

Rights Action

info@rightsaction.org • www.rightsaction.org • June 2011

This Is How The Global "Free Trade" Model Works

We dedicate this newsletter to Ilse Velasquez & Maria Margarita Chub Che & to their families & communities

Dear friends,

With your trust and donations, we are grateful to fund and work with people and organizations in Guatemala and Honduras, and in El Salvador and Chiapas, who are involved in hard and sad, but necessary and inspiring struggles to end repression and impunity, to demand justice and real democracy, and to design their own community development and environmental justice projects. To date in 2011, we have channeled over \$225,000 to our partner groups and to families of victims of repression. Below, we summarize some of the groups, struggles and people we are supporting.

- To make tax-deductible donations in Canada and USA: See below
- To join our listserv: www.rightsaction.org
- Rights Action's Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Rights-Action/176850879028427?ref=ts>

Thank-you and please send us your questions and comments.

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Make checks payable to "Rights Action" and mail to the appropriate US or Canadian office.

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GUATEMALA

Assassination of a Poor, Mayan Qeqchi Woman

TO FURTHER THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF PRODUCERS OF AFRICAN PALM TREES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF DIESEL BIO-FUEL

We are saddened and enraged by one more assassination carried out in the interests of the global “free trade” economic development model. At midnight, June 4, 2011, Maria Margarita Chub Che, a Mayan Qeqchi mother of four, midwife and community leader, was shot dead as she bathed behind her small home in the Polochic valley, eastern Guatemala.



Wearing a green güipil, with a towel over her shoulder, Maria Chub (woman on left in photo) participated in a public march, May 28, 2011, to commemorate the March 28, 1978 Panzos massacre of Mayan Qeqchi villagers.

Maria Chub was targeted because she organized her community to defend their land and homes against the greed of land-owners who, backed by the Guatemala army, police and private death squads, are violently and illegally evicting Qeqchi communities in the Polochic valley. With international financing, these land-owners are producing African Palm trees and sugar cane dedicated to the production of diesel bio-fuel.

[RIGHTS ACTION is channeling emergency relief funds to the families of wounded and killed, and to hundreds of forcibly evicted families.]

HONDURAS

Killing of a Teacher, Ilse Velasquez

AS PART OF EDUCATION-PRIVATIZATION SCHEME BY MILITARY-BACKED REGIME

Ilse Velasquez, a 59 year-old teacher, lost consciousness on the street after a tear-gas canister fired by police and soldiers struck her head. Toxic smoke that surrounded her affected her respiratory system. Moments later, Ilse was hit by a car, driving wildly in the melee of live bullets and clouds of tear-gas, that caused internal bruising. Soon after, Ilse died in an emergency room.

Along with tens of thousands of Hondurans in the pro-democracy movement, Ilse had been protesting the education-privatization plans of the military backed regime. Since the June 2009 military coup, 100s of pro-democracy activists have been killed and assassinated.

DISAPPEARANCE OF HER BROTHER — MANFREDO VELASQUEZ

Ilse was a long-time member of COFADEH (Committee of Relatives of Detained and Disappeared in Honduras). In the 1980s, when Honduras was also controlled by a military regime, Ilse's brother Manfredo Velasquez was disappeared. COFADEH:

"Ilse and her family were tireless fighters for truth and justice during the time of enforced disappearances in our country, under the doctrine of "national security" in the eighties. The disappearance of Manfredo Velásquez was the first case of human rights violations known to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in which the State of Honduras was convicted. Through to today, the government of Honduras has not complied with the Court's resolution to investigate and punish those responsible."

The Honduran Resistance Front, which coordinates demonstrations against the abuses and policies of 'de facto' regime, blames the regime for the Ilse's death. Witnesses reported seeing police and military drinking alcohol before attacking demonstrators.

[RIGHTS ACTION thanks those donors who have enabled us to channel over \$200,000 to the pro-democracy movement in Honduras since the June 2009 coup. This work and struggle continue. We ask for your continued support.]

GUATEMALA

Mayan Women Victims of Gang Rapes Announce Lawsuit AGAINST CANADIAN MINING COMPANY HUSBAY MINERALS

Earlier this year, we reported on a wrongful death suit filed by the Klippensteins law firm in Canada, December 1, 2010, on behalf of their client Angelica Choc against HudBay Minerals nickel mining company, for the targeted killing of her husband Adolfo Ich.

Now, a second case has been filed against HudBay by Klippensteins. On March 28, 2011, Rosa Elbira Coc Ich, and ten other indigenous Mayan Qeqchi women, announced a lawsuit against HudBay relating to rapes suffered by them.

On January 17, 2007, the eleven women were gang-raped by mining company security personnel, police and military during the illegal and violent expulsion of 100 families from their farms and homes in the community of "Lote 8", municipality of El Estor, Guatemala. These evictions were sought by HudBay in relation to its "Fenix" mining project.



11 Mayan Qeqchi women from Lote 8. Photo, 2010: www.mimundo.org.

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- View on YouTube: “El Estor Evictions”
- For information about both cases: www.chocversushudbay.org

[RIGHTS ACTION supports Mayan Qeqchi people and organizations seeking justice for these and other mining-related human rights violations and defending their lands and territories against harms and incursions by mining companies, in the El Estor region, and by African palm and sugar cane producers in the nearby Polochic valley region.]

HONDURAS

Return of President Zelaya

A STRUGGLE IN HONDURAS OF THE AMERICAS FOR THE AMERICAS

Rights Action thanks and honors the Honduran pro-democracy movement, coordinated by the National Resistance Front, for the return of President Mel Zelaya ousted by a US and Canadian backed military coup in June 2009.

- View at www.therealnews.com: “Massive turnout for Zelaya launches new chapter of Honduran struggle”

We thank those North American activists, journalists, politicians, etc, that have worked *in solidarity with* the Honduras pro-democracy movement and *in alliance with* them: given the role played by the governments of the USA and Canada in supporting the military-backed regime in Honduras, North Americans know this is our problem.

No — No justice has been done for the military coup itself, let alone the suffering and death caused by State repression since the coup.

No — The governments of the USA and Canada have not been held to account for their support for the coup and ensuring 2 years of repression.

Yes — Resistance to the regime has come at a cost of repression and suffering to Honduran women and men, boys and girls in the pro-democracy movement.

But, even given all this, the return of President Zelaya is an important step forward. The coup regime has not gotten completely away with their crime. Repression and State terrorism have not won the day.

[The pro-democracy work and struggle continue. We ask for your continued support.]



GUATEMALA

Elections But No Democracy

US GOVERNMENT GLOSSES OVER WAR CRIME ACCUSATIONS AGAINST LEADING GUATEMALAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

In September 2011, Guatemala will have presidential elections. Likely, the North American media will give uncritical coverage to these “elections”, not reporting on the backdrop: on-going, systemic violations of human rights; chronic impoverishment and exploitation of a majority of Guatemalans; and the fundamental lack of democracy and rule of law.

A Wikileaks State Department cable, published April 14, 2011 (Spanish newspaper El Pais), exposed US Ambassador to Guatemala Stephan McFarland’s dismissal of strong allegations that front running candidate, General Otto Perez Molina, participated in war crimes.

Guatemalan criminals, who gained political and economic power during the US-backed military governments (1954-1990s) that followed the 1954 CIA-coup in Guatemala, continue to hold onto power today even after almost 20 years of United Nations commissions focused on disarming, exposing and prosecuting the clandestine networks of criminal power.

Wikileaks cables expose one of the reasons why: the US willingness to conduct ‘business as usual’ with those implicated in these networks.

OTTO PEREZ MOLINA: CIA ASSET & GENERAL DURING TIME OF STATE TERRORISM

Perez Molina is a strong supporter of big business and free trade, and enjoys a history of good relations with the US government. Journalist Alan Nairn reported in April 1995 that Perez Molina had been on the CIA payroll. When Perez Molina ran for president in 2007, he gained the reputation as being the embassy’s favorite candidate.

In the leaked cable, McFarland acknowledged that Perez Molina was a former head of military intelligence and commanded the army detachment in the Department of Quiche during the conflict. These facts alone are sufficient to demonstrate Perez Molina’s participation in war crimes as an intellectual author, and possibly as a material author — almost 300 massacres were carried in the Quiche department during the worst years of State repression and genocide.

In addition, journalists have implicated Perez Molina in the killing of Judge Edgar Ramiro Elias Ogaldez who was involved in the investigations of the 1994 murders of two Mayan Presbyterian pastors and of the 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Jose Gerardi. Military officials were being investigated in both these cases.

That Perez Molina has never been prosecuted is not surprising given that no soldier has yet been prosecuted for the genocide and other war crimes during Guatemala’s armed conflict which resulted in over 250,000 victims. Publicly denouncing Perez Molina is dangerous, especially since those who know about his involvement in crimes during the decades of State repression and genocide also know he may be involved today in crimes that he and other ex-military intelligence and death squads continue to commit, now as part of organized crime networks.

Elections but no democracy in Guatemala.

[RIGHTS ACTION supports community based human rights and pro-democracy groups in Guatemala seeking justice, an end to impunity, and to build a real democratic country and State.]

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HONDURAS

Goldcorp & Honduran Regime

COVER-UP BLOOD POISONING AT "SAN MARTIN" MINE

Since 2007, Goldcorp Inc and the government of Honduras have covered up information about blood poisoning and related health problems caused by Goldcorp's open-pit, cyanide leaching "San Martin" mine in the Siria Valley, department of Francisco Morazan, central Honduras.

- View on Youtube: "All That Glitters Isn't Gold — 10 min. trailer"

Though Goldcorp suspended its mining operation in 2008, villagers in towns near the mine site suffer recurring health harms, even today; local residents — as well as cows — have died of health problems likely caused by the mine.

BLOOD & URINE STUDIES IN 2007

As evidence of health and environmental harms mounted in the mid-2000s (hair loss, skin rashes, miscarriages in women and cows, dying cows, etc) and as pressure mounted from the Siria Valley Environmental Committee (comprised of people from the mine-affected communities) and other human rights and non-government groups, the government of Honduras carried out its own study in

August 2007, taking blood and urine samples from a random and representative sampling of 62 children and adults in communities near Goldcorp's "San Martin" mine. 'Experts' contracted by Goldcorp observed and were present during much of the blood and urine sampling process.

COVER-UP BEGINS

Upon completion, the government of Honduras did not release the results. Rather, the Ministry of Environment claimed a need to send the samples to 'experts' in Colombia, for further verification. Again, 'experts' contracted by Goldcorp traveled to Colombia to 'accompany' the blood and urine samples verification process.

FINDINGS

What is now known, in summary, is that of the 62 people sampled in 2007, 46 of them (27 children and 19 adults) have dangerously high levels of heavy metals poisoning in their blood that would have required immediate and sustained medical treatment back in 2007, let alone today. Twenty-four of the children studied contain dangerously elevated lead levels in blood (10 ug/dl = 10 micrograms of lead/decilitre of blood), according to World Health Organization and CDC standards.

For a representative and random sampling of villagers, near Goldcorp's mine, these are very high percentages of villagers with indications of blood poisoning. The implications for the local population at large would have been alarming in 2007, had they been advised. They are alarming now, as villagers near the mine site continue to be exposed to water and environmental contamination that has never been acknowledged by Goldcorp and the government of Honduras, let alone remedied.



Boy from a mining affected community, suffering very typical hair loss, over 3 years since mine was temporarily closed. Photo, 2011: Carlos Amador, Siria Valley Environmental Committee.

NEEDED

- acknowledgement by the government of Honduras and Goldcorp that there are past and on-going health and environmental harms caused by the mining operation
- all the health files — including complete results of blood and urine tests — to be returned to the 62 individuals
- that Goldcorp and the government do everything necessary to provide comprehensive treatment and compensation to all affected people and communities, and to repair the underlying environmental contaminations and harms.

[RIGHTS ACTION supports the Siria Valley Environmental Committee working to achieve full acknowledgement of all this, and to obtain reparations and compensation for the victims.]

HONDURAS

Three Campesinos Massacred & Two Kidnapped IN THE AGUAN REGION OF HONDURAS

Even as Honduras has been re-admitted into the Organization of American States, on Sunday, June 5, Jose Recinos Aguilar, Joel Santamaria and Genaro Cuesta (members of the Authentic Revindicative Campesino Movement of the Aguan, MARCA), were massacred in a car, a few meters from the San Esteban cooperative. At the same time, it is reported that armed forces entered the National Agrarian Institute and opened fire on families who for several months have taken refuge within the government owned agrarian training center. Doris Pérez Vásquez was shot in the abdomen and is reported to be in critical condition.

As the San Esteban community buried the three men, they continue to search for Olvin Gallegos and Segundo Gomez, also members of MARCA. Eyewitnesses saw private security guards kidnap the two men.

The killing and kidnapping of these 5 campesinos follows upon the May 15 disappearance of Francisco Pascual López, as he tended cattle on his farm close to “Panama” African palm plantation, a farm that maintains heavy presence of paramilitaries. Nearby farmers with whom he shares the farm heard shots fired, but when they arrived, he was gone. Police found bullets and a trail of blood leading into the Panama African palm plantation, but refused to enter the plantation.

PARAMILITARY TRAINING ON HONDURAN MILITARY BASE

There are reports that approximately 400 private security guards, employed by African palm producers in the region, are being trained in the Rio Claro base in Tocoa, Colon, home of the 15th Army Battalion. The security guards reportedly are drawn from the “Orion” company, employed by the Exportadora del Atlantico, and others are employed directly by the “Dinant” palm oil and derivatives company.

The trainers wear Honduran military uniforms, and rarely leave the base though they have been reported to participate in forced evictions. During evictions, security guards have been reported to change into military uniforms.



TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS

To support indigenous and campesino organizations working for community-controlled development, environmental justice, human rights & justice in Guatemala & Honduras, Chiapas & El Salvador, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

UNITED STATES: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

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CREDIT-CARD DONATIONS: <http://rightsaction.org/contributions.htm>

DONATIONS OF STOCK: info@rightsaction.org

EDUCATION & ACTIVISM

- **SPEAKERS:** Contact us to plan educational-activist presentations in your community, school, place of worship, home (info@rightsaction.org)
- **DELEGATIONS TO CENTRAL AMERICA:** Form your own group and/ or join one of our educational seminars to Guatemala and Honduras to learn first hand about community development, human rights and environmental struggles (info@rightsaction.org)
- **CREATE YOUR OWN** email and mail lists and re-distribute our information
- **RECOMMENDED DAILY NEWS:**
www.democracynow.org
www.upsidedownworld.org
www.dominionpaper.ca
- **RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**
Eduardo Galeano's "Open Veins of Latin America"
Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States"
James Loewen's "Lies My Teacher Told Me"
Naomi Klein's "The Shock Doctrine"
Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"
Dr Seuss's "Horton Hears A Who"

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