



PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALA PROJECT

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1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

Impunity

The CIDH asks for protection for members of OASIS

The Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (CIDH) asked the government of Guatemala to adopt preventative measures for 12 members of the Organisation to Support an Integrated Sexuality to Confront AIDS (OASIS), who have reported that they were victims of attacks by unidentified groups. The request was made in response to the petition of the Human Rights Ombudsman, Sergio Morales, to the international body.

No to remilitarisation

Various social and human rights based organisations have pronounced themselves against the decision that 3,000 soldiers are to carry out “civic security” tasks. The press release declares that this decision is absurd and inappropriate, as not only is civic security being remilitarised but also military elements are being assigned a task and mission for which they were not trained. This action evidences the irresponsibility of the officials involved, President Berger, the Minister of Defence and the Home Secretary, who are not committed to the Peace Accords and solely use them as propaganda. The organisations, amongst them CALDH, FAMDEGUA and the Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala, demand that the President respect the commitment to reduce the armed institution and that the Congress of the Republic fulfil its fiscal and supervisory purpose.

The PDH presents report with indications of extrajudicial killings to the international community

Guatemala, 21.02.2006 - This Monday the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) presented to the international community indications which point to the involvement of some members of the security forces in extrajudicial killings. The report shows that 305 corpses with signs of torture were discovered in 2005. This figure exceeds the 22 corpses with signs of cruelty found in 2004. People being disappeared and arrested arbitrarily, seen for the last time with members of the National Civil Police (PNC), and the use of vehicles without license plates, are some of the elements highlighted by the PDH. Even though the PDH can not prove that there is a higher order for the systematic elimination of people, in its report it supplies data about the security forces' links to arbitrary deaths. Morales claims that they even received data about a specific location where they would be carrying out torturous acts.

The National Court of Spain confirms authority to judge genocide

Guatemala, 22.02.2006 - The Penal Court of the National Court of Spain (ANE) confirmed its capacity to judge before this court the alleged genocide committed in Guatemala between 1978 and 1986. The sanction occurred after judging without grounds an appeal presented by Spain's Attorney General against the decision made by the Central Judge of Proceedings (in district Number 1) that accepted the lawsuit presented by Nobel Peace Prize winner, Rigoberta Menchú. The lawsuit asked that they be able to investigate crimes against humanity committed against Guatemalans. The director of the Rigoberta Menchú Foundation (FRMT), Estuardo de León, made known that this legal decision is "positive, as it obliges [them] to retake the process in Guatemala".

Land

Police and soldiers evict from two plantations in Alta Verapaz

Some 800 families of indigenous tenant farmers and *campesinos*, who have occupied the plantations La Moca and Cabañas, in the municipalities La Tinta and Senahú, Alta Verapaz, respectively, for more than 55 years, were evicted by approximately 1000 members of the Riot Police and 105 armed soldiers. Leocadio Juracán, representative for the *Campesino* Committee of the Highlands (CCAD), indicated that the workers of the plantation La Moca were deceived by the estate's management when, on the 15th February of last year, they were forced to sign a settlement which stated that they accepted having been paid for their labour with land. However, until now, this offer has not been fulfilled. Because of this breach of contract, the labourers decided to occupy the estate as a form of pressure. As a consequence, the proprietors resorted to the criminalisation of the case, and the security forces executed the eviction on the 1st February, after which they burnt the huts that the *campesinos* had built as well as some of their belongings.

Discussion on legislation starts

The judicial body intends to create seven agrarian tribunals throughout the country, before the creation of laws to regulate the issue. According to Daniel Pascual, leader of the *Campesino* Unity Committee (CUC), the process is being started from the wrong end, as adequate legislation is still not in place. This will make objective rulings more difficult. The representative for the Chamber of Agriculture, Héctor Muñoz, is of the opinion that the time span established for the initiation of the tribunals' activities is very short, as the judges are not fully capacitated in agrarian law. It can be foreseen that with the application of the land registry law various proprietors will come forward to claim the same piece of land, for which the specialised tribunals become necessary in order to resolve these problems. The Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) announced that the previously mentioned tribunals will start to function before the laws are approved. Because of this, the laws will be based on already existing laws, such as those of the Land Information Registry, Protected Areas, and the Land Fund.

Globalisation

Montana exploring gold at 36 locations

Montana Exploradora de Guatemala, a subsidiary of the Canadian company Glamis Gold, has obtained 36 mining rights covering 25 years (extendable) which allow the exploration for gold. The projects are located in the eastern and central parts of the country. Their management falls under the company Entremares de Guatemala, which is in the process of obtaining a licence for the exploration of the project Cerro Blanco en Asunción Mita, Jutiapa. Others are located in the western region. These are managed by Montana, which is in charge of production at the mine Marlin in San Marcos. Montana handed over a cheque made out to the Bank of Guatemala for the amount of Q507, 368.40, equivalent to 50% of the privileges. A similar amount was given to the Mayor of San Miguel Ixtahuacan, San Marcos, Edwin Oswaldo Avila. The community wishes that this money be invested in community projects.

Construction of geothermal plant causes tension in Escuintla

Local authorities, residents and environmentalists reported that on the 27th February security forces took the municipal capital San Vicente Pacaya, Escuintla, by force in order to facilitate the transportation of machinery belonging to the company Ortitlán. The company is seeking to construct a geothermal plant for which it, however, does not hold a construction licence. Carlos Salvatierra, member of the Madre Selva Collective, reported that in the early morning of Sunday, hundreds of the police's Special Forces and army members surrounded the village. Civil society and the local town council have opposed the plant due to the fact that they were not taken into account, and as a consequence of the corresponding construction licence not having been negotiated with them, they claim that the autonomy of the municipality has been violated. Salvatierra revealed that, further, the plant will be situated within the Pacaya Volcano National Park which is a protected zone and an area with importance for tourism. Alvaro Alidío González, Mayor of San Vicente Pacaya, repudiated the actions of the security forces. He judged the presence of the police and the army as an

act of intimidation that violates the autonomy of the municipality and puts in danger the lives of the inhabitants and the local authorities. It is known that arrest warrants have been issued for the Primary Town Councillor, Gustavo Díaz, and the Town Council Secretary, Ezequiel Arias, who has already been the victim of aggressions. According to González, the inhabitants have proposed, amongst other programmes for community development, energy benefits for the population of San Vicente Pacaya in exchange for their approval for the plant, however, the company Ortitlán has refused.

Sources: Prensa Libre, Siglo Veintiuno, El Periódico, Inforpress Centroamericana, La Semana en Guatemala, Informe Semanal Sobre Derechos Humanos, Informador Rural.

2. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: WITHIN GUATEMALA

Team: Silvio Köhler (Germany), Estefanía Sarmiento (Columbia), Didier Califice (Belgium), Ulrike Beck (Germany), Tawia Abbam (United Kingdom), Chus García (Spain), Michael Beattie (Australia), and Silke Gatermann (Sweden).

2.1 MEETINGS WITH GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

Meetings with the authorities and members of the diplomatic corps in Guatemala are an essential component of PBI's work, strengthening the support for the project throughout the country. During the month of January meetings were held with the following authorities:

Guatemalan Authorities:

Silvia Vásquez de Hidalgo, Vice-Minister of Community Support, Home Office
Victor Hugo Godoy and Marco Tulio Álvarez, Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH)
Hugo Herculano Pop, Departmental Assistant of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) of Alta Verapaz
Hugo Marlon Rene Ac Nuila, Presidential Human Rights Coordinating Commission (COPREDEH) of Alta and Baja Verapaz
Edgar Amilcar Orellana Orellana, Chief of Alta Verapaz Police Station, National Civil Police (PNC)
Yefri Palala, Regional Coordinator of the Land Fund (FONTIERRA) of Alta Verapaz
Martín Sacalxot, Department of the Indigenous Peoples' Defence Unit of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH)
Mario Choa, Walter Solís, and Mariluz Velásquez, Department of Ombudsmanship for the Individual Rights' Unit, Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH)
Osmin Revolorio, Departmental Assistant of Escuintla, Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH)
Officer Salguero Godoy, Police Station 31 Escuintla, National Civil Police (PNC)
Luís Alberto Muñoz González, Governor of Escuintla

Diplomatic Corps:

Susie Kitchens, Second Secretary Political, Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Juan López-Dóriga Pérez, Ambassador, Embassy of Spain
Howard Austad, Advising Minister, Embassy of Norway
Åsa Björklund, Head of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights in Guatemala, Delegation of the European Commission in Guatemala, European Union

2.2 MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The PBI Guatemala Project team holds regular meetings with Civil Society Organisations. This enables us to monitor the situation of human rights defenders and to exchange information on the work being carried out, as well as to gather information which helps us to develop our analysis of the internal political situation.

Civil Society Organisations:

David Morales, Federation of Trade Unions in the Food and Similar Industries in Guatemala (FESTRAS)
David Alvarado, Solidarity Centre
Centre for Legal-Environmental and Social Action in Guatemala (CALAS)
Security in Democracy (SEDEM)
Felipe González, Oxlajuj Ajpop

Ricardo Cepeda, Collective of Social Organisations (COS)
Families of the Detained and Disappeared of Guatemala (FAMDEGUA)
Sister Argentina, Social Pastoral of Cobán
Jorge López, Organisation to support an Integrated Sexuality to confront AIDS (OASIS).
Rigoberto Dueñas, General Office of Guatemalan Workers (CGTG)
Nery Rodenas, Human Rights Office of the Archbishop of Guatemala (ODHAG)
National Human Rights Movement (MNDH)
Amilcar Méndez, “Runujel Junam” Counsel of Ethnic Communities (CERJ)
Justo Mendoza, Coordinating Body of Indigenous and *Campesino* Organisations (CONIC)

International Organisations

Coordinating Body for International Accompaniment in Guatemala (CAIG)
Heike Kammer, International Service for Peace (SIPAZ)
Forum of International Non-Governmental Organisations (FONGI)
Québec-Guatemala Accompaniment Project (PAQG)
Intermón Oxfam
Blanca Blanco, Trocaire

Courtesy visits were also paid to the following organisations:

Association for the Advancement of Social Sciences in Guatemala (AVANCSO)
Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH)
Rights in Action
Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG)
Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice In the Face of Indifference and Silence (HIJOS)
ComunicArte
Technical Unity for Accompaniment, Relations and Consultation for the Social Movement of Guatemala (UTARA)
National Coordinator of *Campesino* Organisations (CNOG)
Guatemalan Conference of Religious Men and Women (CONFREGUA)
Guatemalan Education Workers Union (STEG)

2.3 ACCOMPANIMENTS

Since the 13th of May we have accompanied Carlos Morales, leader of the **Union of *Campesino* Organisations for the Verapaces (UVOC)**. Throughout the last month, we accompanied him during his activities in Alta and Baja Verapaz, and in Guatemala City.

Background: Carlos Morales, leader of UVOC, has been victim of death threats, acts of intimidation, and persecution by unknown individuals. Due to a serious increase of personal death threats at the end of April 2005, which led to a genuine fear of his life, Carlos Morales was forced into hiding in Guatemala City for a month, following which he requested 24 hour accompaniment from Peace Brigades. UVOC is a campesino organisation from the Verapaces (the departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz) and works principally on the theme of access to land for campesinos and to provide support in the process of legalisation of the communities' titles to land. UVOC also offers training for communities affiliated to UVOC and supports development projects within those communities.

We continue to carry out regular visits to the office of the **National Coordination of Residents of Marginal Areas in Guatemala, CONAPAMG**.

Background: CONAPAMG works on the question of access to housing and services and the legalisation of illegally occupied land. We have accompanied CONAPAMG since the 4th of July 2004, when their office was broken into and inventories, bills, computer discs and money were stolen. CONAPAMG's community leaders suffer from threats on a regular basis. In March of 2005 Miguel Zapeta González, resident and leader of the community “Esquipulas” in zone 21 of Guatemala City, was murdered. Many of the communities that CONAPAMG supports are evicted frequently, and for others there are many more evictions pending. PBI meets with Guatemalan authorities in the local zones where there are CONAPAMG communities that are negotiating either the right to access to the land that they occupy or to buy it.

We began accompanying the **Association of Friends of Lake Izabal (ASALI)** and **Eloyda Mejía**, Legal Representative of the organisation, shortly after a forum on the future of the lake, which took place in El Estor on the 21st of February 2004, after which the threats against her worsened.

Background: Eloyda Mejía has suffered a number of threats as a result of her work to protect Lake Izabal, in the province of Izabal, East Guatemala, and due to her work to inform local residents of the possible damaging effects of the re-opening of the Guatemalan Nickel Company (subsidiary of Skye Resources INC, Canada) mining operation in the area.

We carried out regular visits to the offices of the **Madre Selva Collective** and had frequent contact with their members. PBI has accompanied the members of Madre Selva since June 2004. On the 23rd February we accompanied Magalí Rey Rosa at the National Resistance Front against the Mining of Metals (FNRM) forum in Chimaltenango.

Background: Madre Selva is an environmental organisation which holds regular workshops on the negative impact of mega-projects and in particular those involving open cast mining and the installation of hydroelectric power plants. Members of the organisation regularly receive threats because of their work

We have been accompanying the Union of Workers of the company "**Association of the Coffee Industry**", and **Other Related Industries (SITINCA)** affiliated to the Federation of Trade Unions in the Food and Similar Industries in Guatemala (FESTRAS). Since June of 2005 we have acted as international observers during various protests against the unfair dismissal of José Armando Palacios and the situation of workers in the INCASA factory in Guatemala City.

Background: In January of the 2004, three workers of the company's internal security decided to join the trade union. Since then the company has allegedly carried out anti-union activities, focused on José Armando Palacios, who was one of the three workers. On the 16th April, unknown armed individuals broke into the house of José Armando Palacios and threatened the life of his wife and their two children. They asked for Mr. Palacios, whom they wanted "to kill for being in the union." On the 6th of May, Mr. Palacios was dismissed without any explanation.

We continue to accompany the **Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)** periodically. At the beginning of January, we accompanied them during an exhumation in the community of Joyabaj, Municipality of Joyabaj, Department of Quiché. We also accompanied them in February during an inhumation in Xecoxol, Department of Chimaltenango.

Background: CONAVIGUA continues to facilitate the process of exhumations and inhumations in various departments throughout Guatemala, largely in Quiché, Chimaltenango and the Verapaces as part of their efforts to recuperate the collective memory of Guatemala's recent history. This process provokes tense situations in these small rural communities between victims and their perpetrators, and the women from CONAVIGUA receive threats so as not to go ahead with this work. The organisation continues preparing for more exhumations and inhumations during this year.

We accompany the **Union of Bocadeli Workers (SITRA BocaDeli)**, which is affiliated to the **Syndicated Guatemalan Workers Union (UNSITRAGUA)**. During the month of November, after a legal judgement closed the factory and ordered the National Civil Police (PNC) to guard the factory to prevent the removal of vehicles and goods, the workers were able to stop their vigil in front of the factory.

Background: In August the BocaDeli Foods Prefabricated Products Distribution Centre in Mixco, Department of Guatemala, was shut down without any notice being given and without the workers being paid neither their salaries nor redundancy pay. Ever since the closure the workers have maintained a constant presence day and night in front of the factory to prevent the removal of goods or vehicles for sale before they receive the payments to which they are entitled. Meanwhile, various vehicles with darkened windows have been circling the workers in a threatening manner. As yet the Salvadorian owned BocaDeli has not responded to the Union initiative to open a dialogue over the dispute. UNSITRAGUA have brought the case before the International Labour Organisation.

We accompanied Carlos Guarquez, General Coordinator of the **Guatemalan Association of Indigenous Mayors and Authorities (AGAIL)** and **Mayan Foundation (FUNDAMAYA)** and adviser to the municipality since January of 2005. As well as staying in regular contact with him, in February we accompanied him in some of his activities in the capital.

Background: Mr Guarquez has suffered from various forms of threats, accusations, and intimidations because of his work rejecting the Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) and mining exploitation. On the 25th of March 2005, in the village of El Tablón, Sololá, the vehicle used by Carlos Humberto Guarquez, of FUNDAMAYA, was doused in petrol and set on fire by unknown individuals. Death threats specifically naming Carlos Guarquez, the then Indigenous Mayoress of Sololá, Dominga Vásquez, and her husband, Alfonso Guarquez, were found scattered around the vehicle. Part of the threat

stated: "For your stupid meddling in society, tomorrow will be the day of your disappearance from this world." As a result of this threat we decided to activate our Support Network within Guatemala.

We accompanied the **MTC, Movement of Peasant Workers**, an entity of the Pastoral Society of the Dioceses of San Marcos, which among other things supports peasant communities defending their human rights. We have been in regular contact with the members of this organisation after receiving a petition for international accompaniment.

Background: Since the beginning of November 2005, Julio Archila, a member of the MTC, has suffered various forms of intimidation and threats directed against him and his family. Apparently his security problems are related to the support the MTC gives to the "nonconformist" campesinos of the farm Las Delicias, San Marcos. On the 4th of November, officials from the PNC, in conjunction with people from the aforementioned farm, arrested Julio, accusing him of stealing coffee. He was brought in front of the judge and, on not finding any proof of the accusations, he was freed. Since then there have been other acts of intimidation and threats made against Julio Archila and members of his family.

2.4 OBSERVATIONS

On the 1st and 2nd of February we continued observing the pacific occupation of the capital city's Central Park by the *campesinos* from different estates that form part of the *Campesino* Unity Committee (CUC), looking for the handing over and legal recognition of their land.

On the 24th February we observed the protest against the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) organised by the National Front of Struggle for the Defence of Public Services and National Resources, integrated by diverse civil society organisations. They presented an appeal of unconstitutionality against the DR-CAFTA to the Court of Constitutionality.

2.5 FOLLOW-UPS

We have maintained contact with the **Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH)** through meetings with their Co-directors and visits to their office.

Background: On various occasions we have accompanied various members of the organisation which is constantly under threat. On the 11th of January 2005, a day after coming back to work for the year, the organisation received a bomb threat at its headquarters. In March the organisation and several of its members received strong threats. During the month of June, four members of the organisation were subject to attacks and acts of aggression. The organisation continues to receive threatening telephone calls and is under frequent surveillance.

We continue to maintain contact with members of the **Community of El Maguey**, affiliated with the **Campesino Unity Committee (CUC)** through frequent contact and occasional visits. In February, after they were given the titles to their land, the team visited the Community.

Background: After a violent evacuation of the community by the army in April 2003 a Governmental Decree withdrawing the community's right to the land was issued. This Decree was appealed before the Constitutional Court which, in May 2004, decided in favour of the community. They have secured expedient 1-61 which protects them against evictions or police intervention in the farm. Reconstruction of the community has begun, but they continue waiting for the finalisation of their title to the land.

We continue to maintain contact with the **Sololá Indigenous Municipality and Dominga Vásquez**. On the 1st of January 2006 Dominga finished her duties as Indigenous Mayoress of Sololá but she continues as a leader of her community. We continue to maintain in contact with her, monitoring the Municipality and the new Indigenous Mayor.

3. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: OUTSIDE OF GUATEMALA

The Project Coordination Office in Madrid, the Regional Representatives and other members of the Project Committee, as well as national PBI groups, have been involved in public relations campaigns with numerous NGOs, national agencies and governments, parliamentarians, etc. These meetings help in the development and strengthening of the project's "Support Network", an essential tool for the workings of the international presence of PBI in Guatemala.

Tara Ward, a member of the Project's Committee, was in touch with the PBI Canada and PBI USA groups to coordinate a possible delegation, and also to organise a conference call.

On the 15th February in Berlin, Kerstin Reemtsma, European Project Representative, met with directing member of the Association of German Lawyers, Dr. Malaika Ahlers, who is in charge of human rights. On the 21st February she met with Member of Parliament, Christian Carstensen of the Social Democrats, in Hamburg, and then on the 22nd February with Social Democrat Member of Parliament, Niels Annen. MP Annen is a member of the Foreign Affairs Commission and the Human Rights Commission of the German Parliament. They all joined the support network.

Project Coordinator, Montse García, took part in Peace Brigades International's International Council meeting as a representative of the PBI Guatemala Project. This meeting took place from the 19th to 14th of February in Bustarviejo, Madrid. During these meetings the International Council (CI) implemented decisions that were taken in the PBI General Assembly (GA). The International Council was able to act on behalf of the GA, taking important decisions for the organisation. The CI consists of representatives from different parts of the organisation (country and project groups) as well as independent members. During the week the Project Coordinator was able to have many conversations with the coordinators and representatives of the other PBI projects (Colombia, Nepal, Mexico and Indonesia) and with representatives from the European Office in Brussels (BEO) amongst others.

4. PUBLICATIONS BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (IN SPANISH)

In this section we publish several communiqués written by human rights organisations in which they express their preoccupations regarding the current state of affairs in Guatemala.

Bloque Anti imperialista.

El Desalojo contra trabajadores de las fincas San José Moccá y La Cabaña, Senahu

3 de Febrero de 2006.

A las 10:30 de la mañana del 1 de febrero, haciendo un uso totalmente desproporcional de la fuerza, más de cuatrocientos agentes de la policía nacional civil provenientes de distintas comisarías del país, cien efectivos del ejército al mando de un teniente coronel de artillería y la fiscal del ministerio público quien se encontraba armada, procedieron a ejecutar el desalojo de casi trescientas familias que reclamaban sus derechos laborales a los propietarios de la finca San José Moccá y Las Cabañas.

Las fuerzas armadas se encontraron con un grupo de familias en la carretera y un grupo de aproximadamente 400 mujeres y niños quienes como única estrategia de defensa y resistencia se encontraban rezando en idioma Q'eqchi'. Ante la presencia de la policía, el ejército y la fiscal del ministerio público de Cobán, campesinos contratados por los terratenientes Roberto y William Hempstead Smith, procedieron a quemar los alimentos, enseres y viviendas de los trabajadores. Después la policía quitó las barricadas del camino que conduce de Tucurú a La Tinta, donde los campesinos habían realizado un tapón como parte de las protestas nacionales de lucha contra la represión, impulsadas por las organizaciones campesinas.

Inmediatamente después la policía y la fiscal subieron al casco de la finca, junto a una delegación de diez campesinos q'eqchi. Mientras tanto el Ejército se retiró del lugar. De la orilla del camino hacia el casco de la finca hay casi 20 kilómetros de distancia y se tarda en transitarlos en carro casi una hora. Las dos fincas miden alrededor de 85 caballerías. Las familias que reclaman sus derechos laborales han trabajado durante generaciones como mozos colonos en la producción del café, donde cumplían largas y duras jornadas de trabajo, recibiendo salarios miserables y sin ningún tipo de prestaciones laborales según las leyes del país. Se calcula que los propietarios, Roberto y William Hempstead Smith, originarios de familias alemanas, adeudan a los campesinos más de diez millones de quetzales en concepto de las prestaciones de ley.

La fiscal del MP y demás instancias jurisdiccionales, ordenaron el desalojo contra los trabajadores incumpliendo flagrantemente las leyes del país, violando los derechos de los trabajadores, y protegiendo abiertamente los intereses de los latifundistas. De hecho los terratenientes cubrieron los costos de movilización y alimentación de los agentes de la policía y efectivos del ejército. Se calcula que en cada desalojo que se lleva a cabo en la región los terratenientes gastan alrededor de Q.150,000.00

Al retirarse, la policía con el aval y consentimiento de la fiscal del ministerio público, se llevaron en un camión cortes de las mujeres, piedras de moler, alimentos, instrumentos de labranza y animales de patio. Los terratenientes dejaron guardias de seguridad privada en su finca.

Una hora después de que las fuerzas represivas del estado daban por terminado el desalojo, los campesinos volvieron a OCUPAR la tierra, porque no están dispuestos a renunciar a sus derechos como trabajadores y dejar la tierra que les pertenece.

COMUNICADO DEL COLECTIVO MADRE SELVA

El pueblo de San Vicente Pacaya fue tomado por asalto por fuerzas de seguridad para imponer el paso de maquinaria de una empresa extranjera que no cuenta con los requisitos legales de construcción. Un contingente de miles de efectivos de la PNC reforzados con camiones del ejército y una tanqueta, tomó por asalto el pueblo de San Vicente Pacaya, Escuintla ayer por la madrugada (domingo 26 de febrero). El operativo se produce para imponer por la fuerza el paso de maquinaria pesada para la construcción de una planta geotérmica de la empresa ORTITLAN subsidiaria de la empresa trasnacional israelita ORMAT. ORTITLAN no cuenta con la debida licencia de construcción por parte de la municipalidad de San Vicente Pacaya. La construcción de la geotérmica se inició de manera irregular dentro del área protegida Parque Nacional Volcán de Pacaya.

Las fuerzas de policía se dedicaron a perseguir a los dirigentes del movimiento contra la geotérmica y a las autoridades municipales con el objetivo de capturarlos. Este operativo de búsqueda y captura fue dirigido personalmente el responsable de la compañía ORTITLÁN Yoshi Shilom que actuaba como si fuera comandante de la PNC.

Este hecho viola la autonomía municipal y es un acto amenazante e intimidatorio contra la población de San Vicente Pacaya y su Corporación Municipal que tiene un antecedente en la agresión que sufrió el pueblo de Sololá en enero del 2005 cuando una fuerza conjunta de policía y ejército impuso por la fuerza el traslado de maquinaria propiedad de la empresa minera Montana Exploradora con el saldo de decenas de heridos y una persona asesinada por la fuerza pública al servicio de las empresas trasnacionales.

La población de San Vicente se opone a la construcción de la geotérmica por los riesgos de contaminación del agua y porque prefieren un desarrollo eco-turístico que aproveche las características excepcionales del Volcán de Pacaya como un polo de atracción turística.

La intervención violenta de las fuerzas policíacas rompe un proceso de diálogo y negociaciones entre la empresa ORTITLÁN, miembros de la sociedad civil, de las comunidades y la municipalidad de San Vicente Pacaya. Dentro de las demandas de la gente de San Vicente Pacaya estaba la compensación por parte de la compañía aportando la electricidad para el bombeo del agua potable que surte a todo el municipio. ORTITLÁN se negó a aceptar esta demanda.

El Colectivo MadreSelva llama a la opinión pública a solidarizarse con el pueblo y la municipalidad de San Vicente Pacaya y a rechazar este operativo policiaco militar para imponer los intereses de una compañía trasnacional sobre la voluntad soberana de un municipio. Nos oponemos a la criminalización del reclamo social a través de órdenes de captura contra dirigentes comunitarios, y al uso de los recursos públicos del Ministerio de Gobernación y del Ejército para servir a intereses empresariales privados.

Guatemala, 27 febrero de 2006

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