honduran Center to Promote Community Development ([CEHPRODEC](#)) informed that there are 17 metal mines of gold, silver and copper that use a total of 11,630 hectares of land in Choluteca. The concessions for exploration are located in the communities of: Clavo Rico, Guajiniquil, Baldoquin, La Moloncosa, Potosí, Ojo de Agua 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, Quebracho, Yoloran 1 and 2, San Felipe, Cerro Colorado, El Jocote, Samaria and Maya II.

The report "All that Glitters Is Not Gold" by the organization [Peace Brigades International](#) (PBI), notes that mining has caused significant problems to Honduran populations, in particular: the San Martín mine in the Siria Valley, which was operated by the Canadian company Goldcorp Inc. (and its local subsidiary, Minerales Entre Mares) between 2000 and 2008. It was finally closed because of the countless complaints of environmental contamination and human rights violations.

Palo Ralo is a community in the municipality of San Ignacio in El Porvenir (Francisco Morazán) that had been displaced by Goldcorp/Entre Mares. There is insufficient water in the new location where they were displaced to, and they lack conditions to continue living there.

The San Andrés mine, of the Canadian company Aura Minerals (and its subsidiary company MINOSA - Minerales de Occidente S.A) located in the Department of Copán. Many complaints have been filed since 2006 because of cyanide contaminated water spills, and these spills have occurred close to the Lara River.

Chronology of the Canadian-owned "Aguila Dorada" mining operation

On February 16, 2017, engineer Giovanni Comito, from Montreal, Canada, and a specialist in metals, Edmonst Jean, from Quebec, Canada, claimed to be passing through the city of Choluteca. They gave a power of attorney to the lawyer

Kenneth Adiel Bonilla Osorto to represent them in any legal action in favor of their mining company.

On March 8, 2017, the mining company's certificate of incorporation was authorized by a Notary Public in the city of Choluteca. This document includes the Canadians and the lawyer. According to this document, the mining company has 6,000 Lempiras maximum capital, with Giovanni Comito as the main investor, owning 75% of this capital, and Jean with 15% and Bonilla Osorto with 10%.

On April 4, 2017, the Environmental Unit of the Municipality of Choluteca verified that Aguila Dorada S.A. de C.V. was established in the facilities owned by Luis Armando Vílchez, resident of the Copal Abajo community, and that the company would focus on the exploitation of the produced materials, using a grinder, and these produced mineral materials would be brought from different municipalities in the region.

On July 26, 2017, the lawyer Kenneth Adiel Bonilla Osorto, power of attorney of Águila Dorada S.A. de C.V., went to INHGEOMIN to request the concession and installation rights for the mine. The request failed to include permission to use the water, the type of materials that would be used, the diagram of the facility, the procedures to treat waste and an explanation of the distance between this facility and the population, and agricultural activities.

On July 31, 2017, members of the Copal Abajo community in the municipality of Choluteca, took over the access routes to this community to prevent the entry of trucks with dirt or produced mineral materials, from the municipality of El Corpus, since it was clear that it was for gold panning.

Community members from Copal Abajo take over the highway on July 31, 2017. /Photo: La Tribuna.

On August 1, 2017, the General Secretary of INHGEOMIN sent the scant documentation received to the Mine, Geology, Environment and Security Unit.

On August 1, 2017, ruling 33-2017 of the Mine, Geology, Environment and Security Unit warns the company to abstain from any mining activity due to the lack of an environmental license and agreement on mitigation measures.

On August 8, 2017 the Mining Unit issued its ruling. The company failed to present more than 15 elements required for the concession, including key information, details about operations, details about the general process, characteristics of grinding, transportation, personnel, final products among others....

On August 17, 2017, on accordance with the law, INHGEOMIN gave the company 10 business days to complete the complementary information required for this request. This expired on October 10th of last year.

September 25, 2017, the municipal corporation of Choluteca and the departmental governor certified that 371 community members, which is 100% of the citizens registered in the census, voted against mining in the community. This town hall meeting took place in the Policarpo Bonilla School.

On October 30, 2017, the community leadership of Copal Abajo presented a statement of opposition to the mining facility, which was included in the case file.

On December 12, 2017, the Institute of Mining received a request for a record of registration of all requests for mining concessions in the Copal Abajo community. On this same date, a request to declare expired the procedure for mining concession of the Aguila Dorada S.A. de C.V. company, because more than ten days had passed since the date of notification.

Permission to start a business had been granted by the Municipality of Choluteca without the date of issue, however, it expired last December 31.

On January 4, 2018, the Secretary of INHGEOMIN issued proof of notification by email to the legal representative of the company to inform him that the legal action brought forth by the Copal Abajo community was accepted for review by the court.

On January 31, 2018, in compliance Code #5, Article 72, of the Law of Administrative Procedures, INHGEOMIN confirmed that the administrative file under the name of COPAL ABAJO states that the community of Copal Abajo is free of mining concessions.

On February 18, 2018, the community assembly of Copal Abajo gave the mining company 60 days to remove the machinery.

Why Hondurans Flee North

The U.S. and Canadian governments and North American businesses and investors (hydro-electric dams, mining, African palm, tourism, cattle, fruit, etc.) are maintaining profitable relations with the anti-democratic, corrupt, repressive government in Honduras, turning a blind eye to and in effect benefitting from repression, human rights violations, corruption and impunity.

U.S. and Canadian problems

Keep sending copies of this information, and your own letters, to families, friends and networks, to your own elected politicians and media, to your pension and investment funds, asking: Why our governments – as public policy -, and our companies and investment firms benefit from and turn a blind eye to the poverty, repression and violence, and environmental and health harms in Guatemala and Honduras?

More information

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- Honduras Solidarity Network: Karen Spring, spring.kj@gmail.com

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To support the development, human rights, environmental defense and emergency relief work of community groups in Honduras and Guatemala trying to implement their own development, human rights and environmental defense and emergency relief projects, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

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