

# PEOPLE LAND TRUTH

A close-up photograph of two Indigenous Australian women. The woman in the foreground is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. She has dark, curly hair adorned with yellow and white beaded hairbands. She wears a large, ornate necklace made of multiple layers of colorful beads (red, blue, yellow, and white) and several silver metal rings. She also has a large, circular gold nose ring. The woman in the background is slightly out of focus, also looking towards the camera. She has similar traditional adornments, including a gold nose ring and beaded hairbands. The background is a blurred natural setting with dry grass and earth.

**Intercontinental Cry**  
marking eight years of independent journalism

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Design: Natalie Lowery  
Cover Photo: Rita Willaert  
Editing: Brenda Jo McManama, John Schertow  
Proofreading: John Schertow  
Idea and Concept: John Schertow

Founded in June 2004, [Intercontinental Cry \(IC\)](#) is an international online publication dedicated to Indigenous Peoples. We provide news, videos, petitions, editorials, and action alerts to make sure you know what's happening around the world today.

English  
w: [www.intercontinentalcry.org](http://www.intercontinentalcry.org)  
e: [info@intercontinentalcry.org](mailto:info@intercontinentalcry.org)  
t: [@indigenous\\_news](#) [@intencry](#)  
f: [www.fb.com/Intercontinental.Cry](http://www.fb.com/Intercontinental.Cry)

Spanish  
w: [www.es.intercontinentalcry.org](http://www.es.intercontinentalcry.org)  
e: [ic.espanol@gmail.com](mailto:ic.espanol@gmail.com)  
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ESSENTIAL NEWS ON THE  
WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

QULLACHATINO TZELTALYUIN  
HAISLA GWICHIN YANKUNYT JAT JARA SECOYA  
SERI KITASOOTAMPUN TULUPANES ADIVASI  
DEHCHO KTUNAXA PENOBSCOT SUTIKALH BAKOLA  
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YUKPAARAWAK TSAWWASSEN GITGA'AT BRIBRI  
KAREN KAYAPO WANCAYILCA TAHITAN KADAR  
KAINAI AKURIYO GUAMBIA EMBERA  
NAGA ACHUAR PATAMONATELENGIT PIKANI  
PNONGTOBIQUE YURACAREPUYUMA INUIT  
TOBA NADLEH MALISEET TAWANKA CUCAPA  
MURSIQUILMES GUANACOS CHEROKEE CARIB  
AWAS TURKANA HAVASUPAI WORIMI AWA  
SINIXT INGARIKO WUJINUXU YAVAPAI PENAN  
BAKANAHUATL MATSIGENKA VOLNGU KOGI  
TLICH OHOUSAHT TUPINAMBA PUEBLO  
PINPU YAKAMA SEKURUWE RARAMURI  
SURIATAYAL MANDINKA WINTUNANUAK  
HOPI MI'KMAO HUU-AY-AHT MATSESIBALOI  
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AWETI HOUMA MANGGARAI CHAGOSHADA  
MAASAI COCONUCOS INUPIATKANAK  
OGIEK ENDORODIS PUREPECHASHIPIBONAY  
EPERA LERAGERE BARABAICHOMALCOARARA  
QEQCHI HUITOTOSPALAWAN TRIQUIKUY  
GUARAYO WETSUWETEN HEILTSUK  
COFAN CHEYENNE CHIQUITANO MISKITO  
YAMI WAMPISYAWALAPITINAHUKUA  
BRAD MUNDA NYANGATOM DJIBWAY SALISH  
PAIUTE KANIEKHEKA SAMBURU  
ROMA DIAGUITA WIRADJURI WARLPIRI MIRRAR

INTERCONTINENTALCRY.ORG

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Intercontinental Cry  
marking eight years of independent journalism

# Contents

Preface	3
Introduction	4
Africa	5
Asia	16
Europe	26
Latin America	32
Middle East	48
North America	52
Oceania	62
International	72
Acknowledgements	97
Further Resources	98

# Preface

Intercontinental Cry has certainly come far over the years. When the project first began, back in 2004, it was little more than an obscure forum that didn't really do much of anything. Today, IC is one of the most prominent online publications for Indigenous rights.

It's been a remarkable journey, to say the least. In last 12 months alone, we gained over a dozen new volunteers, including two Editors, four columnists and nine translators; We welcomed three more people to our sustainer program, which helps make sure we stay online; We created a directory so you can learn about the world's diverse Indigenous Nations; And we stepped beyond the English-speaking world with a Spanish website. Meanwhile, we continued to pour out articles, editorials, videos and monthly reports.

But you know what? As much as IC has grown — and despite the thousands of hours that we've all given to this digital compendium of struggle, it still feels like we're just getting started. I have to thank our readers for that, not to mention all the good people who've sent us letters, donations and other forms of support. I'm grateful beyond words for everything that we've received over the years. In fact, that's why I decided to put together this eBook: I wanted to show our thanks to everyone that stands with us.

PEOPLE LAND TRUTH is our very first online publication. It highlights some of the best and most important stories that we've published over the past 12 months. It also includes a few generous contributions from the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Sacred Land Film Project and some of our most trusted writers.

However, this eBook isn't just for IC's readers and allies. It's also for people who don't know what's going on, for instance, with the Himba, Ngobe, Cree, Quechan, Bedouin, Triqui, Ashaninka, Papuan and the Wixarika, among many others.

Right now, more than 500 Indigenous Nations are standing up to governments, corporations and NGOs around the world. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these struggles get little or no attention from journalists, activists or human rights professionals. They are simply tossed aside and forgotten. At Intercontinental Cry, we're doing our best to change that; and above all, to make sure you know exactly what's happening and why it's happening.

Respectfully,

John Schertow

Founder, Publisher, Editor, Writer & Designer

[www.IntercontinentalCry.org](http://www.IntercontinentalCry.org)

# Introduction

There are an estimated 370 million Indigenous Peoples living around the world, representing more than 4,000 of the nearly 7,000 languages that are still spoken today.

Their territories – covering about 20 percent of the earth's surface – largely overlap with the world's richest areas in terms of biological diversity. Indigenous Peoples' special connection to the land and their ancestral knowledge plays a key role in the protection of this biodiversity. There are hundreds of frontline efforts around the world dedicated to this.

Amidst these efforts, Indigenous Peoples are struggling to reclaim ancestral lands, to develop sustainable economies, to maintain traditional languages, to protect cultural resources and sites of spiritual and historical significance, and to help foster a climate of global political accountability, responsibility and healthy living. With the help of national laws and international agreements like ILO Convention 169 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they are also striving to secure basic rights that have been denied for generations.

At the same time, Indigenous peoples are facing a full spectrum assault at the hands of governments, corporations, paramilitary groups, settler-mobs and non-governmental organizations.

Arson attacks, assassinations, kidnappings, mass-evictions and military suppressions are a common occurrence. Psychological warfare operations have also become commonplace for both Nations States and corporations.

The media plays a significant role here as well, by their failure to reveal the full extent of what's happening; and their heavy bias in the stories they do tell. In the latter case, corporate interests are routinely given priority over the needs and rights of Indigenous Peoples and. Nation state supremacy over Indigenous Nations is always considered to be a 'given'.

Conflicts with non-governmental organizations are also on the rise. Left and Right, NGOs are ignoring Indigenous Peoples rights, exploiting emergency efforts for their own private gains and misinforming the public about the nature of these struggles. Even more disturbing, NGOs are increasingly forging new alliances with notorious companies like Barrick Gold and Rio Tinto.

It's a disturbing state of affairs to say the least. Fortunately, Indigenous Nations around the world are rising to the occasion. For the safety of future generations, we must.

# Africa



## US Company Wants A 72,000 Hectare Palm Oil Plantation In The Rainforest

JOHN SCHERTOW

For 12 months, conservation groups have been warning about SG Sustainable Oils' plan to establish a 72,000 hectare palm oil plantation in the rainforest of Cameroon.

Back in July 2011, the conservation groups [Naturefund](#), [Rettet den Regenwald](#), Rainforest Foundation UK and [SAVE Wildlife Conservation Fund](#) went on a last minute run to stop the government of Cameroon from granting the massive land concession to SG Sustainable Oils (**Sithe Global Sustainable Oils Cameroon**), a subsidiary of the New York-based company, Herakles Farms.

SAVE said at the time, "[It] will be an environmental disaster for the rainforests in Cameroon; even worse than the planned highway through the Serengeti. The oil palm plantation will further fragment this unique landscape, restricting the natural movements of many animal species," noted SAVE.

"In [the Cameroon] landscapes are several protected areas, including Korup National Park, Bakossi National Park, Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary, and Rumpi Hills Forest Reserve. These protected areas represent a stronghold for many endangered, unique species. If they are lost from these areas, they will likely be lost from this world forever. This oil palm plantation will further isolate these protected areas and increase bushmeat hunting pressure. Hunting for bushmeat, the meat of wild animals, is already driving large-bodied mammal species to extinction. This oil palm plantation will lead to increased bushmeat hunting and decimate forests and wildlife," SAVE continued.

The ancestral lands and livelihoods of the Baka, Bakola, Bedzang and Bagyeli (BBBB)–so-called '[Pygmy](#)' peoples – would also be threatened by the rainforest cull.



BULLDOZERS ARRIVED AT THE FABA VILLAGE AGAIN TO RESUME LAND CLEARING FOR MORE OIL PALM NURSERIES.  
PHOTO: SAVE-WIDLIFE.COM

With a combined population of about 45,000 people, the Baka, Bakola, Bedzang and Bagyeli live in 38 small villages along the edge of the protected areas of the rain forest. They are heavily dependent on its resources for subsistence.

Despite these and other risks, the government of Cameroon gave Herakles exactly what it wanted. By the looks of things, they didn't even flip an eye when it came to the Indigenous Peoples, thanks in no small part to a propaganda campaign that was endorsed by NGO "All for Africa."

"All for Africa" championed the plantation proposal as "Development Assistance", asserting that it would be a "lasting development project" that will

bring thousands of new jobs to the Indigenous population.

"Experiences from Asia show however: that is usually a deception," commented SAVE. "After the large companies remove the tropical wood, nothing remains for the rural population [but] rooted out surfaces. On the plantations they work ... at best... for exploitative low wages."

In this case, the deception runs a little bit deeper. "All for Africa" was founded by none other than Bruce Wrobel, the Managing Director of Sithe Global. Wrobel is also the founder of Herakles Capital Corporation which owns Heakles farms.

It's corporate green-washing at its best. However, no amount of green-out can cover up the fact that 72,000 acres of pristine rainforest will be ripped from the Earth's surface, severely impacting the region's biodiversity and destroying the ancestral lands and livelihoods of the Baka, Bakola, Bedzang and Bagyeli.

To make matters worse, Cameroon also gave Herakles a hefty bonus: The [power to arrest and detain](#) anyone caught "trespassing" on the now-leased land.

UPDATE: Following these events, the Indigenous Peoples who rely on the rainforest have started a campaign of their own. They are now attempting to exercise their legal right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) as enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). They are also asking the international community to send their voices out to urge [decision-makers at Herakles to listen](#).



# Indigenous Himba Take Fight To The UN

RICHARD LEE

The Namibian government can usually ignore the demands of [indigenous](#) groups – safe in the knowledge that their voices will seldom be heard. And even if they are that the groups are too isolated and marginalised to cause the ruling party any difficulty – apart perhaps from some temporary embarrassment.

But the government will have more trouble ignoring the latest call from the [Himba](#) people of Kaokoland, who have long seen their [rights](#) trampled upon and decisions about their future imposed from afar. Not only has the lengthy list of abuses and justified demands been signed by all 36 of the traditional Himba leaders but they have also appealed directly to the United Nations and the international community to intervene.

In a remarkable statement (that can be downloaded at the end of this article), the leaders take the government to task over their rights to [land](#), traditional titles, cultural identity, lack of consultation relating to mining and dam construction and routine oppression. And they demand that the Namibian government ends land grabbing, halts plans for a new dam, stops interfering in ancestral tribal institutions, provides culturally sensitive schools and allows the Himba to move freely across the border with Angola.

The leaders words are extremely powerful – highlighting the complete marginalisation of their people by the government of Namibia. They make the following key points and demands:

“The statement affirms that the indigenous Himba people, are the original inhabitants, caretakers and true owners of our Kaokoland that we have inherited from our ancestors. The borders were reaffirmed as well as documented by all three colonial governments that ruled our country before Namibia became independent.

Within Kaokoland, we traditional leaders rule and care for our people and land in our areas according to our ancestral governance structure.

But to our grievance, the Namibian government has destroyed our ancestral traditional governance structure, disposing and withholding the official recognition of 33 of us as rightful traditional leaders. We and other traditional leaders from other tribes went to the High Court, and we won the case on December 13th 2001, and the Government of Namibia was ordered to re-install us in our rightful positions as Traditional Authorities. But the state did not comply to the Court order to this very day, and we remain the not recognized leaders, removed from our legal powers.

Our people and we strongly object to the state’s ruthless interference by the Government of Namibia our people to choose their own leaders and destiny. We are not consulted, included in any decision making processes, nor we are heard when we object. We are therefore the marginalized and oppressed tribe in our country Namibia.

Because we are no longer allowed to govern, and are not recognized by the Government of Namibia as the legitimate leaders of our people and land, we see our traditional territory being invaded by the ruling Owambo ethnic group that controls the ruling SWAPO Party. We are currently facing a law that allows any citizen of Namibia to apply and receive 20 hectares of our land. (Communal land Reform Act 5 of 2002). We strongly object this law that is forced upon our throats against our will and consent.

**This is a land grab! We are losing our land. Our land is being fenced by outsiders.**



HIMBA LEADER SIGNING THE STATEMENT. PHOTO: OSISA.ORG

We, the original people of this Kaokoland are semi nomadic people. We are roaming with our cattle, goat and sheep from place to place. We react to the change of climate in our semi dessert environment, and follow the needs of our livestock and move them to grazing areas that are sufficient for them, especially during dry season. The fencing of our land is therefore not only a land right issue, and threatening our way of life, but more so a matter of our very survival. We won't be able to adopt and mitigate the negative effects of climate change when we are no longer able to access and roam freely our land.

We also face other forms of invasion into our territory by large-scale mining companies which will destroy huge areas of our environment without our free,

prior and informed consent. We are not even informed what resources are taken out of our grounds, what dangerous chemicals are used in the processes, nor do we receive any benefits from our stolen natural resources. But if our own people want to apply for small-scale mining permits, we usually cannot obtain them, and we are told that area already belongs to other companies often owned by non-Himba outsiders.

In the recent past we have successfully opposed the construction of the Epupa Hydroelectric Dam. Our leaders such as Chief Hikuminue Kapika and Chief Paulus Tjavara and others went to the UN and informed the Human Rights High Commissioner Mary Robinson herself about the injustice done to us. As a result, the World Bank removed its financial support for the Dam, as has Japan and other international financiers. Today the Government of Namibia claims that they have listened to us, but in reality they have been forced by the international pressure to cease the construction of the dam.

Today, we now also hear that the Government of Namibia wants to build again a dam in our territory, this time in at Baynes Mountains, downstream of Epupa area. But as we have done so in the past, we strongly oppose and object to this. Again, the affected communities and traditional leaders have not been consulted, nor have we been included in any steps of the planning and decision-making levels. We will never give our consent to have our river being blocked, the life in the waters and dependent of it being threatened, and to have our environment being destroyed and our land being taken away from us.

We would use our graveyards and sacred places in those areas that would be flooded or destroyed through the construction of the dam. The population would become refugees, forced to move away with their animals to other areas that are

already inhabited by others from our community. It would cause overpopulation and poverty due to overgrazing in the neighboring areas. Moreover, the beneficiaries of the hydroelectricity will be those who live in the cities and not us.

One of our main grievances is the lack of culturally appropriate schools for our communities. As semi nomadic people we need mobile schools that allow our children to be well educated while moving with their community and animals. Since Norway, that had funded schools, has yielded their responsibility for these schools to the Government of Namibia, we see that these schools are either closed, the school tents and materials are no longer maintained, the transport to move the school tents and materials is now missing and we fear that the moving schools will decrease and no longer exist in the near future.

Starting from Grade 4 onwards, our children are forced to remove their traditional haircuts and attires, their whole cultural identity, and must cut their hair and dress in their western school uniforms if they want to be allowed to attend governmental schools. Many of our children refuse to do this. This school uniform rule is causing an enormous stress for our people, as we fear this will cause the loss of our culture and traditions by forcing our youth to change. Many of us don't send our children to school, because we do not want that. Also, we are compelled to pay school fees and the uniforms that many of us cannot afford.

We demand that our Kaokoland to be legally recognized by the state as our territory, that we have traditionally occupied and owned for centuries.

We insist that the government stop the implementation of the Communal Land Reform Act that is resulting in the fencing off of our land and grabbing in Kaokoland.

We demand that Namibia halts its plans to build a dam downstream of Epupa in Baynes Mountains.

We further demand mining companies to be removed from our territory, and or otherwise we must be included in the entire process of giving out the mining

permits and too the access on the benefits.

We insist that the government cease and desist from further interference, manipulations and disempowerment of our customary tribal ancestral institutions.

We demand that our traditional governance structure to be fully respected and our traditional authorities of Kaokoland by the government without delay.

We demand that the school laws to be amended to become culturally appropriate.

We further demand that our children be taught in our own language, while receiving highly qualified English lessons that would ensure that they speak and write the mainstream language well.

We demand that we can cross, trade, sell and buy freely back and forth of the borders of Angola and Namibia as we are one people, and not to be separated and limited by borders.

We demand better health care and more hospitals and clinics in our areas, and that translation into our language is always facilitated."

Download Statement by Himba Leaders

[www.osisa.org/sites/default/files/statement\\_by\\_himba\\_leaders\\_in\\_namibia.pdf](http://www.osisa.org/sites/default/files/statement_by_himba_leaders_in_namibia.pdf)

*Richard Lee is the Communications and Campaigns Manager at the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), a growing African institution committed to deepening democracy, protecting human rights and enhancing good governance in the region.*

## Kenya Government 'Punishes' Samburu After Court Blocks New National Park

JOHN SCHERTOW

A Samburu community's struggle to maintain their ancestral land and grazing rights on what is now private property, took another unfortunate turn for the worst.

Following a court decision to [block the creation of a new national park](#), that would envelop the community's land, on November 25, 2011, more than 300 police officers went to the community, killed at least one Samburu elder and confiscated as many as 10,000 of their cattle, goats and sheep.

A [report by Samburu Indigenous Minority Rights Group](#) provides details on the police attack.

In Summary:

"On 25th November 2011, police used ten trucks and ten Land rovers to round up the Samburus' cattle in the grazing fields. The cattle were herded by foot and trucks and impounded. Some of them were later slaughtered and feasted upon by the police. Our source told Samburu Indigenous Minority Rights Group that a Senior Government Official ordered the police to confiscate the animals.

That night, homes were deserted; women, elders, children and young people spent the night in the bush under heavy rains in fear of a police attack. The next morning, on 26th November 2011, the police attacked homes where they harassed, beat and intimidated the residents.

One man was found, dead; Mzee Lelekina 56 year old with his body riddled with bullet wounds at the Segera farm, more than 30KM away from his home, where he was taken on the morning of 24th November 2011. Two others, Mzee Lekitacharan and Mzee Lenchordo, were beaten to near death and sent to the Nanyuki Police Station with no access to medical treatment. "

In days that followed the initial attacks, the police assault spread to other villages at the Pois Robo area; fear and tension gripped the area as many residents ran away from their homes in fear of cold blood killings, rape and harassment by police.

The home of the widow of Mzee Lelekina was deserted as a result of the trauma and fear of a cold killing as a way to conceal evidence. She is the only key witness in the execution of her husband by the police.

Government officials later claimed that "the operation was in response to a raid that led to the death of two policemen; even though no one knows who killed the policemen", says Samburu Indigenous Minority Rights Group.

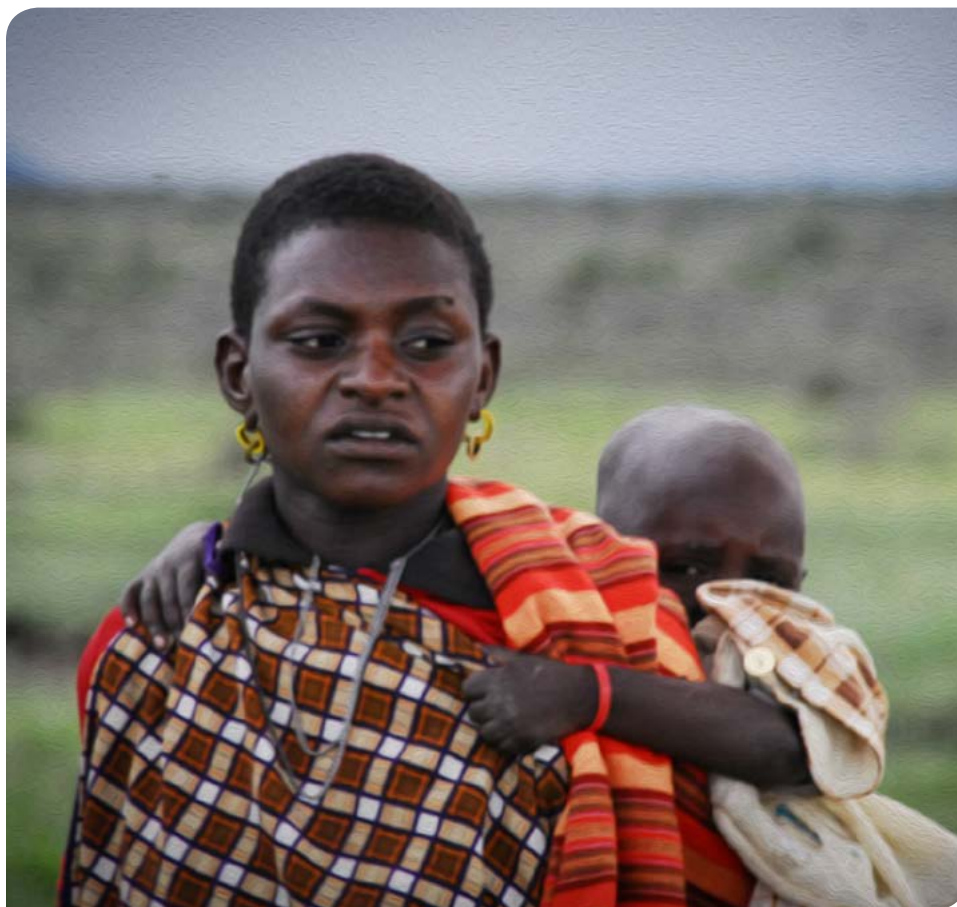
The Samburu – who insist that [they had nothing to do with the raid or the two deaths](#) – believe the police operation was really meant to 'punish' the community for taking former President Daniel arap Moi to court.

The former president previously sold the Elan Downs property to the African Wildlife Foundation, which led to the forced eviction of hundreds of Samburu families.

In their response, "The Samburu initiated legal proceedings against the former president and the African Wildlife Foundation, claiming their right to the land," [explains Cultural Survival](#). "The judge in the case [declared that the status quo should be maintained](#), with the Samburu continuing their occupancy in the property, until the court reaches a decision."

"Despite this ruling," Cultural Survival continues, "the Kenya Wildlife Service announced that the property had been donated to the government by the [Africa Wildlife Foundation](#) and [the U.S.-based] [Nature Conservancy](#) and would become





SAMBURU MOTHER WATCHES AS HER ANIMALS ARE TAKEN BY POLICE. PHOTO: CULTURAL SURVIVAL

a new Laikipia National Park. Members of Parliament questioned the Minister for Forestry and Wildlife, Dr. Noah Wekesa, about the establishment of the National Park during a Parliament session on November 22, and Dr. Wekesa agreed that the establishment of the Park would be put on hold until the court announces its decision. The Kenya Wildlife Service was also enjoined in the case, along with former president Moi and the African Wildlife Foundation. This was the situation when, on November 23, unknown raiders shot and killed two Kenya police who were camped at the Elan Downs property.”

**Update:** *After this article was originally published, police in Kenya released the Samburu people’s cows, goats, and sheep. However, according to Cultural Survival, the Samburu say that many of the animals “... were lost during the police round-up or possibly attacked by wild animals. Police were also seen roasting and eating some of the livestock.”*

*Shortly thereafter, a Kenyan court recognized the African Wildlife Foundation’s land title transfer of the “Eland Downs property” to the Kenya Wildlife Service. The Samburu say they will continue to argue their right to the 17,000 acre area when the court reconvenes sometime in 2012.*

# Kalahari Bushmen Finally Gain Access To Drinking Water On Ancestral Land!

JOHN SCHERTOW

In 2011, the Kalahari Bushmen or San People celebrated a major victory in their long-time struggle for water rights on their ancestral lands. For the first time in nine years, the [Bushmen finally had access to drinking water!](#)

This fortunate news stems from an unexpected partnership between Gem Diamonds Botswana and the non-profit organization Vox United. The goal of the partnership, which came about after consultations with the Bushmen earlier that year, would aim to provide the indigenous residents with access to water at four villages located on their ancestral land in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR). The names of those four villages are Mothemelo, Gope, Metsimanong and Molapo.

The partnership itself arrived just three months after another major victory in January, when Botswana's Court of Appeal overturned a previous High Court ruling that dismissed the Bushmen's legal right to water.

As [Survival International reported at the time](#), the Court of Appeal found that:

- the Bushmen have the right to use their old borehole [the Mothomelo well]
- the Bushmen have the right to sink new boreholes
- the government's conduct towards the Bushmen amounted to 'degrading treatment'.
- the government must pay the Bushmen's costs in bringing the appeal.

A few days after the key ruling was handed down by the Court of Appeal, Botswana decided to approve a massive \$3 billion diamond mine near the village of Gope. The approval was [reportedly issued on the condition](#) that the diamond deposit's owner, Gem Diamonds, refused to provide the Bushmen with any access to water.

It's still not clear whether or not the government actually issued such a horrendous condition; however, Survival International confirms that the Bushmen now have access to at least one fully-operational, solar-powered well.

Vox United re-drilled the same well that the Appeals Court singled out –the very same well that the government sealed during their [forced relocation](#) of the Bushmen in 2002.

Ever since the relocation took place, the Bushmen have been struggling in court for their right to live on their ancestral land.

Four years after the relocation, a more reasonable High Court ruled that the Bushmen had the legal right to live on their ancestral lands and that the government acted illegally by taking them against their will. Botswana promised that it wouldn't appeal the ruling; however, since then, the government has continuously obstructed the Bushmen's return by making them pay their own way back, by arresting hunters and by banning the Bushmen from using the old borehole.

"The Bushmen have been waiting for water for a very long time," said Rebecca Spooner, a campaigner for Survival International, "And although Mothomelo is the site of the original borehole, it's fantastic news they've managed to reinstate it here."

Vox United has already drilled other wells; however, they will require desalination equipment before the Bushmen can use them day to day. "[It's] going to be very expensive," said Spooner.

Fortunately, with Gem Diamonds making good on its end of the deal with Vox United, there's no reason to think that they won't come through here as well.

**Update:** *After 8 months, the Bushmen continue to enjoy unobstructed access to the old Mothomelo borehole. Thankfully, the government has not taken any steps whatever to get in the way. However, the government is still harassing the Bushmen. IC contributor Damon Gerard Corrie recently reported:*

*"On April 10th, 2012, a group of 8 tribesmen and women from the Metsiemanong San Indigenous community in Botswana were arrested for hunting in the Kalahari Game Reserve by the Botswana Army and Police Forces.*

*On May 5th, 2012, the government of Botswana sent Botswana Army, Police, and Department of Wildlife and National Parks officers to camp at Metsiemanong in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve – in order to intimidate the nearby San Indigenous community from practicing their traditional hunter-gatherer subsistence.*

*The San Indigenous Community STILL does not know the whereabouts of their 8 tribal members who were ILLEGALLY arrested by the Security Forces of the Government of Botswana."*

*Survival International, meanwhile, has received reports that "Botswana's security forces have set up a camp close to Metsiemanong."*

## The Taureg Struggle To Create An Independent Multi-Ethnic Homeland

JOHN SCHERTOW

June 22, 2012 – Less than a month ago, the media charged forward with reports that the Tuareg-led **National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad** (Mouvement National De Liberation de l'Azawad – MNLA) had [agreed to join forces](#) with the Islamist group **the Ansar Dine** to create an Islamist state across the recently-liberated territory of Azawad.

The agreement didn't come as much of a surprise. After all, both groups had been fighting side by side since January. However, the media failed to consider the nature of that working relationship. They also failed to observe one key difference that would go on to betray their headlines in just a few short day.

The Taureg may be willing to stand beside Ansar Dine to secure their ancestral territory; but they are not so willing to sacrifice their struggle in order to maintain that alliance.

The Tuareg, who have been trying to reclaim their ancestral land since it was taken from them in the late 1800s, are trying to establish an independent multi-ethnic state. The Ansar Dine wants to turn Azawad into an Islamic State that adheres to [sharia law](#). Neither side seems willing to concede to the other. This irreconcilable difference in goals was enough to pull apart the agreement. The MNLA would not accept the Ansar Dine's plan

Now, according to Nationalia, [there is considerable tension](#) "within MNLA on the strategy that should be followed vis-à-vis Ansar Dine. Some members of MNLA are clearly advocating to put an end to any kind of collaboration with this Al-Qaida-linked Islamist organization, but some others are willing to reach a deal with them."

“Some MNLA leaders have vehemently rejected an alliance with Ansar Dine during the last days in several interviews with local media”, Nationalia continues. “MNLA commissary for communication Mossa Ag Attaher is one of the leading voices in this respect: ‘Applying the Sharia and Arabizing our people are grave violations of our culture and of our identity’”, [he says](#). MNLA political wing spokesman Hama Ag Mahmoud [has explained](#) that the rapprochement of his movement to Ansar Dine was a ‘temporary strategy’ and that under no circumstances could both organizations agree on a longstanding alliance. And he insists on the idea that Tuaregs are the most capable people in the region to stop Islamists.”

Again, the media doesn’t seem interested in talking about this. They would much rather feeding the prospect that Azawad could be taken over by the Ansar Dine with the purported funding and military support of Al Qaeda in the **Islamic Maghreb** (AQIM).

There are many others in Azawad who have their own take on all this, who aren’t connected to MNLA or the Ansar Dine – who are also being ignored by the press.

In Early June, a landmark three-day conference brought together representatives of more than 120 tribal communities across Azawad to discuss the situation. The main organizer of the conference was the National Front for the Liberation of Azawad (FNLA), a group that formed on April 8, 2012, two days after the MNLA declared formal independence for Azawad.

“Our goal is to reach a position that would express our views because we have become the victim of a conflict between two bitter enemies – the Malian state on the one hand and Touaregs and terrorist groups on the other hand,” explained Ould Ramzan, the conference spokesperson.

“Meanwhile, all of these developments are taking place on our own land, in Timbuktu and its suburbs. The terrorist groups have even become the main spokesperson in our lives,” he said.

“We reject the unilateral decision of independence which was declared by Touaregs groups,” he added. “We also realise that the Malian state no longer exists in the region. Therefore, we want to come up with a compromise position represented in securing an autonomy that guarantees us independence in running our land.”

The spokesperson adds, “We’ve started forming a military force and we’re about to consolidate it. The goal is to expel these terrorist groups that came to our land from outside it, and to restore our city, Timbuktu, and control it either peacefully or by force,” the FNLA spokesperson said. He added that it would “only be done through the armament of our young people and supplying them with the necessary logistical means”.

The MNLA, meanwhile, is moving ahead with their initial plans. On June 15, Tuareg leaders [swore in an interim government](#). “The inauguration ceremony, which featured a military parade, was attended by political elites, and important Azawadi and Amazigh religious and tribal figures who came from both inside and outside the region, as well as some diplomats and journalists, relays Magharebia.

During the inauguration, Belal Ag Charif, the leader of the interim government, “extended a hand of co-operation to all local and international parties ‘based on a non-negotiable Azawad principle, which is represented in the Azawadi people’s right to self-determination and to running their own affairs themselves”, continues Magharebia.

The interim leader went on to lay out the interim government’s priorities, including establishing security, forging an Azawad army, and creating a new charter “that would establish the main principles of an Azawad constitution, which would consider the Qur’an and Sunnah as the source of legislation and stress respect for cultural diversity, opinion and political orientations of Azawad citizens”.

He also called for “serious negotiations with Mali’s legitimate representatives on outstanding issues between the two states” and urged all armed Azawad



groups to take part in a comprehensive national project without the use military intervention, saying calls for such an approach were irresponsible.

So far, the interim government has been met mostly with scepticism and outright opposition from Ansar Dine.

**The Malian government**, the **African Union**, and the **Economic Community of West African States** (ECOWAS) are also opposing the interim government. In fact, ECOWAS has even announced plans to send in a military force of 3,000 troops to the region. ECOWAS is now seeking permission and support from the United Nations.

Mali, of course, is still reeling from the March 22nd coup led by low- and mid-ranking military officers who were, at the time, fed up with Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré's handling of the Tuareg-initiated uprising.

The ill-timed coup arrived just a few weeks before a new election was supposed to take place in the impoverished country. Toure was not going to be running in that election.

In the days following the coup, Mali was hammered with sanctions by the European Union, the United States and the World Bank. ECOWAS also announced that it would impose its own sanctions unless the junta stepped down. The junta eventually responded by agreeing to restore the country's constitution and pave the way for elections. But before that happened, MNLA and Ansar Dine managed to secure Azawad little or no resistance from the Malian army.

In retrospect, the easy victory was [only the beginning of this newest chapter](#) in a 130-year old story.

The Tuareg have been trying to reclaim Azawad ever since the so-called "Scramble for Africa" began in the 1880s. Back then, the Taureg did everything in their power to resist the French colonial invasion of their homeland; but they were ultimately

defeated. And in the case of in Mali in 1905 and Niger in 1917, the Tuareg were forced to sign treaties with the French.

A few decades later, the big "rush for independence" began in Africa. This UN-sanctioned process of political decolonization divided the Taureg's homeland into several Nation States including Mali, Algeria, Libya, Niger and Morocco.

Since then, the Tuareg have led four major rebellions to reclaim what was illegally taken from them. But it is only now that the Taureg are in reach of their long-sought-after victory. And they have no intention of letting it slip out of their hands, whether it means laying down their arms or their lives.

Unfortunately, it looks like Mali isn't willing to accept either option. Now that the junta has stepped down, Mali and ECOWAS intend to carry out, [in the words of Ivory Coast's army chief](#), a "re-conquest of the north."

# Asia



16

## Indigenous Peoples Say No To 'Disaster Development' In Sarawak

JOHN SCHERTOW

It's no mere coincidence that Sarawak is one of the most impoverished states in Malaysia. For more than 30 years, the governments of Malaysia and Sarawak have been far too busy ransacking the region's precious rainforest to secure and strengthen what has been there for thousands of years.

Development in Sarawak has always been about making money; and as any real capitalist knows, the more money you have to spread around, the less you have for yourself and your friends and family.

Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud knows this well. Minister Taib--a man whose name has become [synonymous with corruption](#) - has made a fortune at the expense of the land and people of Sarawak.

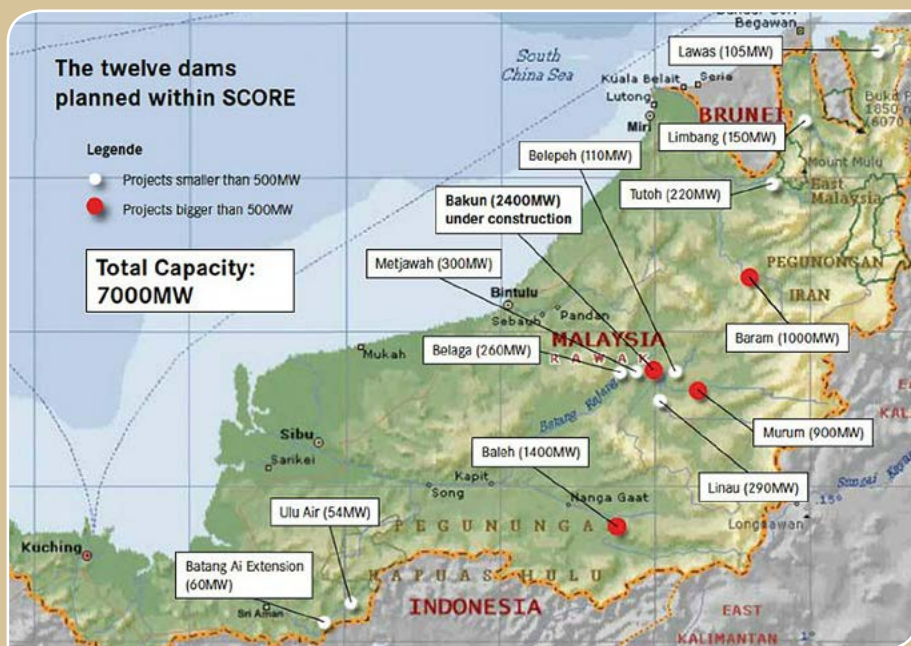
He has no intention of holding back either. Indeed, Taib wants to make sure that the decimation of Sarawak continues for decades to come.

The government of Sarawak is going all out for a new mass-industrialization project known as the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE) initiative ([www.sarawakcore.com.my](http://www.sarawakcore.com.my)). Under SCORE, the government intends to build at least twelve new hydro dams in order to provide 28,000 MW of electricity for a yet-to-be-determined industrial complex in Sarawak.

Describing the risks of SCORE, the [Bruno Manser Fund](#) (BMF) says,

"The ecological consequences of the new dams would be disastrous. River and forest landscapes which exist nowhere else in the world apart from

Borneo would be destroyed for ever, and the animal and plant world would be threatened. Apart from that, dams cause the emission of large quantities of greenhouse gases, which fuel climate change even further."



LOCATIONS OF THE TWELVE DAMS PLANNED WITHIN SCORE. MAP COURTESY OF BMF

A Switzerland-based NGO, the Bruno Manser Fund is leading a [campaign against the SCORE](#) initiative in coordination with a coalition of NGOs from around the world.

The social and cultural consequences of SCORE would be equally disastrous, [says BMF](#). For instance, just one of the proposed dams--the 1000 MW Baram dam--would drown approximately 412 km<sup>2</sup> (41200 hectares) of rainforest and [26 indigenous villages](#) along with it. That will result in the displacement of up to 20,000 people.

Speaking to the future, Peter L., a Kenyah whose village would be lost to the Baram dam, compares the Chief Minister's plan to "A tsunami created by human beings" that will "pick up speed and destroy everything: rivers, forest, harvest, villages, simply everything!"

"It is, however, not only the forest and fields as the lifeblood of Baram culture that are threatened," reiterates BMF campaigner Annina Aeberli, in the NGO's 2012 newsletter, [Tong Tana](#). "The indigenous peoples of the Baram region are also lamenting the loss of their history and their social cohesion, which it defined strongly through their ancestors."

As Maria, another Kenyah from Long Anap said to BMF, "Those of us alive today can at least run away when the water comes, but what are the dead going to do?" Thomas M., retired secondary teacher from the village of Long San, echoes Maria's concerns. With tears in his eyes, he said, "my father died in 2002. I won't let it happen that they flood his grave, so that my father dies a second time. I'm going to fight against the dam."

Knowing the history of 'disaster development' all too well, Indigenous Peoples throughout Sarawak are coming together for the sake of their ancestors and future generations. Under the banner of "Save Sarawak Rivers" ([SAVE Rivers](#)), affected Indigenous Peoples like the Kenyahs, Ibans, Penans, Bidayuhs and Ukits have joined with local organizations and concerned individuals to halt the construction of the hydro dams and any other plans to bring 'dirty industries' to Sarawak.

In February 2012, SAVE Rivers hosted a [landmark conference](#) to discuss the situation. During the three-day event, Indigenous representatives described how the Sarawak government and project companies have been denying their rights to information and consultation; how involuntary resettlement has made them more impoverished; and how other dams in Sarawak have violated international agreements like the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as basic rights guaranteed under Malaysian law.

After the discussions came to an end, the representatives issued a joint statement [demanding](#) an immediate end to the dam projects, respect for the

right to consultation and a public referendum on the issue of the dams. They also called on the government to stop all other destructive development activities in Sarawak and to start promoting socially and environmentally responsible alternatives such as micro-hydro, solar, wind and biomass energy projects.

Following the successful conference, Peter Kallang, chairperson of SAVE Rivers, said that it's just the beginning of the struggle. [Discussing the next steps](#), Mr. Kallang commented, "There is a need for further awareness-raising in society as such, but especially in the affected regions. Therefore, we are planning a road show in Baram where we will visit all affected communities. The goal is to create committees in all affected areas which in turn will become the organizational base for collective action against these mega-dams."

After that it's anybody's guess. But you can be sure that they won't stand down, much like the popular Xingu Forever Alive movement in Brazil which has been fighting the Belo Monte Dam for more than 40 years. With so much at stake, there is simply no room to let the government do whatever it wants like it's just another day at the office.

## Canadian Mining Firm Admits Wrongdoings To Subanon People

JOHN SCHERTOW

TVI Resource Development, Inc. (TVIRDI), after years of violating the human rights and customary laws of the Subanon People, finally [admitted its wrongdoings](#) in a cleaning Ceremony led by the Subanon's traditional judicial authority.

TVIRDI, a subsidiary of the Canadian mining firm TVI Pacific, began exploiting the resources within Mount Canatuan in 1994. However, the company never obtained the Subanon's consent to occupy the mountain, which is located within their ancestral domain lands in the Philippines province of Zamboanga del Norte. The Subanon refused to give their consent to TVIRDI, because Mount Canatuan is [sacred to them](#).

Over the years, the Subanon did everything in their power to protect the mountain; but with the Philippine government being a major investor in the mine, their efforts always fell through.

With no other options in sight, in 2007, the Subanon decided to turn to their own Traditional judicial authority for help. The Traditional authority, known to the Subanon here as the Gukom sog Pito ko Dolungan (Gukom of the Seven Rivers Region), agreed to step in.

After several months of deliberation, the Gukom found that [TVIRDI was guilty of violating human rights and Subanon customary law](#). The verdict mentioned, in part: TVI's refusal to recognize Timuay (traditional leader) Jose "Boy" Anoy as the traditional leader of the Subanon in the area; damages they caused to personal property and the environment, the physical abuse of certain individuals; and their failure to obtain the Subanon's free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).



The verdict required TVIRDI to take part in a mandatory cleansing ceremony and pay fines to the Subanon for their actions.

Initially, the company would have no part of it; but, “In August 2009, after a series of consultations, Timuay Boy Anoy was formally installed by the Gukom as the legitimate Timuay in the titled ancestral domain in Canatuan. During the event, TVIRD also publicly declared their recognition of Timuay Anoy’s leadership and declared its willingness to discuss ways of resolving their conflict with Timuay Anoy and his Council” the Gukom state, in a [May 18 Press Release](#). “The act paved the way for further negotiations of the other penalties.”

Two years later, on May 17, 2011, TVIRDI took part in that Ceremony.

During the Ceremony, the company finally acknowledged that Mount Canatuan is a sacred site and admitted that they were wrong for desecrating it. They also admitted to their other misdeeds and agreed to pay the fines as stipulated by the Gukom.

“Since TVIRDI admitted its fault and presented themselves to Timuay Boy Anoy whose authority they violated, the imposed penalty could be negotiated to an agreed minimum amount,” explained Timuay Fernando Mudai. The fine was presented by a TVIRDI representative before the formal opening of the Boklug Ceremony.

Some may view the Ceremony--and indeed, TVIRDI’s admission---as little more than a symbolic gesture; however, as [Mines and Communities points out](#), “For the legitimate leaders who have struggled for recognition (and lost much in the process because of their anti-mining stance), this event is more than symbolic. The submission by TVI to tribal justice marks a victory in overcoming the huge imbalance of power faced by tribal people like the Subanon when confronting such companies.”

The victory is of the rarest kind, given how Canadian mining companies incessantly claim they’re accountable only to themselves.

That said, with the ceremony now over, TVI has to prove that it means it. Mines and Communities suggests that “TVI should back up its apparent new-found respect for the Subanon, by assuring that the Canatuan mine is closed according to best international practice and by agreeing not to mine on the lands of other Subanon peoples without their Free, Prior and Informed Consent.”

## Tibetan Village Stops Mining On Sacred Mountain

AMBERLY POLIDOR, SACRED LAND FILM PROJECT

In Tibetan culture, where people live in intimate relationship with the natural world around them, reality and mythology have a way of blending together. So it was perhaps no surprise to local villagers when, after a Chinese mining company and local authorities repeatedly repelled efforts to stop a gold mining project on the slopes of holy Mount Kawagebo, the mountain appeared to strike back.

Mount Kawagebo, so sacred that climbing is banned, sits on the border between Tibet and China's [Yunnan Province](#); its eastern side is part of the [Three Parallel Rivers of Yunnan Protected Area UNESCO World Heritage site](#). In February 2011, a small gold-mining operation started near the village of Abin, which is on the western side of Kawagebo, along the path of an 800-year-old pilgrimage route that circles the mountain, attracting tens of thousands of Tibetans annually.

To the local people, who believe strongly in the sacredness of Mount Kawagebo, direct destruction of the mountain body, through activities like mining, is unthinkable. Further, villagers said the project was started without permission or prior consent. Thus began a community effort to halt the project.

Villagers said their attempts to deal directly with the mining company resulted in threats and violence from agents hired by the company, and harassment and arrests by local police. On two occasions, men armed with wooden sticks with nails attacked villagers, injuring more than a dozen.

After efforts to negotiate with the local government failed, villagers pushed \$300,000 worth of mining equipment into the Nu River. A leader of the group was arrested, but later released when 100 villagers surrounded the local police station where he was being held. A few months later, however, mining resumed

and tensions grew. Harassment, death threats and attacks on villagers increased, and some women and children fled to other villages to escape the violence.

On January 20, 2012, a village leader who had tried to confront the mining company was ambushed by local police, tased and arrested. Some 200 community members surrounded the police station, and an ensuing riot resulted in violence and injuries on both sides, with at least one villager sent to the hospital with serious injuries. The leader was released, but protests continued as villagers demanded closure of the mine, and hundreds more villagers from the surrounding area joined in.

This time, the local government held negotiations with the community, including the just-released leader, on behalf of the mining company, whose boss had reportedly fled the area. Villagers involved in negotiations said they were offered money in exchange for allowing the mining to continue, but they refused. On January 23, with tensions mounting, a vice-official from the prefecture government ordered the mine closed and the equipment trucked out of the village.

While the persistence of the community to protect its holy mountain ultimately paid off, some villagers suggested the mountain itself had a role to play. During the negotiations, many reported hearing the sound of a trumpet shell—used in Tibetan religious rituals—coming from the mountain, while others reported unusually windy weather, which stopped once the conflict was resolved.

A Tibetan hired to provide catering to the mine workers described being struck by a physical pressure that forced him to drop what he was carrying; only



PHOTO BY PSEUDOIS. SOME RIGHTS RESERVED

after he prayed did the sensation disappear. Several months earlier, according to another account, a village leader who had accepted bribes from the mining company died suddenly, and a member of his family was seriously injured in an accident.

He Ran Gao, a researcher who works for the Chinese NGO [Green Earth Volunteers](#) and has been closely involved with the communities of the area, described the context of these supernatural accounts. “In a place like Tibet, people have an unusual sense of divinity in nature, based on a whole system of worship and

interaction, which sometime seems superstitious to modern citizens,” she said. “But it is not necessarily irrational or unreasonable.”

This sense of nature worship, Gao said, with its attendant conservation values, is “barely left due to past communism and later economic development.” But in the Himalayas and other mountain areas, where non-Han ethnicities reside and remain somewhat protected, those traditional values can still be found. She described Kawagebo as a success story showing “how sacred nature can be” and how it can “still be respected, protected and continue to make an impact in people’s lives.”

Unfortunately, Abin is but one of many villages threatened by mining activities – in most other cases, marble quarrying – and a greater overarching threat to the region: hydroelectric dam development.

Along the Nu (Salween) River, the longest free-flowing river in mainland Southeast Asia, a proposed 13-dam cascade – including several dams in or very close to the World Heritage site – would wipe out portions of the pilgrimage route

around Mount Kawagebo and displace the communities of the river valley, likely dealing a blow to their traditional culture as well. Although the project was put on hold in 2004 in the wake of widespread protest, it is certainly not dead.

Last year, the World Heritage Committee issued a [statement](#) expressing concern over reports of unapproved construction under way at one dam site on the Nu River, and surveying work – including road-building and drilling – at three others. It warned that “the many proposed dams could cumulatively constitute a potential danger to the property’s Outstanding Universal Value.”

The committee asked China to submit by February 1 of this year a detailed list of all proposed dams, as well as mines that could affect the World Heritage property, along with the environmental impact assessments of any proposed projects, prior to their approval. The committee also requested, by the same deadline, a report on the state of conservation of the property and on the progress made in completing a strategic environmental impact assessment on all of the proposed dams and related development that could impact the site's World Heritage value.

*Many thanks to He Ran Gao, who provided reporting and other source material for this report. He Ran wishes to thank villagers who provided her with information, but whose names have been withheld.*

*This article was originally featured on the Sacred Land Film Project's website.*

## Prey Lang's Hope For A Sustainable Future

HANNIBAL RHOADES

Prey Lang, 'Our Forest' in the indigenous Kuy language, is a precious and important example of evergreen and semi-evergreen forest. Covering 3,600 square kilometres between the Mekong and Stung Sen rivers of Cambodia, it is the last of its kind on the Indo-Chinese peninsula. It is a haven for flora and fauna, including several endangered species who rely on its [healthy and fragile landscape](#). Furthermore, Prey Lang is of vital social and economic importance to local peoples such as the Kuy who rely on its produce for their survival and livelihoods.

In recent years, the forest has come under attack from economically focused 'development' initiatives seeking to exploit the forest and convert its natural abundance into currency for economic growth. Profiteering, both legal and illegal, has raised widespread concerns over the degradation of Prey Lang. With worldwide examples of how quickly natural resources can disappear, it is an issue that cannot be ignored, both for the sake of the forest and for those who rely on it.

The most recent cause for alarm comes from a [new government sub-decree](#) aimed at protecting the forest. Despite its apparent benefits, however, the measure has been met with concern from Prey Lang network members who are raising questions over its authenticity as a conservational measure.

For example, they cite the exclusion of a large swathe of land which could be logged as evidence of a lack of proper coverage in the decree. The network also questions a disturbing lack of 'broad input' as a considerable stumbling point. Indigenous peoples like the Kuy and other residents who rely on Prey Lang stand



to lose certain rights of access as the result of the sub-decree which prohibits the collection of vines, roots, medicinal plants and more from the forest.

The recent sub-decree and the network's negative response illuminates the Kuy's situation as they stand on the front line of an ecological and social battle for Prey Lang. They have called for [international backing of their campaign](#) to protect their forest, but face more than one threat to their lands. These threats put the importance of the controversial sub-decree into perspective and highlight the magnitude of the struggle to maintain Prey Lang and the Kuy way of life.

Logging is one such threat which poses a huge problem for social and natural conservation largely due to the vast amounts of money available in the 'booming' [furniture market](#) for valuable timbers such as Beng and Rosewood. Many believe the authorities are not doing enough to stem this illegal trade in a disseminated system where local forces are obliged to take the initiative due to the vastness of Prey Lang. Reports suggest that law enforcement officers are receiving up to one thousand dollars per cubic metre of valuable wood if they are willing to turn a blind eye to illegal operations within their jurisdictions. Given that the average [gross national income per capita per year in Cambodia](#) was six hundred and fifty dollars in 2009, the bribes that criminal logging companies offer are likely behind allegations of 'rampant corruption.'

Prey Lang has also been subject to [economic land concessions](#) in which companies have been permitted to clear large swathes of pristine forest for industries such as rubber extraction. Road building is also contributing to direct and indirect forest loss as trees are being felled to create roads which then provide access to previously untouchable areas. This is compounded by internal migrations in which the local populations are being forced out of traditionally - inhabited lands and into the forest's peripheral zone. There are many such instances where the social and environmental impacts overlap, sometimes with [disastrous](#)

[consequences](#). And without proper governmental backing in the form of a comprehensive conservation programme - on top of these and other threats to their forest - the Kuy and those who stand with them face staunch opposition to their claims to lands which they have relied on for thousands of years.

Yet there is hope for Prey Lang and its people. Even though the Cambodian government appears intent on expanding the boundaries of its governance deep into Prey Lang and Kuy customary land it may soon be more financially beneficial to conserve the forest rather than treat it as an inexhaustible resource to be exploited. [New technologies](#) are highlighting the importance of the world's forests and concerns are increasing over the need for long term and sustainable approaches to the use of forest resources; Concerns that are beginning to receive financial backing.

However, such technologies and potential future [forest carbon projects](#) must not draw attention away from two important factors for the survival of Prey Lang in the present and into the future. First, in order to secure a future in which its forests could be ecologically vital and profitable, the Cambodian government must improve the clarity and consistency of its conservation measures and exercise closer control over possible sources of corruption and criminality. The world can no longer afford to set goals in terms of decades--and if Cambodia hopes to benefit from projects of the future it must rigorously protect and conserve the very resource that would make it a candidate. Second, the people of Prey Lang must not be denied access to their forest.

The Kuy and their forest brethren know they can [save Prey Lang](#) and they know how to do it; if only Cambodia would take the necessary steps to listen to them and accommodate their needs before Prey Lang, the last of its kind, disappears to the detriment of all.

## The India You Do Not Know

DAMON GERARD CORRIE

I was fortunate to have met Mrs. Meenakshi Munda of the 2 million person Munda Tribal Nation of India, at the Tribal Link Project Access Global Capacity Training for Indigenous Peoples Training course; held in May 2012 in New York City USA. Meenakshi is a petite, attractive and soft-spoken soul, and I did not expect to hear of the myriad of issues she has already had to face in her young life.

Firstly, the reader may not be aware that there are over 80 million Indigenous Tribal Peoples in India; and more than 6,000 indigenous languages are spoken in India. Officially 8% of India's one billion national population is comprised of indigenous tribal peoples.

Meenakshi's Clan & Totemic animal is the Oriya (a native bird), and this was inherited by her from her father's side of the family; members of the Clan are forbidden from doing any harm to this animal. They must respect and protect it instead.

This blends into another point that she raised which is the misrepresentation of animist Tribal peoples such as hers as being 'Hindus' instead of their true religion which is Animism. The Indian Government census recorders generally (and it is THEY who fill out these forms not the Indigenous Peoples themselves) say things such as "Oh - you are nature worshippers? Well that is like Hinduism"... so they mark the Tribal Peoples as 'Hindus'.

If you think about it, there is a great likelihood that official statistics in India have exaggerated the percentage of 'Hindus' by over 80 million persons (the number of Indigenous Tribal Peoples resident in India).

There are six 'scheduled areas' where the 'scheduled Tribes' exist in the State of India. 'Scheduled' is the old Colonial era British terminology that persists in

the legal jargon of modern day India, where it simply means 'Indigenous'. True to British form, the laws in India are all very diplomatically crafted (rather craftily) to sound convincingly comprehensive ... but only in the vaguest way imaginable (if that makes sense to you).

To put it another way - and give but one example, examine this National Law: "Tribal Lands are NOT to be sold or leased to non-tribal peoples"... 'Officially' ... sounds pretty straightforward right?

But rampant corruption and bribery (not to mention 'legal loopholes') that has infected all aspects of Indian Civil Service - to the point where it has become a 'National Malaise'...and this consequently; results in this law (and many others) being circumvented and openly flouted daily all across India.

Were it not so, the indigenous Tribal Peoples of Jharkand State (where the Munda Tribal Nation has its traditional territory) would actually be able to enjoy a higher and more equitable standard of living. Jharkand is a mineral rich State in India that used to supply 40% of the coal, and 2% of the Uranium that India needs annually. Instead of the Indigenous Peoples reaping the benefits of these activities - it is the multinationals who are doing so, and they are achieving this with the collusion of corrupt officialdom; who are giving them 'legal looking' contracts to usurp indigenous tribal lands at will.

The irony of this 'economic boom' underway on indigenous territories - is that the Indigenous Tribal Peoples are being forced to migrate to the urban centers to SEEK employment, due to the fact that only skilled labour is required by the multinationals who have come into their lands; and the vast majority of tribal peoples possess only limited formal education.

This lack of empowerment and economic opportunities leads only to the lowest paying forms of labour in the towns and cities however, with roles such as maids, nannies, cooks, clothes washers, cleaners etc. For this they are lucky to get paid the equivalent of US\$1 per day – less if child labour is involved (another ‘officially illegal’ but widespread practice) ... though the official minimum wage is supposed to be US\$4 per day.

Getting back to the issue of education though ... The Government of India recently announced a very noble sounding policy called ‘Educate all’ which is actually leading to a drop in educational standards all over India, how? Due to the fact that teachers have been instructed by India’s Ministry of Education (unofficially) to ‘pass’ students even though they may have actually failed their exams ... why would they do such a thing you may wonder? Well, when you want to show the rest of the world ‘official statistics’ that PROVE how your society is ‘advancing by leaps and bounds’ and producing incredible numbers of formerly educated graduates each year ... you get the point now right? ... Yes, truly ‘incredible’ achievements indeed ...

The last and most upsetting issue facing the Indigenous Tribal Peoples of India today however, is the fact that they are often caught in the middle of armed conflicts; with paramilitary forces (locally called ‘Naxals’ – which means ‘those against the system’) on one side and the government security forces on the other....with both sides often inflicting serious injustices on the indigenous who have nowhere to turn for refuge. Rapes, tortures and extra judicial killings are commonplace.

It does not help when the media they turn to – to draw attention to their suffering in a last ditch attempt to have redress in the Court of Public Opinion – are entirely biased against them and refuse to publish anything they have to say; publishing only the official government ‘version’ of events.

Meenakshi (who is also the Chair of the [Asia-Pacific Indigenous Youth Network](#)) expressed her gratitude for having benefited from her two-year training course

(2011–2012) thanks to the Tribal Link Foundation, she feels it has taught her an incredible amount about how the United Nations Permanent Forum actually functions, as well as being expertly informed in a readily understandable way – about a myriad of various UN affiliated entities such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Nagoya Protocol, as well as establishing contacts and lines of communication with various donor agencies both inside and outside of the United Nations framework. Last but not least – the networking opportunities and bonds of solidarity and support that this training bestows to ALL whom experience it. Her desire is that other indigenous brothers and sisters from India will likewise be availed the unique opportunity to benefit from the sound training that the Project Access Global Capacity Building for Indigenous Peoples training course offers.

*Damon Gerard Corrie*  
*Autodidact Indigenous Rights Journalist*

*Project Access Global Capacity Building Training Course for Indigenous Peoples 2009–2010 graduate, and Presenter for the May 2012 Training Course.*

# Europe



26

## Saami Communities Standing Up To British, Australian Mining Companies

JOHN SCHERTOW

At least four Saami communities are standing up to Australian and British mining companies that want to exploit the Indigenous Peoples' customary reindeer grazing lands in Northern Sweden.

In November, 2011, the communities of Sirges and Jåhkågasska in Jokkmokk warned that the British mining company Beowulf is in breach of its own ethical guidelines for refusing to engage them meaningfully and in accordance with international human rights conventions.

The British company is pursuing a new iron mine that could negatively impact the Saami's grazing lands, "without which they cannot continuously pursue their traditional reindeer herding," says the National Saami Association.

"In contrast to what Beowulf has reported to its shareholders, the company has not shown any willingness to cooperate with Saami communities, as required by international conventions. This is demonstrated by the company's refusal to assist the communities' participation in impact assessments, which are necessary to obtain knowledge of how the proposed mining would impact upon the Saami communities and their land uses," the National Saami Association continues.

"Beowulf's behaviour is extremely disrespectful. It suggests both a great reluctance to engage with Indigenous People and a lack of knowledge of indigenous rights. Mineral exploration in an area inhabited by Indigenous Peoples requires indigenous consent to the project. But this also assumes that the company engages with the affected indigenous community, and this is something Beowulf has not done" says Mattias Pirak, Jåhkågasska tjiellde.

“The Sami culture within the municipality is alive and vital. Reindeer husbandry and its ancillary industries have helped to create a living landscape, both historically and into the present, as recently confirmed by the established of the [World Heritage area of Laponia](#), instituted with respect for the unique nature and culture that have long existed in the area. Any mining project will not only affect our communities, but also neighbouring ones” says Jakob Nygard, Sirges Saami community.

A large increase in traffic to and from the mine could also have a major impact on the Reindeer. As the National Saami Association concludes, “Reindeer herding requires large tracts of land in order to survive and the municipality of Jokkmokk is clearly defined as reindeer grazing area,” which needs to be held intact.

Meanwhile, two other Saami communities are continuing to speak out against Scandinavian Resources’ (SCR’s) [proposed iron mines](#) in the Kalix River Valley, less than 200km away from Beowulf’s proposed project.

On August 28 2011, Damien Hicks, Executive Director of Scandinavian Resources (SCR), stated that his company cannot operate in an area without the support of local communities. These were welcomed words for the Saami; however, they want to make sure that the company will abide by them. They also want to make sure it will commit to a process of Free Prior and Informed Consent (something they want from Beowulf as well).

Last week, the Mineral Policy Institute attended SCR’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Perth to reiterate that message on behalf of the Saami communities of Girjas and Laevas, as well as the Saami Council and the National Swedish Saami Association (SSR).

While at the AGM, the Mineral Policy Institute read out loud a [written statement](#) that outlines the Saami’s concerns and asks whether or not the company will



PHOTO: LET IDEAS COMPETE, ON FLICKR. SOME RIGHTS RESERVED

engage in a process of Free Prior and Informed Consent as a prerequisite to mining.

Whether or not the company agrees, [the two communities have made it clear](#) that they will not accept any mining on their traditional lands.

The Saami Council also sent another invitation to one of SCR’s main backers, Canaccord Financial Inc., to visit the communities “in order to understand the severity of the human rights breaches concerned and why the communities will never consent to Scandinavian Resource proposed mining activities”. The [Canadian investment firm](#) has yet to respond to the invitation.



## Upcoming Conference To Call Attention To Indigenous Peoples In Caucasian-Caspian Region

JOHN SCHERTOW

A major conference is on the way for Indigenous Peoples in Caspian region.

On May 8, 2012, the organizing committee of the “Indigenous Peoples of Caucasian-Caspian region” conference gathered in Nagorno-Karabakh (a de facto independent, but unrecognized state within Azerbaijan) to discuss the details of the event, which will take place on 5-7 October, 2012 in Yerevan, Armenia.

The organizing committee was joined by representatives from Armenia as well as intellectuals, academics and public leaders from Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Turkey, Russia, Europe and North America.

The conference will ultimately cover a wide range of issues; however, according to Talysh delegation member Mortza Kasempuv, one of the main goals of the conference will be to draw attention to the situation of Indigenous Peoples in the Caspian region, particularly in Azerbaijan.

“Iran is our homeland, where all the rights of indigenous people are exercised. Official Baku’s policy aims to wipe all national minorities of Azerbaijan, Talysh, Lezgians, Avars and Udis off the face of the country. We were evicted from our historical lands: Lankaran, Astara, Masalli, Lerik and Goranboy. Azerbaijan must recognize all the nations residing in its territory to ensure peace,” Kasempuv said, in a [recent interview](#) with the online Armenian news agency PanARMENIAN.Net.

More than two decades ago, in 1993, the Talysh Peoples established the [Talysh-Mughan Autonomous Republic](#) in their homeland – what is now south-eastern Azerbaijan. But with limited international support, the Autonomous Republic was quickly suppressed.

Since then, the Azerbaijan government appears to have maintained a policy of forceful integration aimed at ‘minority’ populations like the Talysh, Tat, Kurds and Lezgins. Kasempuv alludes to such a policy in his recent interview with PanARMENIAN.Net, stating that, “There are no Talysh schools in Azerbaijan, language and culture are forbidden, as repression is also exerted against Talysh activists.”

International coverage of the Talysh, [whose population likely exceeds 1 million](#), is equally scarce. An initial online survey by Intercontinental Cry determined that almost no up-to-date information about the Talysh Peoples is available to the public. It is much the same for the Lezgian, Avar, Udis and others in the region.

# Altai Gas Pipeline Threatens UNESCO World Heritage Site, Telengit Sacred Lands

JOHN SCHERTOW

The Indigenous Telengit Peoples are turning to the international community to help stop a new gas pipeline that would cut through their sacred lands in the Altai Republic of south-western Siberia.

The Ukok Plateau is said to be [the place where the spirits come to listen](#) to the songs of the Altai, Shor, Telengit and other Indigenous Peoples in the Altai region who practice a traditional form of throat singing known as “Kai”.

The Ukok Plateau is especially important to the Telengit Peoples. For the past 8,000 years, Ukok has been a resting place for their ancestors; it is where they go to bury their dead. And among the burial mounds, stone stellae, and petroglyphs of their ancestors, the Telengit pray for their people and make offerings to the spirits around them.

“Ukok is a sacred territory for us. Over many centuries, our ancestors have conducted rituals and buried our dead there. The San Salary takes place on Ukok, a ritual to honor the spirits of the heavens and our ancestors,” say the Telengit, in an [appeal to the international community](#). “Each visitor to Ukok leaves a rock in offering at each obo (cairns located at mountain passes), ties a dyalama ribbon, and leaves ‘white food,’ while those who travel on horseback leave a hair from the horse’s mane.”

[The Telengit](#) say they also learned their way of life in the remote and pristine permafrost landscape.

But now, that living memory and the cultural legacy of the Plateau are under threat. Russia and China are working together to build a pipeline that would carry natural gas from Siberia to China. The pipeline would bisect the Ukok

Plateau along with [the Golden Mountains of Altai](#), a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Russia, and the Kanas National Park which is one of China’s last undeveloped wilderness areas.

In 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that the 2,700-kilometer [gas pipeline](#) would be constructed by the end of 2011. Fortunately, a [disagreement on the cost of the pipeline](#) has been stopping the project from moving ahead; but with China eager for a trade and transportation corridor through the region, an agreement could be reached any time.

In their public appeal, the Telengit express their greatest concerns about the project:

“A pipeline across the Ukok Plateau will destroy numerous monuments of scientific and historical importance, and, more importantly, vital to our people’s sacred traditions. The planned pipeline will inflict serious environmental damage in a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the Ukok Nature Park where we have many animals and birds that are listed in the [Red Book](#): snow leopard, argali mountain sheep, manul (Pallas) cat, black stork, bar-headed goose, steppe eagle, and others.

“Damage to permafrost on Ukok is particularly dangerous, as it will hasten the melting of glaciers in the Tabyń-Bogdo-Ola and Southern Altai ranges. This region is also prone to earthquakes that could cause devastating pipeline leaks and spills. Construction of the pipeline also threatens our local economy. In our Territory of Traditional Natural Resource Use we practice free-range animal husbandry, fishing, and hunting, and we are developing cultural and

ecological tourism. Construction of a pipeline, contamination, and the melting of permafrost will affect all our economic activities, we will lose our sources of food and livelihood.”

According to the [The Altai Project](#), the pipeline would also provide more access to poachers; increase threats to the [Katun River watershed \(also considered sacred\)](#); and destroy or damage cultural and historical landmarks like the Kalbak Tash petroglyphs in Chui-Oozy.

“We have appealed to Russian and Chinese government agencies and Gazprom, but our rights and demands are being ignored. Our only hope is for broad-based international support, and we turn to you with a request to send letters of protest in our names to the companies and governments of Russia and China.”

## Hundreds Of Kumyk Protesters Holding Out For Increased Rights & Autonomy

JOHN SCHERTOW

Hundreds of Kumyks are holding out in a peaceful protest camp in the volatile Russian republic of Dagestan, which is close to civil war.

In April 2012, The Kumyk set up the protest camp just north of Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan, to demonstrate their concerns of being neglected, discriminated against and driven from their territory. The camp is demanding more autonomy so they can preserve their language and culture.

According to the Society for Threatened Peoples (STP), the campaign has so far been ignored by the Russian government, the regional government of Dagestan, and the media.

On June 11, STP sent an appeal to both governments demanding they stop ignoring the protest. “There is still a chance to find a peaceful solution for the problems of the Kumyks, who are campaigning — non-violently — for more autonomy and for the preservation of their language and culture. Please try to start a dialogue with them very soon,” says the letter. “Dagestan is already close to a civil war — so please do not let the protest of this ethnic group escalate too. Any additional conflict will seriously affect the civilian population.”

STP points out in a [press release](#) that, “Since May 2012, at least a dozen people were killed in attacks and bombings — for which Islamist terrorists are blamed. More than 20 people were reported missing in the Russian republic since the beginning of 2012. The police and military forces react with counter-terrorism operations, meaning indiscriminate violence, arrests, torture and also disappearances of innocent people. Terrorists and security forces are trying to undermine every political initiative to resolve the conflict.”

Ramazan Alpautov, an independent expert on inter-ethnic relations, further warns that the protest could be “radicalized”, something that could conceivably have a far-reaching impact on the entire Turkic Muslim Kumyk population. “The moderate activists in the camp are trying to keep young people away from the site — otherwise the movement would probably have been radicalized already” Alpautov, a Kumyk himself, states.

With a population of 431,700 people, the Kumyk are the third largest ethnic group in Dagestan. Unlike the larger Avars and Dargins, the Kumyk do not traditionally live in the republic’s mountainous regions, but rather in the lowland areas between the Caspian Sea and the foothills in southern Dagestan.

*Dr. Ramazan Alpautov can be reached through [facebook](#)*

*He speaks English, German, Russian and Kumyk.*

# Latin America



32

## Broken Promises Fuel New Wave Of Anti-Mining Protests In Panama

JENNIFER KENNEDY

Feb 5, 2012 – An indigenous Ngobe protester was killed by a gunshot wound to the chest during confrontations with the police this morning, 5th February, in San Félix, Panama. It has been confirmed that three more people have been hurt with local residents insisting many more are injured. In flat contradiction, the Security Minister Jose Mulino has stated that his officers are not carrying guns. In retaliation to the death, Ngobe protestors have set light to a police station in San Félix.

Since 30th January, demonstrators have been positioned at various points along the international Inter-American highway using branches, pieces of wood, metal and rocks to block the road. They are protesting against the government's decision to remove a law that would provide environmental protection to their lands. The police continue to deny that there has been any violence, although on Thursday 2nd January there were reports of up to 7 people injured in attacks involving tear gas.

Early 2011 saw similar actions by thousands of Ngobe who protested the government's amendment of the national mining law 415, which would have allowed for the commission of mines and other projects in the region. In March 2011, after talks between government officials and Ngobe leaders, it was agreed that Article 5, which will protect the entire Comarca from exploration and exploitation, would be written into the mining law 415.

Although the government has begun the exploration of other mines in Panama, the semi-autonomous Comarca holds an extremely considerable amount of mineral wealth. Not only is it home to Cerro Colorado – the second largest copper deposit in the world – but it holds several small but significant sites already under exploration by foreign mining companies.



Corriente Resources Inc. have reportedly been working in the area since 2009 with the assistance of the consultancy firm, Kokopelli, owned by Canadian Don Clarke. Kokopelli's role is, according to its own website, "to work directly with industry to build sustainable, respectful and responsible relationships with Indigenous communities."

Don Clarke was also Vice President of sustainable development for Ecuacorriente, a subsidiary of Corriente Resources Inc, a company which was allegedly at the centre of human rights abuses and social conflicts in Ecuador.

In early January, Hector Lopez, leader of the Association for the Rights and Social Development of the Ngäbe-Bugle People, stated at the National Assembly that he opposed article 5 as it would affect development in the region, and in his opinion, violates law 10, a founding law of the Comarca. Lopez is strongly in favour of mining in the region and believes the Ngobe should receive 50% of mining profits.

However, Celio Guerra, president of the traditional Ngabe Bugle Council also stated in January that "the people who protested last year in San Felix spoke loud and clear. We don't want mining in the Comarca."

As protests continue to swell on the highway, there are growing concerns over Panama's freedom of press. On 20th January, a Canadian journalist and fixer, Rosie Simms, was denied entry into the country. She had been working on behalf of the Canadian broadcaster, CBC, who were covering a story about Canadian mining companies in Latin America.



NGOBE HIGHWAY BLOCKADE. PHOTO CREDIT JENNIFER KENNEDY

Many believe that this is symptomatic of a wider issue relating to freedom of press. A recent report by Reporters Without Borders revealed that Panama has dropped 58 places on the freedom of press index since 2010.

As the protests continue, other parts of the country have joined in solidarity. In Donoso district, Colón province, a group of Ngobe and campesinos have blocked a road to the Petaquilla mining project. In Bocas del Toro province, Banana plantation workers have announced that they will strike in 73 hours unless

the government honors its agreements. Truckers, stuck in San Felix, have also pledged to strike. In the capital, many people have taken to streets in support of the Ngobe.

After five days of protests there is major disruption throughout Panama. Market sellers in the capital have reported losses of up to \$10,000. In Bocas del Toro, banana companies have estimated a loss of \$270,000 due to road closures. According to the Chamber of Commerce, the economy could face a total loss of over 10 million dollars.

Meanwhile, the Costa Rican government has expressed concern that 270 of its citizens remain stuck in Panama due to the road closures. Pressure has been increasing for all sides to enter into talks.

UN representatives in Panama have urged both Ngobe leaders and the government to begin 'a peaceful dialogue' and 'to avoid violence.' Although President Martinelli has said the situation is 'reaching a limit,' he has refused to reach out to the Ngobe. He also continues to undermine the legitimacy of the protests by accusing opposition parties of 'manipulating' them.

In a continual distortion of the facts, the government has been using misleading rhetoric such as 'kidnapped' and 'hostages' when referring to travelers delayed on the highway.

On the 4th of February, mobile phone coverage was suspended along a large stretch of the highway where the protesters were concentrated. Later in the afternoon, six teachers were arrested in the city of Santiago whilst protesting in solidarity.

The situation is extremely charged and tension is mounting across the country. As violence continues to unfold in San Félix, journalists and human rights organizations are being denied access to the area. The government continues to spread disinformation and there have been no attempts so far to reach out to the Ngobe and begin peaceful talks.

## Ashaninka Communities Join Forces To Investigate Illegal Logging

JOHN SCHERTOW

Two Ashaninka communities have denounced the ongoing invasion of “clandestine Peruvian loggers” in Terra Indígena Kampa do Rio Amônia, an indigenous territory in the state of Acre, Brazil.

The denunciation immediately follows a four-day inspection of the territory by 15 Ashaninka men from the Soweto community of Alto Rio Tamaya in Peru, and the [Apiwtxa community in Brazil](#).

Armed with spears and GPS trackers, the inspection team set out on August 29 to confirm the presence of Peruvian loggers in the Brazilian territory, which is a well-known home of Indigenous Peoples who live in voluntary isolation.

The invasion made headlines last month when members of [FUNAI reported](#) that they were surrounded by a group of heavily armed men, most likely drug traffickers, from Peru. FUNAI also expressed grave concerns that Isolated Peoples in the region were [being hunted](#) by the same men.

The Ashaninka did not encounter any Isolated Peoples during their inspection mission, however, they were able to confirm that loggers are actively harvesting mahogany and cedar, two endangered hardwoods that are protected by law. According to statements from the Apiwtxa community, the inspection team found:

1) A clearing and a camp approximately 200 meters from the border, between Markers 43 and 44, where “cut timber was found and several cedar, mahogany, copaiba copal and cumaru marked for felling and removal.”

2) A second camp, between markers 42 and 43, where loggers are using a motorized winch, “a system of exploitation that causes very high environmental impact.”

3) A group of eight Peruvian and Brazilian youth in the middle of the forest. One of the men from the expedition later said that “The adult in the group was not there, only his son. They sat and listened like children to our appeal to not go to the Brazilian side.”

Following the inspection mission (which fortunately ended without incident), the Ashaninka presented their findings at a meeting on September 2 with the coordinator of the Pro-Indian Commission of Acre (CPI-AC), and agents of the Federal Police and the local office of the IBAMA.

During the meeting it was agreed that a second investigation would be carried out. According to the Apiwtxa community, it will include “flights over the marked locations and for verifying other clearings in addition to what was seen on the ground. This new inspection mission is due to occur in the next few days, and also will serve for making photographic and filmed records.”

The issue of long-term monitoring was also discussed at the meeting; with the Ashaninka offering to carry out monthly expeditions along to the border “[as long as] we have the logistical support of the FUNAI and IBAMA” said Issac Piyāko, leader of the Apiwtxa community. “This action would be reinforced with an over-flight in the region conducted by the FUNAI or IBAMA every two, three months”, Piyāko added.

Putting the invasion in context, the Ashaninka explain that, back in 2002, the government of Peru “granted immense areas of forest [through a new forest law] to large scale logging companies. Without due inspection, the policy [has facilitated] illegal activities, which invade [upon] native community areas.”

Malu Ochoa, the Executive Coordinator of CPI/AC, examines this fact in “Sustainability without Borders”, an in-depth analysis of the Ashaninka’s efforts to conserve biodiversity in the border region. Ochoa explains that,

In Peru, as of 2000, the new Forest Law [Lei Florestal] and Wildlife [Fauna Silvestre] (Law 2738) permitted the creation of the “Bosques de producción permanente”, domain areas of the State dedicated exclusively to forest management. Within these, are defined Units of Exploitation, large areas of forest for the removal of wood, by contract bidding, were delivered to businesses and legal entities/persons in the form of 40 year concessions. According to the Instituto Del Bien Comum – IBC, there are concessions that amount to 50,000 hectares. It so happens however, that this legality contributes largely to the illegal logging in the region, becoming a true chaos for the indigenous populations.

The great problem with this “shredding/retailing” of the Peruvian Amazon in the form of forest concessions was generated by the common practice of governments of the Amazon countries, to create policies for the region with purely economic goals. The intention is to remove the non-renewable natural resources and to construct large scale infrastructure projects (IIRSA), without considering the negative impacts and, worse, without knowing the local demands and/or realities. In the Peruvian case, it is without the “knowledge” of the existence of native communities and of populations of isolated indigenous peoples.

“In Peru, the Ashaninka people have no title to land and have been in the struggle for demarcation for 10 years. “Our relatives are constantly threatened, and some already murdered. They remain in the gun sights of the invaders and

because of this we are requesting help for the people,” said Piyāko.

“What most concerns us is that the authorities until now have not assumed their responsibilities. If we do not solve the problem, our territory will continue to be invaded, and we will continue to suffer the death threats,” added a Peruvian Ashaninka leader, whose name was held back to avoid retaliation.

The Soweto community says they have already attended several meetings in the city of Pucallpa; however, the government asserts that it just doesn’t have the budget to carry out any of their own inspections.

The Apiwtxa community has faced similar inaction. Most recently, in 2008, FUNAI agreed to set up a monitoring post on the Brazil side of the border, “but as of today, this has not been done”, said Piyāko.

At least Brazil has started to pay a little more attention to the situation. However, the Ashaninka hope that both governments will take a more proactive role to stop the invasion altogether. To that end, the leader of the Apiwtxa community suggests a new preservation policy to prevent future invasions and a joint effort aimed at removing the existing invaders.

## Battle For The Birthplace Of The Sun Unfolds In Mexico

TRACY L. BARNETT

MEXICO CITY — To the native Wixarika of Mexico, better known as the Huichols, the mountains of Catorce and the desert at their feet are the center of the world, a temple of prayer on the level of the Vatican. To a pair of Canadian mining companies, it's a mother lode of gold and silver in a market hungry for both.

A battle for the UNESCO-recognized Wirikuta Natural and Cultural Ecological Reserve in the northern state of San Luis Potosí has been unfolding over the past year and a half. The context seems the stuff of a movie script, but it's deadly serious to the Wixarika people, whose core cultural practice for more than a thousand years has consisted of regular pilgrimages to Wirikuta, the birthplace of the sun: a magical desert where the balance of life on Earth is maintained through a sacred cactus that carries the wisdom of a blue deer.

"It's as if they wanted to put a gas station in the middle of the Basilica," said Santos de la Cruz, referring to the most sacred shrine of Mexican Catholics, the Basilica of Guadalupe. De la Cruz is a traditional authority in his community of Bancos de San Hipólito and also an attorney engaged in the legal battle to defend his peoples' lands and traditions. "What they want to do is to rip out the vein of the heart of Wirikuta — and that's why we're here. We're not interested in gold and silver; what interests us is life."

The fight began in the summer of 2010, when word got out that First Majestic Silver Corp. of Canada had been granted 22 mining concessions for more than 6,000 hectares, nearly 70 percent of it within the reserve. Another critical problem in the area is the ongoing razing of thousands of hectares within the reserve for industrial tomato growers.

More recently, a vastly larger threat came to light in the form of a planned open-pit gold mine by another Canadian corporation, Revolution Resources, Inc. An estimated 59,000 acres would be obliterated by the planned mine, which is located around the place known as Bernalejo or Las Margaritas — the hunting grounds of the sacred peyote cactus, where the deer spirit Kauyumarie, an intermediary between the deities and man, is believed to reside.

All of these incursions, say the Wixarika leaders, endanger the integrity of the ecosystem and their ability to practice their religion. They also maintain they are in violation of their right to informed consent regarding development of their traditional lands.

"In Wirikuta is where we find the ideas that put us in tune with our deities, that teach us the wisdom that we carry back to the Wixarika people," explained Jesus Lara Chivarra of San Sebastian Teponahuatlán, one of a small handful of Wixarika leaders who have been officially authorized to represent their communities. "Wirikuta is where we pray for all of humanity, that we may avoid a global catastrophe... We have been carrying out our pilgrimages and ceremonies and prayers so that harmony and ecological equilibrium might persist, so that things move in an abundant way. And now, to take away this place from us is to do away with the Wixarika ethnicity."

Wixarika leaders have fought the mines in court, obtaining a suspension of any permits for the First Majestic mine until the company demonstrates their planned mine will not affect the rights of the Wixarika people to be consulted about the use of their traditional lands. But observers fear that the suspension



will not withstand political pressure, and they point out that it does nothing to stop the bigger Revolution Resources mine.

Meanwhile, the Wixaritari (Wixarikas) and the Wirikuta Defense Front, the citizen coalition that has formed to support them, have waged a simultaneous battle in the court of public opinion. They traveled to New York, Texas, Seattle and Vancouver — right to the headquarters of First Majestic Silver — to make their case. They marched on Los Pinos, the Mexican White House, to deliver a letter to President Felipe Calderon and teamed up with some of Mexico's most beloved rock stars to organize Wirikuta Fest, an event that sold out Mexico City's massive Foro Sol stadium. The cheering mass of humanity chanted along with a star-studded lineup the movement's mantra: "Wirikuta no se vende, Wirikuta se defiende" (Wirikuta is not for sale; Wirikuta is to defend). The event raised more than half a million dollars for sustainable development projects as an alternative to mining in the region, and raised awareness and interest in a burgeoning movement to respect and support Mexico's multitude of indigenous ethnicities.

First Majestic and the Mexican government responded with their own publicity stunt. Two days before Wirikuta Fest, in a highly publicized ceremony at the national Museum of Anthropology, Mexican Secretary of the Economy Bruno Ferrari handed over a document to a group of Huichols and announced that First Majestic had donated some of its concessions to the Wixarika people and that 45,000 hectares of the Wirikuta reserve was being set aside as a "mining reserve" where mining would be prohibited.

It sounded too good to be true; and in fact, it was. The land that First Majestic was handing over to the Huichols was the same 762 hectares the company had offered to Wixarika leaders a year before when they went to the company's headquarters in Vancouver. The tract included the Cerro Quemado, or Burned Peak — the most visited and best known of the network of sacred sites that comprise Wirikuta, but less than one percent of the government-protected Wirikuta Cultural and Ecological Reserve.

The 45,000 hectares the government had set aside as a "mining reserve" were the areas that had not been concessioned to First Majestic or to Revolution Resources — in other words, the land that had never been given over to the mining companies. The coordinates had been determined by government representatives of the CDI, the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, without input from the elected traditional authorities of the Wixarika communities.

Wixarika leaders, members of the Wirikuta Defense Front and Ruben Albarran of Café Tacvba, one of Mexico's biggest rock bands, hastily organized a press conference on the eve of Wirikuta Fest to denounce the government's "media masquerade," but the majority of the media had moved on to other topics. The Wirikuta Fest was a huge success, but many Mexicans are still under the mistaken impression that Wirikuta has been saved.

The struggle continues to intensify as the mining companies move forward with preparations, and as activists continue to work through the courts and political connections to do everything possible to stop the mines and to see that Wirikuta receives the federal and UNESCO protection that it deserves.

“What these people don't understand is that all the region of Wirikuta is sacred, not just the Cerro Quemado,” emphasized Jesus Lara. “To negotiate with the mining company is to destroy ourselves, it is to do away with our culture.”

Like many others, Lara believes a strong energetic force is created by the presence of the silver that lies beneath the soil. It was that energy that led his ancestors here sometime in the mists of prehistory, he believes, and it's what gives the place its essence to this day.

“If they remove the silver, it will no longer be what it is today; it's like having an empty bottle. That's how it will be; the bottle may remain, but the content will be gone.”

*For more information and to find out how you can help, go to [www.wirikutadefensefront.org](http://www.wirikutadefensefront.org) or <http://theesperanzaproject.org/tag/wirikuta>*

## Indigenous Peoples ‘Betrayed’ By President’s Backing Of Hotel

JOHN SCHERTOW

October, 2011 – The Elder “Mamos” or Spiritual leaders of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, expressed profound concern over plans to build a new seven-star hotel on their ancestral territory within the Tayrona National Park in northern Colombia.

The Mamos only learned about the proposed “Dávila tourism complex” after an attorney, Samario Alejandro Aria, uncovered a letter from the Ministry of the Interior which described the project area as being empty of any permanent human settlements.

The comment generated a considerable amount of confusion among journalists who took it to mean that the Ministry was denying the existence of the Indigenous Peoples. That does not appear to be the case. Rather, the Ministry was pointing out, however unsympathetically, that there aren’t any indigenous communities in the area.

However, the Mamos point out that there are four Kogi families who are living there today.

What’s more, the Mamos warn that the proposed site is located on sacred lands that are supposed to be held inviolate. In the Mamos’ own words “...In these sites one must take care not to touch the mother of earth, water, and sun called Taiyuna.”

Soon after learning about the risk of destruction, the Mamos were confronted with another unpleasant shock: President Juan Manuel Santos decided to endorse the mega hotel as an environmentally-friendly project that would promote eco-tourism.

During his inauguration, President Santos took part in a “unprecedented” ceremony that was conducted by Mamos from all four Indigenous Peoples in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta--the Kogi, Wiwa, Arhuaco and Kankuamo. During the ceremony, Santos was presented with a sacred staff as a symbol of universal balance.

The Mamos say that, because of the president’s decision to endorse the project, the Universe has now been thrown off balance. And the only way that balance can be restored is for the President to shift his position, as [Ati Quigua](#), the indigenous representative on Bogota’s city council, states, “... to reconsider this decision and return the park.”

In an earlier interview with [Noticias Uno](#), Quigua observed that, “Permission is being given to a company that has committed many crimes against nature; the Dávila family has used the name of the Kogis to sell coffee throughout the world and have nothing to do with the Kogis.” Elsewhere, the Davila Abondano family has [dispossessed Campesinos and Indigenous Peoples of their lands](#).

Fortunately, at this point, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development hasn’t received an environmental permit application, which means the project still can’t move ahead. The Ministry also says that if it does receive an application, it will review all relevant social, spiritual, cultural and environmental aspects of the project; and it will carry out a consultation process with the Indigenous Peoples.

**Update:** *In the days that followed this report, a group of government officials spoke out against the construction of the mega hotel. One Senator stated that*

*“Tayrona National Park is one of the most important natural resources on the planet. Those who have travelled the world say it is the most beautiful place in the universe.”*

*Midway through the internal upsurge, President Santos informed Environment Minister Frank Pearl that two of his relatives were involved in the project’s development. Not long after that, Minister Pearl rejected the proposal. The sacred land remains undisturbed.*

## This Land Is Ours! A Tale Of Land Theft Through Violence And Laws

FRAUKE DECOODT

“This land is ours! It does not belong to the State. It is ours, as indigenous people!” said 20 year old Guatemalan Lorena Sanchez, when on the 3rd of May 2011 a state representative from Fondo de Tierras, a government department regulating access to land, arrived in Tzalbal to tell its people they are living on state property.

Tzalbal, a village of fourteen settlements, is located in Guatemala, deep in the Cuchumatanes mountains. Tzalbal is home to the Ixil, a native Mayan people. The Ixiles live in the municipalities of Nebaj, Chajul and Cotzal, in the northwestern department of Quiché. Tzalbal lies the municipality of Nebaj.

The villagers had no idea that their land had been nationalised in 1984 — a fact that was concealed from them for 28 years. They are perplexed, shocked, and angry. In the 1980s the area was scorched with genocide and state repression, and the majority of Ixiles were forced to flee their land.

### The genocide of the Maya-Ixil Peoples

During the 36 year conflict in Guatemala, 98% of the 7000 victims in the Ixil region, were Ixiles. A sixth of the Ixile population was assassinated by the army, and 70% of their villages were obliterated. Most Ixiles fled to the mountains; many died due to cold, starvation and disease.

Although the Ixil area was one of the worst affected, the whole of Guatemala suffered during the conflict that raged until 1996 which saw 12% of the population displaced and more than 200,000 people killed or disappeared. The state army was responsible for 93% of the atrocities and 626 massacres.

Approximately 83% of the victims were indigenous.

Post-conflict investigations from the Guatemalan Catholic Church and the United Nations have established that during the 1980s the state committed acts of genocide in Guatemala.

### **A people displaced from its lands**

Though the genocide can be explained by the racism towards, and the dehumanization of the indigenous people who comprise more than 60% of the Guatemalan population, one cannot fully understand the pattern and formation of the genocide in Guatemala without taking into account the importance of land.

The residents of Tzabal comprehend, only too well, the intimate relationship between land and conflict. Patricio Rodriguez is only 66 years old but the wisdom of age and the harsh experience of poverty and conflict are inscribed on his face. Patricio points out that their present conditions are “because of the war, the repression, and the massacres of the government in the eighties. So many years they burned our houses, they killed our animals and destroyed our milpas [small plots of maize, the staple food of the Mayans]. Because so many people had been killed we fled to the mountains to save our lives. The army then thought this land was abandoned, empty. But we deserted our land because of the repression.”

A small, friendly man responsible for the drinking water of Tzabal comes and sits beside me – “now we are starting to realise that during the armed conflict they stole from us. And to legalize their theft they made a law.”

### **The conflict for the land and the land for the conflict**

It is the unequal distribution of the land in a principally agricultural society like that of Guatemala that has been the primary cause of poverty and conflict. In 1964, 62% of the land lay in the hands of just 2% of the national population,

whereas 87% of citizens barely had sufficient land for subsistence farming.

Since independence, the Guatemalan state apparatus has largely served the interests of the Guatemalan oligarchy, in effect becoming a guarantor of land and (indigenous) labour. These guarantees have always been provided through the use of violence and the legal system.

In 1944, under President Arbenz, the State began to serve the interests of the majority of its rural population by introducing an agrarian reform programme. However, in 1954 these reforms were quashed in a coup d'état, with the support from the United States of America.

The equal redistribution of the land was one of the main demands of numerous indigenous, peasant and guerrilla movements that rose from the 1960s until the 1980s. Violent repression of these movements has allowed unequal land distribution to be maintained and expanded. Land became a gain of the conflict.

After their accession to power in 1954 the army generals decided that the State apparatus should not only serve the oligarchy but also their own interests. One of their primary interests was land; their means to acquire it was through violence and laws, or what were euphemistically known as “development projects.”

### **An assembly to inform the community**

If one explores the chronology of law drafting and violent events that engulfed the region it becomes very clear how the State usurped indigenous lands. For the locals it became clear when they researched their case.

Ronaldo Gutierrez is the young “indigenous mayor,” the communitarian indigenous authority, of Tzabal. Wearing the typical red jacket emblazoned with black embroidery of the Ixiles, he explains to me in a quiet voice and broken Spanish that after the state representative left he called a meeting of the

representatives of the other thirteen settlements. With the help of others they investigated the case and decided they would organise a popular assembly to inform the whole community.

On the 6th of October, the community hall filled with people and the sounds of Guatemalan marimba music. A painting remembering the atrocities of the conflict adorns the outside wall. About seven hundred Ixil were present, the majority of the men wear their typical straw hats, some wear their red jackets. Also a fair amount of women are present, all wearing embroidered blouses or “huipil” and “traje”, skirts. Some, mainly older women, wear colourful ribbons knotted in their hair.

### The laws of war

Ramon Cadena, a lawyer from the International Commission of Jurist is one of the people that offered to help investigate the case of Tzalbal. At the assembly he explained that the root of the problem is a law called “Decreto No. 60-70”; a law that was passed in 1970 by General Osorio who declared “the establishment of Agrarian Development Zones of Public Interest and National Urgency”. Quiche was one of many northern departments declared a “Development Zone”.

The “public interest” was the colossal project called “Franja Transversal del Norte” which converted a group of generals and their allies into gigantic land owners. Together with the following “National Development Plans” of 1971 to 1982 these projects aimed to promote the production and exportation of petroleum, minerals, electric energy, monoculture plantations and precious timbers in the north of the country.

It should be noted that the departments mentioned in these laws were also the ones that suffered most of the massacres. I was informed that these laws are the basis for the theft of the land and natural resources of the indigenous people. They are also the root of the war that was unleashed by the government

of Guatemala against the peoples of Guatemala. State violence and repression were undertaken in parallel to the “Development Plans”.

Another law that sealed the destiny of Tzalbal is “Decreto Ley No. 134-83”, ordained in 1983 by General Mejía Victores. With this law the army measured and territorially reorganized the Ixil region in order to establish the “model villages” and legalize nationalisation.

Like many other villages, Tzalbal was converted into a ‘model village’ or ‘centre of development’. Instead of the chaotically scattered houses of an indigenous village, houses were rebuilt in a pattern where its inhabitants would be easy to control. The people that were not massacred and did not flee to the mountains, or who returned because they could not bear the harsh conditions in the mountains, were resettled in these villages. Many inhabitants refer to these villages as concentration camps.

‘Civil Self-defence Patrols’ or PACs, were established in the model villages. These were militarised civil vigilantes introduced by the army. By 1985 more than a million men collaborated with the army. Failure to participate flagged them as a suspect subversive, which often had lethal consequences.

In 1983, as ordered in the “Decreto Ley No. 134-83”, the PACs of Tzalbal were forced to measure their land. In front of the whole assembly, a courageous man stood and explains, in Ixil, how the army had promised them land if they would measure the boundaries. But they were cheated. The land was measured to be nationalised.

Ramon Cadena concludes that on the 11th of May 1984 the State officially dismembered the original land title of 1903 and transferred approximately 1495 hectares of Tzalbal land to the State.

The laws that legalized the usurpation of indigenous land, the “Decreto No. 60-70” and “Decreto No. 134-83” are laws of war. The Peace Accords were



signed in 1996. In a communiqué released after their assembly, the communities demanded that their constitutional right to possess the land be reinstated.

### **History repeats itself, history continues**

After so many development projects, development laws and “centres of development”, the indigenous population of Guatemala is rather suspicious of any initiative that bears the name “development.”

The laws passed during the war remain valid, other new laws have since been added, which open opportunities in new territories or reinforces control over the land already seized. Such is the case with the Law for Public-Private Alliances, which allows the State to legalize land evictions for the sake of “public interest”. Under the Development Plan of the present government of Colom, the economic development of the “Franja Transversal del Norte” continues, adding amongst others Peten and the Pacific Coast. The evictions of peasants and indigenous communities continue.

Mega-projects continue to flood Guatemala like the hydroelectric dams that are looking to inundate its indigenous lands. Electric energy is indispensable for big industries like mining companies, oil refineries, and the massive monoculture plantations of sugar, oil palm trees, bananas, and coffee. And of course, gigantic roads and a large infrastructure to transport all this produce is necessary.

The same unequal land distribution continues. According to the last census of 2003 almost 80 percent of the productive land remains in the hands of less than eight percent of Guatemala’s population of 14 million. More than 45 percent have not enough land for subsistence farming. Not surprisingly, half the population lives in poverty and 17 percent in extreme poverty.

The same people remain in power. “It was Tito who was the commander of the army, he was the chief” explains Lorena in a low and preoccupied voice. In the collective memory it was not just anybody who was in command of the Nebaj,

Quiché military base in 1982 and 1983. In the region, “General Tito” refers to Otto Pérez Molina, the presidential candidate and very possibly winner of the elections to be held on the 6th of November 2011. A villager remembers “it was him that obliged us to measure the land, he was in command when our land was stolen from us”.

The fear remains too. When one speaks of Otto Pérez one does it anonymously.

General Otto Perez Molina commanded the Nebaj, Quiche military base in 1982 and 1983.

The same indigenous peoples also remain, fighting for their land. As Lorena insists, “we have natural resources to defend, as indigenous people we have a right to defend our water, our forests, our rivers.” Old Patricio Rodriguez asserts that multinationals “should return to their own lands with the plans they have done or they think to do.”

### **In unity the struggle continues!**

I am told Tzalbal is the first village to find out that their land was nationalised, and the first to publicly denounce this and demand, unconditionally, that their land be given back. Nonetheless, the case of Tzalbal is illustrative of what the conflict in Guatemala was about. This conflict was about land.

The methods used to acquire land in Tzalbal are also familiar. The natives of Tzalbal appear to be the unwanted actors in a drama that always seems to repeat itself in Guatemala. A drama which has run for more than 500 years where invaders, whether Spanish, military or “representative” democratic governments, steal the land of the indigenous peoples through laws and violence.

But the struggle of the communities persists. In the assembly the words “worried” and “capitalism” are heard amongst the discussions in Ixil. But more significantly, the community hall is filled with a militant conviction. United, the

Ixiles present shout, “We don’t want another master!”, “Finish the law! Give us back our land!”

When I ask Patricio Rodriguez how he thinks they will recover their land he responds, “through unity, through manifestations, through national and international organisations concerned with our rights. We will get our land back, bit by bit, step by step.”

Gregorio, the man responsible for the drinking water continues, “all together we will go to congress, to the ministries until they take us into account. As they stole from the community, they have to return the land, without any conditions, in the name of the community. Because it is unquestionable, the land is from our forefathers, from our great grandfathers that have passed away, they left the land to us as we are their children.”

*For safety reasons the names of the interviewees in Tzabal were changed.*

*Frauke Decoodt, is a freelance reporter from Belgium based in Guatemala, where she worked in 2010 for a year with Peace Brigades International (PBI). She holds a B.A. in Social Anthropology and Development from the University of Sussex and a Masters Degree in the Anthropology of Conflict, Violence and Reconciliation, also from Sussex University. She wrote her dissertation on “Representations of Conflict and Violence in Mainstream News Media: exploring content, context and power relations”. Her long time interest in journalism also led her to obtain a post-graduate degree in Investigative International Journalism from the Hogeschool Mechelen / Fonds Pascal Decroos.*

## US and Honduras Shirk Responsibility For Drug Raid Misquito Massacre

HANNIBAL RHODES

In the early hours of May the 11th, a Honduran military helicopter opened fire on a boat that was making its way up the Patuca River near Ahuas in the Department of Gracias a Dios. Though the facts of the night’s events remain murky, the corpses of four indigenous Misquito villagers, including two pregnant women, provide incontrovertible evidence of the tragedy suffered by the Paptalaya community. Four others were injured in the same attack and ten orphaned.

The forces aboard the offending helicopter—a combination of specialist American FAST advisers and Honduran security agents—clearly appear to have fired on the wrong boat tragically killing, injuring and orphaning the Misquito passengers. However, reports from locals suggest that the US involvement in this incident ran deeper. Villagers say that at least ten armed Caucasian men with limited Spanish proficiency arrived in their village following the shootings. They reputedly stopped locals from reaching the injured and the dead, threatened them with guns and subjected them to degrading treatment on their own land. The massacre and the subsequent treatment of the Misquito people has led COFADEH and the indigenous community to seek justice, pressuring the government for a full and unbiased enquiry.

The events that have occurred in the aftermath of this disaster, which may also constitute a crime and breach of international law, were perhaps almost as shocking as the killings themselves. At best, the massacre was a tragic case of mistaken identity (villagers are forced to use the river day and night as there are no other alternative routes through the forest) but the reaction of both the US and the Honduran governments to this appalling event has been desperately disappointing. President Lobo’s response was to make derogatory

comments about the indigenous Misquito, hinting that, to his mind, their presence on the river in the early hours of the morning was not unfortunate but suspicious. Honduran officials have blamed locals of Ahuas for the areas notoriety as a smuggling route, citing their poverty and isolation as reasons. There is strong evidence that the villagers do have a casual involvement, being paid for unloading narcotics shipments, but the policy is not to harm these individuals who are seen as relatively innocent and inconsequential participants. Both Lobo and his official lackeys seem to have forgotten that it is their own government that is responsible for any lack of infrastructure in the area; A lack of infrastructure which, for example, may cause people to take to the river at irregular hours. Regardless of this fact, incident represents the crossing of a line that is meant to protect against the loss of innocent lives.

In apportioning the blame onto the locals of Ahuas, then, the Honduran powers that be have completed a cyclical argument that is found wanting. Meanwhile, they have ignored the welfare of those injured in the attack who have yet to receive proper medical care. This abandonment is unforgivable and more broadly reveals the continuing marginalization of and discrimination against Indigenous Peoples like the Misquito. In the fall out of the massacre, Honduras has reacted by distancing itself from its own people when it should have sought to make amends for the events of May 11th.

It is not only the Honduran authorities who have failed to take decisive and meaningful action in the aftermath of these killings. The incident has been reported very differently in the USA than it has been by the Misquito, and the Americans have provided a similarly ineffective reaction to his possibly heinous violation of the Misquito's human rights. Though they do not deny that there were US 'FAST' members aboard the offending helicopter, the American administration has denied that any US individual fired on the boat personally. In addition, US sources claim that the boat fired on the helicopter first, prompting the forces to open fire on the Misquito as an act of self-defense.

These excuses cannot be taken at face value. Even if no FAST member fired a weapon, as a specialist advisory team they surely had ultimate control of the operation and accordingly must take responsibility. As for the claim of self-defense, if the Misquito boat had fired on the helicopter, the bias of casualties would not support the notion that the helicopter crew were in any particular danger. The same cannot be said for those who were gunned down on the water; and testimonies such as that of Hilda Lezama bring into question the nature of the confrontation as reported by the US media and official government representatives. Perhaps not surprisingly, US reports also skim lightly over the villagers' claims of subsequent abuses at the hands of apparently American forces. The US has attempted to deflect any responsibility for the incident as the Honduran government has done and their relationship, despite this issue, has continued.

Thus far, there has been no justice or resolution for the Paptalaya community, caught in the heavy crossfire between traffickers and anti-drug forces. Since the incident, human rights groups have visited the affected community and begun proceedings to ensure that justice is eventually delivered. When they arrived they "Witnessed an atmosphere of terror generated amongst dire poverty, in an area where indigenous people are now losing control of natural resources." Like COFADEH, they have called for a full and independent investigation into the night's events and have begun pressuring both governments.

We must hope that a full enquiry clears the fogs of misinformation which have shrouded this issue, excusing the authorities from accepting accountability and casting the Misquito into a darkness that was only sharpened by their losses

## Triqui Caravan Stands Down After Shameful Moves By Government

JOHN SCHERTOW

Feb 10, 2012 – The Triqui people of San Juan Copala are [returning to the Palace of Governance](#) in Oaxaca de Juárez after a series of shameful moves by the Oaxaca government.

Things were finally starting to look up for the displaced community. On January 23rd, Oaxaca Governor Gabino Cué agreed to send an armed escort to accompany the Triqui on their return home after being displaced by paramilitary groups 16 months ago.

But then, Governor Cue presented a Peace Accord with some last minute revisions that Triqui representatives dared not accept.

Under the terms of the Accord--which would supposedly guarantee the Triqui's safety--just five families per week would have been allowed to return home instead of everybody at once. Presumably, those five families would have had to travel without any escorts, be they police officers, human rights observers or government officials. The paramilitaries used such conditions in the past to terrorize the Triqui People.

Ultimately, the Triqui decided to ignore the revisions and proceed with their Caravan, without a police escort.

The journey was going well at first but then, after a day's journey down the highway to San Juan Copala, the caravan came face to face with a [police blockade](#).

The paramilitaries set up their own blockades down the same highway. They also [occupied San Juan Copala](#) – and not in the way that some US activists can feel good about.

Things went downhill from there. Government officials then showed up at the blockade and asked the Triqui to sit down with the paramilitaries and “negotiate,” when suddenly, a member of the caravan was arbitrary arrested, and the government at the same time suspended their talks and led a complete withdrawal. Even the police left. It was as if the government was handing the caravan over to the paramilitaries.

Suffice it to say, the Triqui were once again betrayed by the Oaxaca government.

Five months earlier, Oaxaca [forced a group of displaced Triqui women to suspend a peaceful sit-in](#) they started in August 2010.

The sit-in began just a few weeks before paramilitaries threatened to execute all supporters of [The Autonomous Community Council Of San Juan Copala](#), having already endured seven months of [violence and inhumane treatment](#) at the hands of the same paramilitaries, the Triqui couldn't take the chance of ignoring the threat, and ordered a full evacuation.

From that point on, the sit-in became the Triqui's first line of defence.

However, as far as the government was concerned, it was an eyesore that they wanted to get rid of, especially with the “Grito de Independencia” celebrations fast approaching.

The government's solution was to approach the Triqui with a proposal: In exchange for suspending the sit-in for the celebration, the government would give the Triqui women and their children temporary lodging. And after the celebrations, they could return to the site.

The Triqui agreed.



PHOTO CREDIT: MUNICIPIO AUTONOMO DE SAN JUAN COPALA

It wasn't long before the police set up a fence around the palace corridors to block them from ever going back; "[and then] we were called again by the same officials who bring lies and deceit in order to present us with the offer of another round table," said the Community Council in a [September 20 statement](#).

Despite the steady line of lies and betrayals, the Triqui continue to struggle for their right to return home, on the land of their ancestors, without being terrorized. They have no intention of giving up that struggle.

*For news and updates on this situation, keep an eye on [municipioautonomodesanjuancopala.wordpress.com](http://municipioautonomodesanjuancopala.wordpress.com), [sanjuancopalaooaxaca.wordpress.com](http://sanjuancopalaooaxaca.wordpress.com), [cdefensayjusticiamasjc.blogspot.com](http://cdefensayjusticiamasjc.blogspot.com) (links in Spanish only)*



# Middle East



48

## The Praver Plan Made Law: The Further Plight Of The Negev Bedouin

HANNIBAL RHOADES

The Bedouin of The Negev have been subjected to a vast array of colonial abuses since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1950 – and despite the efforts of UN bodies and NGO's, these abuses continue to this day.

The most recent affront to the health of the Bedouin people and their culture and livelihoods stems from the Israeli state's threatened implementation of the much-maligned Praver plan. This initiative, vastly abstracted from the suggestions of the [Goldberg Commission](#), advocates the enforced removal of Bedouin peoples from villages and their relocation to urban centres.

Catastrophically for the Bedouin of the Negev, the Praver plan has recently been passed into law; those who stand by their traditional land claims now face the full dismantlement of their property, alienation from their cultural milieu and dispossession. Unless they submit to inferior treatment and a [meagre land settlement](#) these Bedouin, full Israeli citizens themselves, will be relocated to designated Bedouin cities such as Rahat. There they face a life bereft of their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices, in often [stultifying conditions of urban poverty](#), where their health may also deteriorate sharply.

The subjugation of the Bedouin people of the Negev today owes much to the historical rigidity of the Israeli state's attitudes to their Arab co-inhabitants. Indeed, it would seem that opinions of the Bedouin have changed very little since the late Israeli military leader [Moshe Dayan](#) called for the disappearance of "this phenomenon of the Bedouin" in 1963. Rhetorically cast as backward nomadic invaders, the Israeli state has repeatedly forced migrations upon the Bedouin, relocated them to townships, cut off their facilities and roundly insulted their status as ancestral inhabitants of their land.

One such example of Bedouin suffering is the deliberate placement of the [Ramat Hovav industrial district](#) next to the Bedouin village of Wadi El Na'am. As a result of dumping and chemical waste, the people of this village suffer an unusually [high burden of mortality caused by cancers](#).

Other illnesses such as asthma have also risen in prevalence, as have miscarriages, leading one angry Bedouin activist to claim that the state wants Arab residents without education and wealth, a deformed population. The methods used by the government to assimilate the Bedouin then have hardly been "without coercion" as Dayan suggested they ought to be; and it is a poorly kept secret that the true reason for these abuses lies in the states desire to settle Jewish farmers in The Negev at the expense of the Arab Bedouin through ignoring their traditional land rights.

There was some doubt whether the highly controversial Prawer plan would pass into Israeli law as this most recent attempt to prise the Bedouin from their land is widely regarded as racially discriminatory, and as being in violation of the Bedouin peoples human rights. There has been a great degree of internal and international concern over the welfare of the Bedouin in light of the proposal of this plan, not the least of which from the United Nation's [Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – both have condemned the move.

However, invoking the masked trope of 'development,' the Israeli government have ignored such concerns and pressures passing the plan into law. The central aim of the now reified plan is to demolish what the state says are illegal Bedouin villages, classified as unrecognized, and forcibly relocate them to the predominantly Bedouin cities. Thirty five villages are threatened by the plan.

The government has already begun its work to eradicate Bedouin presence in the area. The village of AlAraqib stands as a testament to the Israeli government's commitment to implementing their plan, it has been demolished an astonishing thirty seven times since 2010, even before the Prawer plan made this action a lawful priority. Most recently, after the plan had been legally accepted,



PHOTO: ACTIVESTILLS.ORG

[police confined the residents of AlAraqib](#) to their graveyard, itself evidence of the Bedouin's connection to their land, while they levelled houses complete with villagers' belongings and destroyed the olive trees with which Bedouin agricultural livelihoods are entwined. Stripped of their ability to protect their land by the Prawer plan, the Bedouin are also unable to appeal to the courts with any real hope of success due to the plan being granted a level of [legal immunity](#), trumping other laws it comes into conflict with.

The Bedouin face an impossible challenge to remain on their lands whilst the Prawer plan exists. They cannot legally gain building permission on their own lands because of previous acts passed to try and liberate the land for use by Jewish land owners. Without these rights, their houses and livelihoods are resigned to legitimate and legal demolition as illegal developments under the Prawer plan. This legalistic knot– and the appalling abuse of the Bedouin's rights, which have resulted – must not go unchallenged if the residents of

the unrecognized villages are to live as free Israeli citizens. Support must be given to existing initiatives aiming to give the Bedouin their rights, perhaps most importantly to the [Regional Council of Unrecognized Bedouin Villages and Bimkom - Planners for Planning Rights](#) who are seeking a Bedouin voice in this conflict and in the planning processes involved.

Poignantly, these groups call upon the fact that the Bedouin have been present in The Negev since before Israel's inception. They also call authorities to be aware that extending the infrastructure and services that other Israeli citizens enjoy to the unrecognized villages would in fact save the state money.

Ultimately it is recognition – not relocation – that will alleviate the suffering of the Bedouin. The state knows this, and rather than shift the problem into impoverished townships they must take responsibility for their own citizens and accord them equal rights to others, in this case recognising the legitimacy of the Bedouin land claims. The first step on the road to achieving this goal must be the abolishment of the Prawer plan, only after that will Bedouin voices be heard and respected.

## Fake Revolutions

JAY TABER

As talk of a general strike and acts of civil disobedience proliferate in Cairo, the transition to democracy is anything but certain. In the political conflict between the military, clergy and civil society, tyranny could take many forms—including neo-liberalism. As witnessed in many conflicts in former European colonies like Libya, Sudan and Iraq, Egypt has to contend with would-be dictators ranging from military strongmen to theocrats to CIA sycophants.

Sorting out the authentic pro-democracy activists in this mess can be a challenge, especially when rallies in the West identify with the sentiments of fake revolutions staged for the benefit of ill-informed public opinion.

As US covert agencies and their puppet NGOs engage in operations to influence public perception in favour of pro-US, free market tyrants with a democratic veneer, indigenous peoples and civil society intellectuals will undoubtedly be in the sights of whatever thugs eventually come to power in a reconstituted Egyptian society. Knowing the history of US covert ops to overthrow democratic movements over the last century in places like Chile, Guatemala, South Africa and Iran, these targets would be wise to prepare for the worst.

## Climate Change And Indigenous Nomadic Tribes Of Iran

JOHN SCHERTOW

In 2008, the Iranian-based Centre For Sustainable Development And Environment (CENESTA) produced a [short film](#) about the climate change struggles of two nomadic pastoralist confederations in Iran: the Qashqai and the Shahsevan.

The odds are good that you've never heard of either confederation before today, so a brief introduction is in order, because more than 90% of Iran's surface is arid or semi-arid land, pastoral communities play an important role in food production. Primarily, these communities use adaptive and sustainable systems that utilize the region's scarce natural resources.

The largest group of nomadic pastoralists in Iran is the Qashqai Confederation. The Qashqai live and migrate through parts of the Zagros Mountain range of southern Iran, mostly within the province of Fars. Their environment is pretty arid, with an average annual precipitation of about 300mm. For that reason, the Qashqai found it best to live in coordination with nature. This led them to a livestock-based subsistence lifestyle dependent on unfettered migration. The Qashqai traditionally migrate with their herds twice per year.

The Shahsevan are a heterogeneous collection of tribes in north-eastern Iran that, some academics claim were organized by Shah Abbas I in the 17th century, as a militia to put down rebellions led by other tribes. Whatever its origin, the Shahsevan were ultimately divided between Iranian Azarbaijan and the former Soviet Azarbaijan after the occupation by Russian forces during the Ghajar dynasty. Many Shahsevan have now settled as villagers; however there are still some 50,000 Shahsevan who continue to live a nomadic or semi-nomadic life. During the winter season, they live near sea level on the Moghan steppe; and in the summer, they travel about 160 kilometers south to the high pastures of the Savalan range, in the districts of Ardabil, Meshkin, and Sarab. Some Shahsevan

participate in a dual economy, in which they share or exchange pastoral goods for agricultural produce in different villages.

Although migrating pastoralists in Iran only number about 2% of the entire population (1.3 million pastoralists, according to government figures), their efforts satisfy about one quarter of the country's livestock needs.

However, that may be changing now—and with it, the traditional life of both the Qashqai and the Shahsevan. As you witness in CENESTA's film, the pastoralists are experiencing an increasing amount of pressure in the way of food and water scarcity, a problem they attribute to global climate change and those responsible for it.

# North America



52

## US Contractors 'Happily Desecrate' Sacred Village & Burial Site

JOHN SCHERTOW

March 2, 2012 – Contractors working for [Pardee Homes](#) and [Palomar College](#) had a good ol' time desecrating Tom-Kav, a Sacred Luiseno village and burial site in Northern San Diego County, California.

On the morning of February 23, 2012, the developers arrived with their bulldozers to begin work on the Horse Ranch Creek Road, a recently-approved four-lane road that will ultimately pave the way to a brand new college satellite campus and an 844-home development complex.

It wasn't long before a group of Indigenous activists arrived on the scene; but their efforts did little to stop the desecration that day. The Bulldozers pressed on.

However, the operators of those machines weren't just simply trying to do their job, despite the best efforts of the activists. As a [cell-phone video](#) revealed, the workers were enjoying it. You can see one of the operators grinning just before he turns away in shame...

The moment speaks well to the reality of what Indigenous Peoples face in the United States, especially when it comes to preserving sacred sites:

As Elders watched on in horror and others ran out in front of bulldozers to try to save what they could, the workers were celebrating. They were "laughing about what was happening, high-fiving when they were finishing, and you know, making the pump motion with their hands to say whoo-hoo we did a great job," said [San Luis Rey attorney Merri Lopez-Keifer](#).





PHOTO CREDIT: UNKNOWN

Meanwhile, Tom-Kav, a part of the Luiseno creation story and the site of an historic village and burial ground, is being viewed from afar as nothing more than empty land. It's as if California state and federal law doesn't even exist never mind basic moral conscience.

"During the course of [work], many archeologically significant new discoveries have been made, and dozens of Luiseno burials have been unearthed, notes [Save Tomkav Village](#)." California law requires that when new discoveries of human remains occur, construction projects must be put on hold until the materials can be analyzed, which could lead to project modifications. Pardee and Palomar College have disregarded legal protocol by carelessly proceeding with grading and construction activities, and in fact they sped up work as soon as San Luis Rey took legal action against them."

A day after the disgusting display, the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians filed for an injunction to halt the road construction, which is being wholly paid for by Palomar College.

Everybody was hopeful that justice would be served, but that just wasn't the case. On February 29, [Judge Harry Elias denied the request for an injunction](#), giving Palomar College the right of way.

The San Luis Rey Band also filed a lawsuit against the County of San Diego. A decision is expected any time now.

## Federal Judge Denies Quechan Injunction Against Wind Project

JOHN SCHERTOW

A Federal judge has [thrown out the Quechan Nation's request for an injunction](#) against the controversial Ocotillo Express Wind Project in western Imperial County, California.

The Quechan filed for the injunction on May 14, just three days after the Bureau of Land Management, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, gave “fast-track” approval for the project. [The Quechan complaint](#) stated that the Department of Interior, in approving the project, “violated... federal laws, regulations, and policies including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA); National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); Administrative Procedures Act (APA); and the CDCA [The California Desert Conservation Area] Plan.”

The complaint went on to explain that the massive 10,150-acre project area contains 287 archaeological sites including geoglyphs, petroglyphs, sleeping circles and other sites of spiritual significance; thousands of artifacts, and at least 12 burials (however, an exhaustive survey has not been carried out).

Construction of the [112-turbine project](#) would utterly devastate these sites.

Furthermore, the project jeopardizes the delicate desert ecosystem which is “home to the Federally [endangered Peninsular bighorn sheep](#) and the flat-tailed horned lizard, a perennial candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act,” says Chris Clarke, Director of [Desert Biodiversity](#). “The turbines on the site would stand 450 feet tall with blades more than 180 feet long. With blades of that length, if the turbines spin at a leisurely 10 rpm the speed of the blade tips

will approach 140 miles per hour, a serious threat to the region's migratory birds – including the protected golden eagle,” he continues.

A day after filing for an injunction, on May 15, Quechan Tribal Council President Kenny Escalanti [issued this statement](#) outside [the offices of Pattern Energy](#), the company behind the project.

He also spoke at a press conference alongside environmentalists and area residents in which he calls on President Obama to meet with tribal leaders and halt the destruction of sacred sites.

Robert Scheid, Viejas Band of the Kumeyaay Nation, spoke at the same [press conference](#), calling on people across America to seek a national moratorium on industrial-scale energy projects on public lands. “Viejas leaders have asked to meet with President Barack Obama and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar”, reports East County Magazine “to share concerns over violations of laws that are supposed to protect tribal cultural resources; but have received no response.”

With the denial of the Quechan petition, Pattern Energy can now proceed with their construction plans, without restraint. And they aren't wasting any time. A new website documenting the daily destruction of the Ocotillo desert has just been launched: [www.SaveOcotillo.picturepush.com](http://www.SaveOcotillo.picturepush.com).

If construction is completed, the wind turbines will spin for no more than 30 years.

## Proposed Mining Project Threatens O'odham Water, Sacred Sites

JOHN SCHERTOW

Two Canadian mining companies are trying to obtain permits for two unrelated mining projects that threaten O'odham water resources and sacred sites in southern Arizona.

Lori Riddle, Akimel O'odham citizen and founder of Gila River Alliance for a Clean Environment (GRACE), recently began sending out alerts that the Vancouver-based company, Curis Resources, may be just weeks away from getting a green light from the Arizona state government for their proposed in-situ copper mine in Florence, which borders the southern edge of the O'odham [Gila River Indian community](#).

A [summary on the proposed Curis Copper Mining Project](#) that Riddle is distributing outlines the known environmental risks of the mine:

- This proposed Florence Copper Project is proposing to pump more than 10 billion pounds of toxic sulphuric acid into the ground – at the height of its 20-year operation more than one million pounds a day!!
- The flow of the water, both above and below ground is from the mine site towards the Gila River community's Eastern boundary.
- The in-situ process has been used to mine uranium across North America with disastrous consequences. Independent study by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) concluded that no in-situ mine has ever restored groundwater to pre-mining conditions.
- EPA published report in 1999 resulting from a study and samples on the Florence Copper Project, concluding that in-situ leach mining releases radioactive chemicals into the groundwater.
- Previous mining operator BHP conducted a test pilot project in 1997 for 100 days. Since that time, there have been more than 26 separate exceedances of water quality standards for constituents such as radiochemicals, magnesium, sulphates, total dissolved solids, adjusted gross alpha, and radium. In other words there is more than a decade of significant evidence showing that this operation contaminated the groundwater.
- On Jan 23, 2012, Curis reported to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), groundwater exceedances on one of their monitoring wells of contaminants such as sulphate, total dissolved solids, and magnesium ranging from three (3) times to twelve (12) times the allowable levels.
- The proposed acidic solution is NOT akin to vinegar, as claimed by Curis. This acidic solution dissolves arsenic, cadmium, lead, mercury, radiochemicals and other pollutants into the groundwater. In addition, Curis proposes to re-acidify and re-inject this contaminated solution into the aquifer multiple times.
- Natural Geology of Site Does Not Prevent Movement of Water Between Zones – The ore body into which Curis proposes injecting acidic solution is naturally highly fractured which makes movement of injected acidic solution and groundwater unpredictable and difficult to control.

Riddle – who points out that her community just won a long court battle over their water rights – also expresses concern about several claims that Curis has made. For instance, during two meetings by the Natural Resources and Cultural Resources Committees, Curis indicated “that they had met with many Community Government Staff Members to discuss the project;” however, Riddle says:

“Staff and Community Management who would normally be contacted about this kind of project who were present in the audience appeared quite surprised by these statements and you could see them emailing to find out if these meetings had somehow occurred without their presence. At one point after the presentation one of the Community Managers rose to indicate that in the people Curis cited meeting with had very little relation to this type of project and some were not even working for the Community anymore. This really made me question Curis’s trustworthiness.”

Incidentally, the major shareholder in Curis is Hunter Dickinson Inc. (HDI), a name that the Tsilhqot’in Nation in British Columbia knows all too well. HDI owns [Taseko Mines Ltd.](#), the company behind the repulsively named [prosperity mine](#) project.

Another big concern was Curis’ effort “to avoid all discussion of water contamination [focusing instead on the issue of] preservation of our cultural resources.” Curis said during the meeting 59 sites on their property but that there is nothing to worry about, because they would do everything they could to avoid disturbing the sites; “but,” Lori response, “I was really left thinking, ‘doesn’t the law require that anyhow?’”

She continues,

“At one point a Curis employee said ‘we will be there onsite at all times, but I can’t say we are not going to penetrate any pottery’. There were noticeable

2006



FLOOD WATERS ON GILA RIVER. PHOTO: GILANET.NET

gasps amongst Community members and others in audience. “

[...] They also talked about something I had not heard before but should be of a concern because of our water settlement. They said that they would be ‘extracting more water than they are injecting’ so I guess they will also deplete our water source.

They suggested that monitoring the site 24/7 would be a protective measure. Someone at the meeting said that monitoring will not stop the pollution from occurring it will just make us know that it has happened after the fact.

They made some remarks that once again received gasps from the audience stating that they would ‘much rather have the tribes handling human remains’. Again I think we all kept thinking ‘this is the law, you are not doing us some favour here by saying you will follow it.’

Again our leaders were well prepared with many questions and making statements like “you can’t give us a guarantee that there will be no leakage” and “coming to us after the fact (within 2 months of getting permits) is not appreciated and that is putting it lightly.” The Committee, wisely, voted unanimously to recommend that Council oppose the Florence Copper Project.

Opposition to this project is widespread, as the briefing also notes: “Eight separate private landowners owning more than 18,000 acres in the surrounding area, two private water utility companies, thousands of local residents, Pulte Homes, and the Town of Florence have all expressed the opposition to the project because of the grave environmental risk.”

However, despite the opposition—which is likely going to grow—Curis is pushing on. As of this moment, the company is awaiting a decision from the Arizona State Government.

In the not-so-distant background, another Canadian mining company is threatening O’odham cultural sites and, possibly, their water. As the New York Times reported [last month](#), Rosemont Copper, a subsidiary of Canada’s Augusta Resource (also based in Vancouver), wants to start a new open-pit copper-molybdenum-silver mine and mineral processing facility southeast of Tucson, Arizona. A total of 60 O’odham sacred sites, including some with human remains, would be disturbed or destroyed by the project.

Meanwhile, Ofelia Rivas, founder of O’odham Rights Cultural and Environmental Justice Coalition and O’odham VOICE Against the Wall, reports to Intercontinental Cry that the US-owned [heap leach gold mine near the site of Quitovac](#) in Sonora, Mexico, has been seemingly abandoned. Rivas reports that most non-O’odham who were living in the community have “moved away with their money.”

## Cree Nation Of Mistissini Says No To Uranium Development

JOHN SCHERTOW

The Cree Nation of Mistissini has made their position clear. They are unequivocally opposed to any uranium development in Eeyou Istchee (Cree for “The People’s Land”).

On June 5, 2012, Chief Richard Shecapio carried the words of his community to a Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) public hearing in Mistissini, Quebec.

“We want to put an end to the question of uranium development once and for all, right now”, said Chief Richard Shecapio. “We know where this is going and we don’t want any uranium mining at all”.

Those words will sound familiar to anyone keeping vigil against the Canadian mining industry’s global mission. Indeed, this is [the third time in less than two years](#) that the Cree Nation of Mistissini has asserted its position on uranium development.

That position isn’t going to change any time soon.

Chief Shecapio went on to explain that his Council will do “whatever it takes” to implement a moratorium on uranium development. “In light of the lack of social acceptability, cultural incompatibility and the lack of a clear understanding of the health and environmental impacts of uranium mining, it would be reckless for us as a people to move forward and allow the licensing of Strateco’s advanced exploration project. We are seeking a moratorium on uranium mining and exploration on our traditional lands as well as in the province of Quebec”, said Chief Shecapio.



Strateco Resources Inc. is trying to establish an underground exploration program at its Matoush Project in northern Quebec [[Here's some propaganda from Strateco about the project](#)]. The recent CNSC hearing was in regards to the company's application for a license to go ahead with the exploration program.

Chief Shecapio continued, the Cree Peoples "have always been the guardians and protectors of the land and will continue to be. For the Crees of Mistissini, the land is a school of its own and the resources of the land are the material and supplies they need. Cree traplines are the classrooms. What is taught on these traplines to the youth is the Cree way of life, which means living in harmony with nature. This form of education ensures our survival as a people. Any form of education that leads to survival is a high standard of education. Cree form of education teaches us to be humble, respectful, responsible, disciplined, independent, sharing and compassionate".

"Because our people are still active on the land, hunting, trapping and consuming the animals, we are concerned that traditional foods may become contaminated with radionuclides, posing a threat to those who eat them. High levels of radionuclides in moose and caribou tissues have been reported in animals near uranium mines. This indirect exposure can lead to serious health issues for the people who eat contaminated animals", expressed Chief Shecapio.

The CNSC maintains a very different perspective on the matter. The Commission—which is supposedly in charge of protecting "the health, safety and security of Canadians as well as the environment"—asserts that Strateco's project is low risk.

Perhaps it doesn't matter what the CNSC says. After all, when it comes to defending the land from uranium development, even "low risk" is too much risk.

## Algonquin First Nations Have Serious Concerns About Proposed Rare Earth Mine

JOHN SCHERTOW

Two Algonquin First Nations in western Quebec are raising concerns about a proposed rare earth open pit mine on their traditional lands.

In a [joint press statement](#), Wolf Lake and Eagle Village First Nation explain that Matamec Explorations Inc., wants to develop a yttrium-zirconium mine at what they call the Zeus Site, located 90km north-east of North Bay, Ontario.

Yttrium and zirconium are two of seventeen minerals classified as "Rare Earth Elements" (REEs).

"This proposed mine site is located on the traditional lands of our two Algonquin First Nations," the statement reads.

As such, "On April 17, 2012, our two Algonquin First Nation governments met with Matamec Explorations Inc. as part of an ongoing negotiation process regarding a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)."

The statement continues, "The main purpose of the MOU is to ensure that Matamec directly consults our two First Nations during the advanced exploration phase of the proposed mine and that Matamec agrees to cover the costs of our two First Nations' social and cultural impact studies, as well as the costs of our independent experts to oversee the results of Matamec's feasibility and environmental studies."

The two First Nations point to the sizable controversy surrounding rare earth mining and processing, which tends to have severe environmental impacts. By themselves, most rare earth metals are actually quite harmless; however, they are often found along with other radioactive substances like thorium and



uranium--and therein lies the danger. The process of separating REEs from other minerals can produce massive amounts of toxic waste.

As an example, the two First Nations mention the [Mountain Pass rare earth mine](#) in California. The mine, formerly owned by Unocal/Chevron, was shut down in 2002 after a long series of waste water spills. Over the course of 14 years, there were 60 recorded spills which overall introduced 600,000 gallons of radioactive waste water into the sensitive Mojave Desert ecosystem.

The impacts of rare earth mining have been far worse overseas, particularly in [China](#), which has maintained a monopoly on rare earth mining for many years.

There is also a [massive protest campaign](#) right now against an Australian mining company that wants to build a [rare earth refining facility at Kuantan](#) in Malaysia. Similar facilities in Mongolia have turned once-pristine environments into cancer-causing wastelands.

According to Mamatec's website, the Zeus site has a total of seven rare earth deposits, mostly consisting of Neodymium, Europium, Terbium, Dysprosium, Yttrium and Zirconium. There are also deposits of uranium and gold.

Eagle Village Chief, Madeleine Paul, stated "our two First Nation governments want to have an accurate understanding of the environmental impacts of building, operating and reclaiming the Zeus mine, including the associated processing and other facilities. We also want to ensure the project is manageable and represents low impacts before we consider supporting the development of the Rare Earth Element open pit mine."

Wolf Lake Chief, Harry St. Denis, added "our two First Nation governments are going to wait to support the proposed mine until we are satisfied that the social and cultural studies conducted by our First Nations and the environmental studies conducted by Matamec, provide us with a comprehensive and accurate portrait of all the impacts and related impacts of the Rare Earth Elements Zeus mine and we are satisfied the proposed project is manageable with low impacts."

There is, of course, another REE controversy, which Republicans and mining industry enthusiasts have been using for quite some time now to "prove" that environmentalists are "hypocrites." REEs are crucial for the production of green technology including wind turbines, low-energy light bulbs and hybrid car batteries. REEs are also used in smart-phones, flat screen televisions, cordless power tools, computer disc drives, X-ray imaging machines, and, let's not forget, Tomahawk cruise-missiles, smart bombs, Predator drones, electromagnetic railguns, and submarine communications systems.

While Matamec boasts that the Zeus mine would be the first "North American producer of a combination of rare earths- yttrium and zirconium", there are several other rare earth mines in the works that Intercontinental Cry wishes to highlight:

- The Canadian company Ucore Rare Metals, appears to be [exploring the Ross Adams uranium mine](#), among other sites in Alaska;
- Another Canadian company, Rare Elements Resources, is pursuing a rare earth mine within the Black Hills National Forest in [Wyoming](#);
- Avalon Rare Metals also has a rare earth mine at [Thor Lake](#) in Northwest Territories;
- Quest Rare Minerals, [has deposits in Labrador](#) and Quebec;
- Great Western Minerals Group Ltd. has plans for exploration in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Labrador; and
- Overall there are 71 corporations pursuing rare earth projects around the world.

## So, Canada Endorsed the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights?

JOHN SCHERTOW

Less than 2 years ago, Canada became the [148th country to endorse](#) the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

The endorsement was a fairly important milestone for Indigenous Rights, even if the declaration is legally non-binding. After all, Canada has been one of the most vocal [opponents](#) of the declaration. As a matter of fact, in 2006, the government even tried to bribe some African states to [delay the declaration's passage](#). At least, that was the [rumour](#).

Since then, a lot of people have come to look at Canada as a bit of a “huckster doofus.” It’s a pretty morbid joke though, like when a UN report showed that Canada wasn’t really 8th on the United Nations human development scale”... [its real rank was 48th](#), placing it somewhere between Argentina and Kuwait.

Why did Canada suddenly rank so low? Well, because the economic and social well – being of Indigenous People was factored in.

That said, [Canada's endorsement](#) of the declaration seems like a bit of joke too, as Mohawk Activist Ben Powless pointed out at the time. For starters, Canada decided to make the announcement “on a Friday afternoon, right after they announced major plans with the Afghanistan war,” [said Powless](#). But it was only posted online. “[There was] no press conference where people could ask clarifying questions, no informing Indigenous Peoples, just a passive admission on a website.”

Adding insult to injury, Canada tried to portray itself in the announcement as some sort of noble champion; as if the government was doing everything in its

power to right historical wrongs and build a new relationship with Indigenous People “based on good faith, partnership and mutual respect.”

The rhetoric just doesn’t sit with the reality. There are so many land rights conflicts in Canada right now it’s hard to keep up with them all. In BC alone there’s over a dozen. And that doesn’t even scratch the surface of what’s going on in the great white north these days.

The “economic and social well-being” of Indigenous Peoples isn’t getting any better. In fact it’s probably getting worse since Canada decided to cut funding to major Aboriginal health organizations like NAHO, not to mention [134 indigenous healing centres](#) that were helping residential school survivors.

Then there’s that waste problem ... how [there still aren’t any laws](#) to stop companies from dumping their toxic waste on reserve lands or how Canada won’t remediate any of the [4,464 toxic sites](#) already on reserve. According to the Auditor General of Canada, it would cost under \$200 million to clean these sites; but Canada chooses not to spend the money.

[Physical health](#) is another big one. There is a massive gulf between the health of average Canadians and Indigenous Peoples in Canada, even though Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada’s Chief Public Health Officer, downplayed it in his 2008 Annual Report on the State of Public Health in Canada. From youth suicide to Infant mortality rates, homelessness to “substandard” housing, unsafe water to obesity and chronic to infectious diseases, the numbers are all higher for the Indigenous population.

It's daunting, like a dam that could burst at any moment. And despite the glorious promises of a new day, the reality is that Canada is more interested in stuffing paper into all the little cracks than actually fixing the dam.

Only, we're not talking about dams or pieces of paper or numbers or even words on some website. We're talking about human beings. That's what makes Canada's endorsement a little difficult to accept, because it doesn't change anything on the ground.

# Oceania



62

## More Aboriginal Tent Embassies Appearing Throughout Australia

JOHN SCHERTOW

The [Aboriginal Tent Embassy](#) is legendary. Located beside the Old Parliament House in Canberra, the Embassy was established in 1972 in order to demand sovereignty for Australia's Indigenous peoples. Over the years, the humble structure has become an important symbol for Indigenous Peoples throughout the world.

The Embassy speaks to the relationship between differing civilizations and the obligations of modern state governments. It also speaks well to the vital efforts of Indigenous Nations to maintain their cultures, defend their lands and preserve life.

2012 marked the 40th anniversary of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. To mark the occasion, some 2000 Aboriginal people and supporters gathered in Canberra for a peaceful march and coroborree (ceremonial meeting). The successful event reminded Australia that the Tent Embassy is still very much relevant today.

It also helped the world to see that there is more than one tent embassy these days. Right now there are a total of seven tent Embassies dotted around the Australian coast. Including the embassy in Canberra, there is:

1. The [Brisbane Sovereign Embassy in Musgrave Park](#)
2. The [Portland Aboriginal Tent Embassy](#)
3. The [Nyoongar Tent Embassy](#)
4. The [Goomeroi Sovereign Tent Embassy](#)
5. The [Walmadan Tent Embassy](#)
6. The [Kuradji Aboriginal Tent Embassy](#)

Given the relatively short time span that these Embassies have appeared—three in the last few months alone; you can be sure that even more embassies are on the way. Indeed, our Indigenous Brothers and Sisters in Australia are starting to come forward in a big way to challenge the arrogant assumptions of governments and restore health and sanity to the **land of fire**.

However, **this growing movement needs the international community's support**. As friends and allies are constantly pointing out to Intercontinental Cry, many of the embassies are being hammered by the government.

In the last few days alone: 150 police were flown into Broome to converge on the Walmadan Tent Embassy; The Brisbane Embassy faced an **Eviction**; and The Portland Aboriginal Tent Embassy faced off with Police. The Nyoongar Tent Embassy, on the other hand, has faced a series of invasions/evictions.

This state-sponsored violence will also continue. And if the growing indigenous rights movement in Australia remains hidden from the international community, that violence will only get worse.



# Fear, Grief And Hope In Occupied West Papua

MARTIN PELCHER

The months of May and June have seen new waves of terror sweep through the troubled region of West Papua. Tens of “mysterious killings” have been reported, occurring mostly in the Papuan capital of Jayapura. Security guards, students, and soldiers have been shot dead; a woman’s mutilated body was found; and a German biologist narrowly survived being shot in the chest at a popular beach. With worldwide coverage of these incidents, the Indonesian security establishment has manipulated the climate of terror to justify more intense repression of Papuan nationalist groups.

This campaign climaxed on June 14 with the assassination of Mako Tabuni, the vocal deputy chair of KNPB (West Papua National Committee) — an organization that has been at the forefront of mass mobilizations demanding a referendum on Papuan independence.

While advocates in the West have recently seen more success in terms of putting Papuan human rights on the international community’s agenda, this international visibility has been matched in Papua by the proliferation of forms of state terror. This increasingly tense situation may demand a re-evaluation of the work of international solidarity advocates.

## (Not-so-)Mysterious Killings

The latest incidents in Jayapura have been shrouded in uncertainty and subject to wildly contrasting interpretations. Human rights activists in Jakarta and Jayapura, accustomed to seeing the hand of security forces behind such “mysterious” terror, have issued statements critical of Jakarta’s “security approach”, suggesting that the army and police are themselves responsible

for the violence. While these critical views have informed international news coverage, Indonesian news coverage has tended to give more space to police statements evoking shadowy “unknown persons” and pinning the blame on the student activists of KNPB as well as the wider network of underground Papuan nationalist resistance, OPM (Free Papua Organization).

Politically speaking, it is hard to see what Papuan nationalists could gain from inflicting public terror. Human rights activists have pointed out the professional aspect of the shootings, suggesting sniper expertise only available to elite state units such as Kopassus (Army Special Forces Commando) or Densus 88 (the Australian- and US- funded Police counter-terrorism unit). As with the fatal shooting ambush on a bus outside Jayapura last August, which took place the day before a major KNPB mass rally (itself timed to welcome a conference on Papuan independence in the UK), the latest killings appear to have been staged by powerful elements in the security forces so as to disrupt grassroots pro-independence mobilizations.

The recent episode also recalls the massive campaign of “petrus” (contraction of penembakan misterius, “mysterious shooting”) against so-called “criminals” in Jakarta, used by Suharto’s New Order regime to entrench its power in the 1980s. The police attributing the label “criminal” to KNPB leaders such as Mako Tabuni feeds a perception that Indonesian governance in Papua continues to employ a version of the “politics of fear” that sustained the New Order for so long.

The new petrus campaign in Jayapura, and the assassination has set the stage for, and has unfolded alongside other forms of terror. Just a week before Mako



Tabuni's murder, an outbreak of brutality was triggered in the main highlands town of Wamena when two Indonesian soldiers on a motorcycle struck a Papuan child. After some local residents reacted angrily by stabbing the soldiers to death, the soldiers' fellow troops from the notorious Infantry Battalion 756 "Wim Ane Sili" (local Dani language for "House of the Sound of War") descended on the scene armed with bayonets and rifles, and unleashed a vengeful swath of destruction.

The attacks left several locals dead or injured, an entire village razed to the ground, and hundreds of Papuan residents displaced to the bush. Battalion troops then rampaged through Wamena town, burning regional government buildings and the homes of both indigenous Papuans and Indonesian settlers.

In the aftermath of the violence, with many residents still in hiding, local human rights activists evoked the memory of the October 2000 incidents known as "Bloody Wamena" (Wamena Berdarah) — when deadly riots and a massive crackdown followed police attacks on posts flying the Morning Star flag of Papuan nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

### **In a Context of Fear, KNPB Mobilizes**

Recent events in Wamena have reflected tensions in Jayapura. KNPB is known to have an especially strong support base among students from the highlands region around Wamena who have settled in the coastal metropolis of Jayapura. Highlanders are often subject to especially severe forms of the racism that most Papuans face in the Indonesian urban context. Though KNPB's mass mobilizations have been largely peaceful, stereotypes of violent and chaotic highlanders have been used to build fear of their politics via conspiratorial text messages presumably circulated by intelligence agents — a form of rumour that many Papuans refer to as "terror" (teror).

In the face of fear and intimidation, KNPB has continued to mobilize, organizing mass protests to denounce the role of state security agents in creating the climate of terror.

In a press release days before Mako Tabuni's death, KNPB suggested that state agents had played a role in the shooting of the German scientist, as a response to Germany's criticism of Indonesia's human rights record in Papua at a recent UN session.<sup>2</sup>

Security forces have responded to KNPB's challenge with unrestrained aggression, deploying Barracuda mobile tanks and live fire against unarmed protesters, and arresting KNPB chair Buchtar Tabuni on his way out of a meeting at the provincial parliament convened by political leaders to discuss the deteriorating security situation. This is the volatile situation within which Indonesian forces (in this case, reports suggest it was Densus 88) have been able to eliminate a courageous and articulate voice of Papuan resistance.<sup>3</sup>

While Western governments periodically pay lip service to the importance of upholding human rights in Papua, one can guess at the deep (though surely unstable) complicities linking the interests of transnational capital, global governance institutions, and the military intelligence regime on Indonesia's Pacific frontier zone.

The brutal crackdown underway against KNPB targets a group that has articulated a sophisticated anti-imperialist critique of the neo-liberal development policies being forced on Papuans by the Indonesian security state, the global resource companies that help fund it (notably US mining giant Freeport MacMoran and British oil and gas giant BP), and the foreign governments and international institutions who occasionally criticize Indonesia's human rights performance but who are hostile to Papuan challenges to the status quo of Indonesian sovereignty. This is the global context that enables multiplying forms of terror and allows for the assassination of Mako Tabuni.<sup>4</sup>

The latest wave of killings and repression has come at a moment when KNPB has been intensifying its regional outreach work, enacting a program for a "West Papuan Parliament" that would channel forms of direct democracy towards the goal of self-determination. The prospect of a politicized and mobilized



KNPB'S AUGUST 2 RALLY IN WAMENA. PHOTO MARTIN PELCHER

anti-imperialist network spreading throughout the regions of Papua is surely viewed with suspicion by both the Jakarta intelligence establishment and the international players with interests in the region.

KNPB's grassroots political mobilizations complement the higher-level manoeuvres of the leaders of groups such as WPNA (West Papua National Authority) and DAP (Papua Customary Council), who came together at last October's Third Papuan Congress to declare the Federal Republic of West Papua (FRWP). As the Congress closed, police, army and intelligence units stormed the site, beating and arresting hundreds and killing several.

The newly-proclaimed president and prime minister of FRWP, Forkorus Yaboisembut and Edison Waromi, remain behind bars along with Congress organizers and a growing list of political prisoners convicted of "subversion" (makar).<sup>5</sup>

## What Kind of International Solidarity?

Given the complexity and volatility of the political situation, it is not clear what helpful role solidarity advocates can play. The Indonesian state and media do not hesitate to attribute signs of Papuan "separatist" agitation to the shadowy forces of a "foreign conspiracy" seen as responsible for East Timor's independence.

It is worth understanding Indonesian nationalist anxieties in their historical and geopolitical context: the Indonesian nation was founded when the then-revolutionary national army expelled Dutch colonialists from most of the archipelago after WWII; 15 years later, the military launched operations to chase the Dutch out of Western New Guinea as well (the Dutch finally retreated under US and UN pressure). At the time, the standard Indonesian nationalist narrative framed the incorporation of Papua as a question of opposing imperialism, and the West Papuan movement as colonial puppets.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Western support for East Timorese independence — and signs of such support being extended to West Papua — have been easy to frame as vehicles for the West's neo-imperial manipulation and pursuit of the region's abundant mineral and petroleum resources.

The more Western advocates succeed in focusing global attention on the plight of Papuans under Indonesian rule, the more the Indonesian security establishment can deploy the specter of a "foreign intervention" (like the UN's intervention in East Timor) to mobilize Indonesian public opinion behind its harsh policing measures. The current moment poses a stark challenge to action-oriented observers: how to generate global solidarity against injustice in West Papua without strengthening the state's pretext for terror?

Part of the answer may lie in the spaces for exchange that are being generated through networks like Intercontinental Cry: spaces where actors engaged in different worldwide struggles for justice can share perspectives (ideally)

unmediated by giant corporations, intergovernmental institutions, INGO culture, or unreflexive settler-colonial privilege.

To put in plainly: the international West Papua solidarity movement is in need of platforms for exchange that do not center the voices and perspectives of white people. Subject to numerous waves of colonization, displacement and militarization, West Papuans have political affinities with colonized, displaced, racially-deprived, and otherwise subjugated peoples at a global level.

But the dynamics of history and geopolitics have produced a situation where mainly white NGO workers and human rights activists have largely monopolized international access to the scene of West Papuan resistance politics. Collaborations with leftists and rights activists in Indonesian cities have been key to the Papuan movement, as they were for East Timor; so have expressions of support by African-American and Pacific US legislators.

Still, global Papua solidarity advocates have prioritized high-level lobbying towards Western powers, at the expense of possibilities for “South-South”/ intra-“Fourth World” networking. For Indonesia’s deep security state to lose its “anti-imperialist” pretext for repression, solidarity linkages need to bypass neo-colonial adventurist-activist gatekeepers (including this author) — agents of what Teju Cole (referring to the “Stop Kony” debacle) has called the “White Saviour Industrial Complex”.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1950s, when Dutch planners were forced to abandon their colonial project in Indonesia, they refocused their fantasies of “ethical” imperialism on the supposedly “blank slate” of Western New Guinea. These colonial agents framed Papuans as “primitives” requiring “development” before they could be allowed to govern themselves. The legacy of this history lives on in the Indonesian state’s colonization project, fed by media depictions of Papuans’ supposedly “backwards” life ways.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout this history, Papuans have consistently been imagined as objects to be governed by others, rather than as political actors struggling for dignity.

Transnational human rights advocacy has succeeded in getting the story of Papuan suffering out there on the global stage; but the spectre of Western intervention is also justifying and motivating the terror it seeks to stop.

Prevailing models of international advocacy may not be working for West Papua; they are easy for the security state to manipulate towards its own ends — which happen to suit other powerful global actors as well. Western-centric human rights champions need to consider making way for alternative paradigms of direct solidarity among colonized and displaced peoples.

1. See “Indonesia: Investigate military attacks on villagers in Wamena, Papua”, Amnesty International, June 8 2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ASA21/020/2012/en/1b64dac4-87d7-46c8-8950-f838afa35d87/asa210202012en.html>.

2. See “German born tourist shot by “unknown persons” whilst on a beach in Jayapura”, <http://westpapuamedia.info/2012/05/31/german-born-tourist-shot-by-unknown-persons-whilst-on-a-beach-in-jayapura/>

3. Police have acknowledged that they killed Mako Tabuni. They have alleged that he was responsible for several shootings; and that he resisted arrest, was in possession of a gun and tried to steal an arresting officer’s gun. Eyewitness accounts tell quite a different story: of Tabuni being shot point blank while being pinned to the ground by a group of men in civilian clothes.

4. See footage of a speech by Mako Tabuni at a KNPB mass rally in Jayapura, in which he condemns the entanglement of Indonesian state power with foreign capital (in Indonesian): <http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/yerry/news/papua-mako-tabuni-funeral-2>

5. See, for example, “Forkorus: International community must acknowledge the rights of the people of West Papua”, Jubi Online, <http://westpapuamedia.info/2012/02/16/forkorus-international-community-must-acknowledge-the-political-rights-of-the-people-of-west-papua/>

6. For analysis of clashing Papuan and Indonesian nationalist historical narratives, see David Webster, “Narratives of Colonization, Decolonization and Recolonization in Papua”, <http://activehistory.ca/papers/history-paper-3/>

7. See Teju Cole, “The White Savior Industrial Complex”, The Atlantic, March 21 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

8. Scholar Danilyn Rutherford has documented this imperial legacy and its effects: see her new book “Laughing at Leviathan: Sovereignty and Audience in West Papua” (University of Chicago Press, 2012).

## Victory! The Struggle To Protect Koongarra Uranium Finally Over

JOHN SCHERTOW



THE MIRRAR PEOPLES WANT URANIUM LEFT IN THE GROUND

June 4, 2012 – There was a major victory this week in the struggle to protect the Koongarra uranium deposit in Australia's Northern Territory.

The Northern Land Council, which represents native title claimants in the Arnhem Land region of Northern Territory, announced its decision to extend the boundaries of the [world-heritage-listed](#) Kakadu National Park to include the 1,200 hectare uranium deposit.

When the National Park was founded in 1979, the Australian government decided to leave Koongarra out, clearly recognizing the potential market value of

the deposit. Located in the heart of Kakadu, the deposit is estimated to hold 14,540 tonnes of uranium ore worth approximately \$5 billion.

In 1995, the Koongarra deposit was acquired by the French company AREVA, who has tried several times over the years to access the deposit. Fortunately, they have been blocked each and every time by traditional owners.

AREVA's last big effort focused on whetting the appetite of the current Custodian of Koongarra and the sole survivor of the Djok clan (Gundjeihmi), Mr. Jeffrey Lee.

In 2007, the company told Mr. Lee – who was born the same year the massive uranium deposit was identified, in 1971 – that [he could be one of the richest men in the world](#). All he had to do was say “Yes.”

He said “No.”

Rather than sacrifice the land, Mr. Lee decided to speak out against uranium mining and began his effort to bring Koongarra into Kakadu Park, where, he said at the time, “it will be protected and safe forever.”

More recently, in 2011, the French company [tried to stop UNESCO](#) from inscribing Koongarra on the World Heritage List. [The effort backfired](#). On June 27, 2011, the World Heritage Committee announced that it would redraw Kakadu's borders to include Koongarra.

At this point, it's still not clear if AREVA will try to reverse the Northern Land Council's decision.



The Mirarr Peoples, meanwhile, [continue to look for the day](#) when the nearby [Jabiluka uranium deposit](#) will be similarly protected.

They too, have received offers to become billionaires' and they too, have said no, that the uranium should remain undisturbed.

Last year, in the weeks leading up to UNESCO's decision on Koongarra, Mirarr Elder Yvonne Margarula, in a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon, stated, "For many thousands of years we Aboriginal people of Kakadu have respected sacred sites where special and dangerous power resides. We call these places and this power Ojang. There is Ojang associated with both the Ranger mine area and the site of the proposed Jabiluka mine. We believe and have always believed, that when this Ojang is disturbed a great and dangerous power is unleashed upon the entire world. My father warned the Australian Government about this in the 1970s, but no one in positions of power listened to him. We hope that people such as yourself will listen, and act, today."

The respected Elder was lamenting the fact that her father's warning became a brutally obvious truth soon after the Japanese earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011. Indeed, uranium from the Ranger uranium mine – also excised from Kakadu Park – can be traced directly to [Fukushima](#).

It's the nature of Ojang. If left undisturbed, protected by surrounding minerals, it keeps to itself. But once it is exhumed, then it waits for an opportunity, whether it's a tsunami or a careless gesture by some underpaid employee. It doesn't matter what it is, Ojang will seize it. And the consequences will be dire.

**It must be left in the ground.**

## 'Draconian' Environmental Amendments Dropped In Papua New Guinea

HANNIBAL RHOADES

On January 19th the [contested O'Neill-Namah government](#) repealed amendments made to the environmental act by the Somare government and as a result have given local peoples back the rights to their own land and to pursue legal action against environmentally destructive resource based projects.

It has been a long fight and it would seem that the 'right side' has won but what might the future hold for the revocalised, revitalised landowning people of Papua New Guinea?

That the O'Neill-Namah government has taken action repealing the amendments of the represents a huge step forward for local peoples. A case in point are those landowners who are battling against initiatives such as the [Mettallurgic Corp China's \(MCC\) plans to initiate a Submarine Tailings Disposal \(STD\)](#) plan linked to the Ramu Cobalt Nickel mine. Fears abound that such projects will fundamentally alter life for these peoples.

Such fears are upheld by independent research surveys, such as that of the Australian based [Mineral Policy Institute \(MPI\)](#), which have suggested that in this particular case the environmental consequences of dumping tailings could be dire for the Rai coast's ecosystems and all those relying on them.

These studies contradict those presented to the PNG government in March 2001 by the mining company, which intimated that such threats to a balanced and important ecosystem were not significant in the least. Concerns were not enough to stop the then government endorsing MCC's plan or to discourage a supreme court ruling, which rejected an appeal from 1083 worried land owners.

Furthermore the potential plight of his country's people and environment was not enough to deter President Somare. His government 'bulldozed' the now dropped environmental amendment through parliament, which not only gave the government the power to approve activities on customary land without permission, but took away local people's rights to appeal and take legal action against projects. In addition, it exempted foreign companies such as MCC from environmental liability.

This is but one example of a problem experienced worldwide by marginalised and indigenous peoples who are stripped of their voices and any power to preserve the lands and seas on which they rely.

However, for those marked out as political mutes and non-entities in Papua New Guinea help has been found in the form of the disputed O'Neill-Namah government, which came into power last year. Minister for the Environment, the Hon Thompson Haroquave, met his promise to the people last Thursday, ending the "unnecessary and undesirable" section of the environment act and effectively giving local peoples back their rights to their lands and to seek legal action.

This seemingly decisive move does not mark the end to discussions on the subject of resource extraction such as MCC's tailing disposal plans. What it does represent is an opportunity for those peoples who would be directly affected by resource programmes including and akin to the Ramu mine, to take their future into their own hands.

With a voice and a reasonable government to listen to them, the people of Papua New Guinea affected by the environmental amendments at least have a chance of preserving the lands that they rely on. Without a voice those who oppose government backed initiatives face a slippery slope to political non-existence and the potential decimation of their ways of life. For these reasons the O'Neill-

Namah government's decision to repeal the amendments of 2010 is of vital importance.

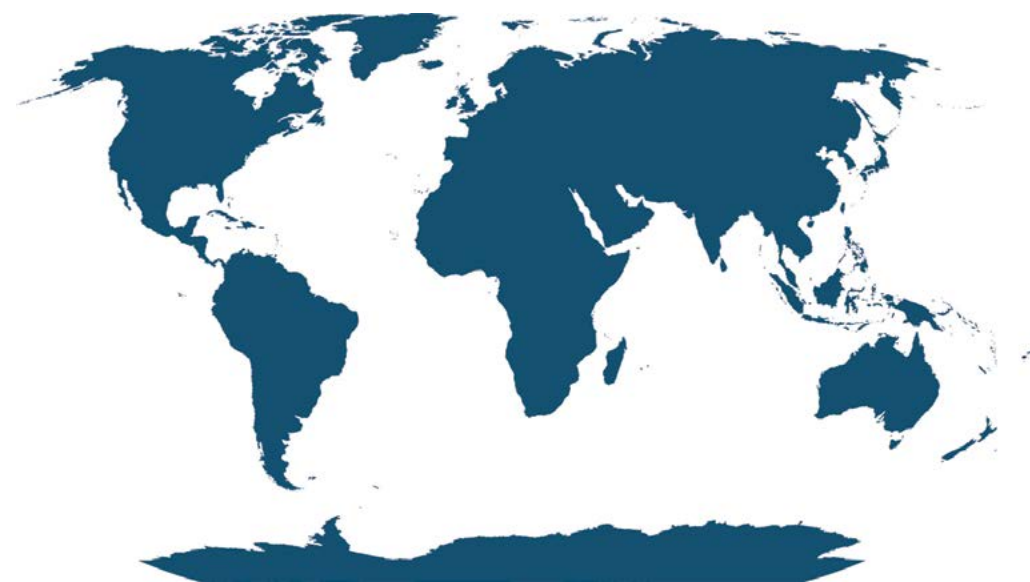
Thompson Haroquave has [sent out a strong and encouraging message](#), stating that he and the government behind him is "committed to protecting the rights of landowners to ensure their livelihoods and way of life are protected while promoting environmentally sound economic development which will benefit all Papua New Guineans."

This message of balance must surely be an encouraging one to all Papua New Guineans. Irretrievably sacrificing both the environment and thus peoples ways of life for economic growth can never be a maintainable approach to governance. We must hope that the continuing political upheaval in Papua New Guinea does not hinder the good work the new government appears to be doing. For the sake of a sustainable future where people are not deprived of their say, their rights or their land, such work must be allowed to continue.

*Hannibal Rhoades is an Anthropology student at Durham University in the UK.*



# International



## Public Relations Puppets

JAY TABER

In Poznan, Poland in 2008, the UN excluded indigenous nation's delegates from participating in climate change talks, insinuating that only UN member states are legitimate governing authorities. The motivation for the United Nations exclusionary policy on indigenous peoples participation was that the UN was meeting to hatch a new scheme for transnational corporations and investment banks to control the world: it was called REDD, a Ponzi scheme for carbon-market trading that would make the Wall Street heists of today look like chicken feed. Indigenous nations sent delegates to protest this life-threatening fraud by the UN and its agencies like the IMF, World Bank, and WTO. Civil society groups spoke in support of the indigenous peoples, UN officials closed them out, and [the world never knew](#).

In the runup to the 2009 UN conference on climate change in Copenhagen, I wrote about the [news ruse](#) perpetrated by the UN to undermine the Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change. True to their past practices, they repeated this trickery with an added twist, stating indigenous peoples could only participate through UN-recognized non-governmental organizations.

This privileged participatory posture of the UN was repeated in 2010 in Cancun, where the Indigenous Caucus spokesman Tom Goldtooth had his credentials revoked for calling the conference a trade show for promoting false solutions. Goldtooth and others were ejected by the UN for drawing media attention to the fact that a major agenda item of the international discussion in Cancun, as in Copenhagen, was to silence indigenous peoples. I later wrote about the NGO [ambassadors of greed](#) fronting for the UN scheme, noting commentary by Goldtooth that he had never witnessed the intensity of deception as unleashed by the UN in Copenhagen and Cancun.

Now, in the runup to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, the UN has preselected indigenous representation – already **compromised** by bribery from UN agencies and transnational corporations – as those that will be permitted to participate. As cheerleaders funded by such entities as Ford Foundation, these supplicants amount to little more than public relations puppets.

The challenge for indigenous media, then, is to out – maneuver the fraudulent manipulations by the UN bureaucracy and expose their hypocrisy. Perhaps of greatest importance is dispelling the notion, once and for all, of the UN as an honest broker.

Adapting to a rapidly-changing ecosystem requires new kinds of leadership. State-centric, market-oriented institutions have failed, and indeed are an ongoing impediment to our survival. If humankind has any chance of evolving organizationally to deal with the climate change crisis, it will be the relational understandings of indigenous peoples and their network of civil society friends who lead the way; not the US, EU, or UN.

In commenting on the difficulties of Fourth World nations to develop independent of colonial structures like the UN, Dr. Rudolph Ryser – Chair of the Center for World Indigenous Studies – once remarked that where a people lacks the ability to develop politically, they remain unable to advance their own social, economic and human rights. He went on to say the age of colonialism has prevented the emergence of politically strong Fourth World nations, and that the UN promises to permanently lock these nations into a cage of political subjugation.

If you look at what the UN does, as opposed to what it says, it isn't much different from its member states. This isn't to say we don't have to deal with its agencies; it only means we have to be as vigilant in holding it accountable as we do the US and EU.

As a modern agency of colonial powers, the UN is admittedly adept at the use of **psychological warfare** in subverting the World Indigenous Peoples Movement. Arming ourselves against this onslaught requires that we instruct young people in this kind of conflict, while simultaneously exercising our networks as the front line of defense.

## Why REDD/REDD+ Is NOT a Solution

TOM B.K. GOLDTOOTH, INDIGENOUS ENVIRONMENT NEWTORK

All humans and all life are affected by climate change however, Indigenous Peoples and local land-based communities worldwide are more vulnerable and therefore are confronting immense challenges. Changes in the climate, environment, the exploitation of economic globalization, free trade agreements and a continuation of western forms of development threaten indigenous and local land-based communities on a local and global level.

The survival of indigenous cultures worldwide, including the languages and right to practice their cultural heritage continue to be affected by a modern industrialized world with an economic growth paradigm that lacks awareness and respect for the sacredness of Mother Earth. As “guardians” of Mother Earth, many indigenous tribal traditions believe that it is their historic responsibility to protect the sacredness of Mother Earth and to be defenders of the Circle of Life which includes biodiversity, forests, flora, fauna and all living species.

Indigenous Peoples participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) climate negotiations and other the UN Convention on Biological Diversity are in the front lines of a power structure that minimizes the importance of indigenous cosmologies, philosophies and world views. These power structures reside within the UN process and prop up inequalities found in industrialized countries, the more developed of the developing countries, the World Bank and financial institutions. These powerful actors have economic systems that objectify, commodify and put a monetary value on land, water, forests and air that is antithetical to indigenous understanding. Indigenous peoples, North and South, are forced into the world market with nothing to negotiate with except the natural resources relied on for survival.

With many indigenous communities it is difficult and sometimes impossible to reconcile their traditional spiritual beliefs within a climate mitigation regime that commodifies the sacredness of air, trees and life. Climate change mitigation and sustainable forest management must be based on different mindsets which give full respect for nature, the rights of Mother Earth and not on market-based mechanisms.

History has seen attempts to commodify land, food, labor, forests, water, genes and ideas, such as privatization of our traditional knowledge. Carbon trading follows in the footsteps of this history and turns the sacredness of our Mother Earth’s carbon-cycling capacity into property to be bought or sold in a global market. Through this process of creating a new commodity — carbon — Mother Earth’s ability and capacity to support a climate conducive to life and human societies is now passing into the same corporate hands that are destroying the climate. Carbon trading will not contribute to achieving protection of the Earth’s climate.

It is a false solution which entrenches and magnifies social inequalities in many ways. It is a violation of the sacred — plain and simple. We recognize the need for industrialized countries to focus on new economies, governed by the absolute limits and boundaries of ecological sustainability, the carrying capacities of Mother Earth, a more equitable sharing of global and local resources, encouragement and support of self sustaining communities, and respect and support for the rights of Mother Earth. Long term solutions require turning away from prevailing paradigms and ideologies centered on pursuing economic growth, corporate profits and personal wealth accumulation as primary engines of social

well-being. The transitions will inevitably be toward societies that can equitably adjust to reduced levels of production and consumption, and increasingly localized systems of economic organization that recognize, honor and are bounded by the limits of nature that recognize the draft Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth.<sup>1</sup>

“In recognizing the root causes of climate change, participants call upon the industrialized countries and the world to work towards decreasing dependency on fossil fuels. We call for a moratorium on all new exploration for oil, gas, coal and uranium as a first step towards the full phase-out of fossil fuels, without nuclear power, with a just transition to sustainable jobs, energy and environment. We take this position and make this recommendation based on our concern over the disproportionate social, cultural, spiritual, environmental and climate impacts on Indigenous Peoples, who are the first and the worst affected by the disruption of intact habitats, and the least responsible for such impacts.

Dialogue is needed amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders and especially the public/civil society and their governments to re-evaluate a colonial law system that doesn't work. A body of law needs to be developed that recognizes the inherent rights of the environment, of animals, fish, birds, plants, water, and air outside of their usefulness to humans.

This would address the question as to the law and rights of nature, however with the framework of indigenous natural laws or within the framework of indigenous *Original Instructions*. Most colonial western law limits nature and what North America Indigenous peoples term as the *Circle of Life*, as mere property or natural “resources” to be exploited.

Many Indigenous Peoples in Copenhagen at the UNFCCC COP 15 were demanding action; not false hopes and empty promises. Developed countries use tactics to continue carbon colonialism. As Indigenous Peoples, many of us are raising the bar. We are mobilizing with social movements, workers, women, youth, small farmers and the business sector with a consciousness for social responsibility

and will make demands in Cancun at the COP 16 and beyond Cancun to South Africa in 2011 and the Rio +20 in 2012 the most stringent emission target reductions and real solutions. As Indigenous Peoples, we are the guardians of Mother Earth, and making principled stands for the global well-being of all people and all life.

On my mother's bloodline, I am *Dine'*, an indigenous tribal nation spanning from Alaska, throughout Canada to the southwestern region of the United States. The deep profound spiritual concepts of Mother Earth and Father Sky being part of us as the *Dine'* and the *Dine'* being part of Mother Earth and Father Sky is woven into our “Way-Of-Being” even before we are born, when we are in the womb of our birth mother. It is our belief the *Dine'* must treat this sacred bond with love and respect without exerting dominance for we do not own our mother or father.

The four sacred elements of life: air, fire/light, water and earth in all their forms must be respected, honored and protected for they sustain life. These sacred elements cannot be owned and traded as property. We, the *Dine'*, the people of the Great Covenant, are the image of our ancestors and we are created in connection with all Creation. Mother

Earth and our place in the Universe embody deep thinking, what we call “*Nahasdzaan doo Yadihlil bitsaadee beehaz'aanii*” or in the closest English translation, “Natural Law”.

On the other side of my family, amongst our *Dakota Oyate* (People), we understand our relationship and responsibilities to the natural world and to all life — animate and inanimate. We have an expression concluding our prayers whereby we say, “*Mitakuye Owasin*”, in English translation meaning “*All My Relations*”. This saying defines the relational precepts we have towards recognizing the rights of Mother Earth, and all life, and the responsibilities we have to remember the responsibility of our place in creation.

## REDD/REDD+ in the negotiations<sup>2</sup>

Many Indigenous Peoples are starting to call REDD/REDD+ “CO2lonialism of forests” or capitalism of the trees and air”. The newspaper *The Australian* calls it a “classic 21st century scam emerging from the global climate change industry.”

This is because in reality, REDD/REDD+ is bad for people, bad for politics and bad for the climate. It will inevitably give more control over Indigenous Peoples’ forests to state forest departments, loggers, miners, plantation companies, traders, lawyers, speculators, brokers, Washington conservation organizations and Wall Street, resulting in violations of rights, loss of livelihood — and, ultimately, more forest loss.

The reasons are simple. Industrialized-country governments and corporations will pay for the preservation of Indigenous Peoples’ forests only if they get something in return. What they want is rights over the carbon in those forests. They need those rights because they want to use them as licenses to continue burning fossil fuels — and thus to continue mining fossil fuels at locations like the Albertan Tar Sands in Canada, the Ecuadorian Amazon, the Niger Delta and Appalachian mountaintops in the United States. They will get those rights by making deals with — and reinforcing the power of — the people that they regard as having “authority” over the forests, or whoever is willing and able to steal forests or take them over using legal means. These people are the very governments, corporations and gangsters who have time and again proved their contempt for the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples. The result is bound to be new and more extensive forms of elite appropriation of Indigenous and other territories.

## REDD/REDD+ can’t be fixed by attempts to detach it from the carbon markets

Existing REDD/REDD+ projects have already set in motion this transfer of power, nor is there any way that REDD/REDD+ can be “fixed” to alter these political

realities. It can only reinforce them. For well-meaning environmentalists to deny this is to indulge in a very dangerous naïveté.

First and foremost, REDD/REDD+ is — and is always in danger of being — a component of carbon markets. While many of the details of REDD/REDD+ are being worked out by well intentioned economists, lawyers, environmental NGOs, and forest conservationists and technicians with no particular commitment to carbon markets, the money behind it was always going to come mainly from industrialized countries and large corporations looking for more pollution licenses to enable them to delay action on climate change. Even among the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, the consensus is already clear: finance for REDD/REDD+ projects will come from carbon markets.

If REDD/REDD+ plans go forward, billions of tonnes of demand for trade-able REDD/REDD+ pollution licenses will be generated by UN-backed carbon markets including the European Union (EU) Emissions Trading Scheme, bilateral agreements and the voluntary market. Even the technical structure of REDD/REDD+ reflects its market orientation: REDD/REDD+ posits a numerical climatic equivalence between saving forests and reducing the burning of fossil fuels.

This equation is indefensible scientifically; its only function is to make different things trade-able in order to generate fossil fuel pollution licenses.<sup>3</sup> A non-market REDD/REDD+ would not need to claim this false equivalence between biotic and fossil carbon.

As an alternative to the carbon market mechanisms of REDD/REDD+, there is an emerging movement of friendly countries, NGOs and Indigenous Peoples organizations (IPOs) proposing a hypothetical REDD/REDD+ that is not connected with the carbon markets. However, these strategic and tactical solutions are risky with no guarantees that these proposals will end up being pushed aside by the more powerful actors with a stake in developing this prospective trillion-dollar market.<sup>4</sup> To act as if REDD/REDD+ might someday be financed by a repayment of the ecological debt the North owes the South, or by a benevolent

fund using public or non-market donations, could be naive. Red flags go up expressing the danger zones of blindly supporting REDD/REDD+, of any kind, as well as any attempt to “fix” REDD/REDD+, that would inevitably mean support for the carbon markets.

***Assuming REDD/REDD+ is irretrievably linked with carbon markets, then at least three important conclusions follow:***

(1) There is no way to stop REDD/REDD+ from dividing Indigenous and forest dependent communities from each other. Every time a forest dependent community signs a contract to provide pollution licenses for fossil fuel-dependent corporations, it will be potentially harming communities elsewhere who are suffering from the fossil fuel extraction or pollution for which those corporations are responsible. No possible reform or regulation of REDD/REDD+ could prevent this; it is built into its structure as a carbon market instrument.

Of course, it would be theoretically possible, with great effort, for Indigenous and forest dependent communities who wish to sign REDD/REDD+ contracts to secure the free, prior and informed consent of all the other communities elsewhere who would be harmed.

Many local communities of these forested areas have values respecting humanity and the concepts of the well-being of community, however, most members of these REDD/REDD+ projects have not been thoroughly informed of the offset reality on how these projects create toxic hotspots violating the indigenous and human rights of communities far away. But unless this consent is obtained in every case — and the list of communities across the globe who would need to be consulted would be huge with many REDD/REDD+ projects — REDD/REDD+ is bound to pit community against community.

Already, a project using aboriginal North Australian Indigenous knowledge of fire management practices to generate pollution licenses for ConocoPhillips has provoked the following reaction from Casey Camp-Horinek, a tribal

member of the Ponca indigenous nation in the US, which suffers from the actions of the company in North America: “Indigenous Peoples who participate in carbon trading are giving ConocoPhillips a bullet to kill my people.”<sup>4</sup>

(2) There is no way to stop REDD/REDD+ from dividing Indigenous and forest dependent communities who sign REDD/REDD+ contracts from other communities for whom climate change is a concern. As part of carbon markets, REDD/REDD+ will inevitably slow action on global warming; that is what carbon markets are structured to do.<sup>5</sup>

REDD/REDD+ will thus heighten climate dangers for Arctic, indigenous lands, small-island states and low-lying and coastal communities, as well as, eventually, everyone else. Again, no possible reform of REDD/REDD+ could prevent the damage it would do to the climate cause, as long as it is linked to carbon trading. Pretending that such reforms are possible only perpetuates the damage. The very structure of REDD/REDD+ makes it impossible that it could ever be made “Indigenous-friendly”.

(3) There is no way to stop REDD/REDD+ from being a speculative plaything of the financial markets — to the detriment of the climate and human rights alike. Already, the biggest investors in carbon credits are not companies that need them in order to meet their government-regulated pollution targets<sup>7</sup>

REDD/REDD+ can’t be fixed by trying to ensure that the money “goes to the right place” REDD/REDD+ proponents often assert that, even though REDD/REDD+ may be bad for the climate, at least it will be good for forests because it will channel large sums of money to nature conservation and biodiversity protection. Leaving aside, for the moment, the difficulty that any program that accelerates global warming will also accelerate forest destruction, this is to overlook the historical lesson that every proposal to solve the problem of deforestation and forest degradation through large sums of money has failed.<sup>8</sup>



*This failure is due to at least three reasons:*

(1) The problem of deforestation is not caused by too little money. It is caused by too *much* money — money in the wrong hands. More specifically, it is caused by the disproportionate political power and global political organisational capabilities of forest destroyers. What is needed to stop deforestation is not well-funded forest global conservation schemes or new markets for ecosystem services, but, rather — for example — a restructuring of trade, finance and consumption, moratoriums on oil extraction and large infrastructure projects in forests, curbs on logging, agrofuels and commercial plantations, and an increase in the political power of those with the deepest interest in saving forests: the communities that depend directly on them.

Making supplementary sums of money available — no matter to whom, and no matter in what amounts — will not help forest conservation unless the underlying causes of deforestation are both understood and addressed. There is no evidence that any major supporter of REDD/REDD+ has the slightest inclination to tackle these underlying causes, although they are well known.

Quite the reverse — all of these actors support the forces that have been most responsible for deforestation in the first place.

(2) Even if REDD/REDD+ could be reformulated as a plan to make available huge financial rewards for the Indigenous protectors of forests, it does not follow that Indigenous Peoples would be able to collect and use the rewards. As ecological anthropologist Michael R. Dove from Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies has observed, “whenever a resource at the periphery acquires value to the center, the center assumes control of it (e.g., by restricting local exploitation, granting exclusive licenses to corporate concessionaires, and establishing restrictive trade associations). The pattern is clearly expressed by a peasant homily from Kalimantan, which states that whenever a ‘little’ man chances upon a ‘big’ fortune, he finds only trouble. He is in trouble because his political resources are not commensurate with his

new-found economic resources. He does not have the power to protect and exploit great wealth and so, inevitably, it is taken from him.”<sup>9</sup>

The truth of Dove’s words are borne out by the record of recent schemes to reward Indigenous and other communities for “traditional knowledge” used in corporate drug development. In the end, the communities that were originally pictured as beneficiaries turned out to be inconvenient entities for buyers and bio-prospectors to deal with, leading to their replacement by ranchers (Argentina), governments (Chile), urban plant merchants (Mexico), or state land agencies and universities (Mexico). Planners were unable to find sites that contained “in one neat package the plants, knowledge, people, territory and decision-making authority, all congealed in the name of [a] participating community” that would receive funds for community development and conservation. Troubled researchers at the United States National Institutes of Health concluded that, in Mexico, treating plant collection as a commodity transaction “breaks the link” among people, plants and territory that the whole deal was supposed to encourage. Anthropologist Cori Hayden observes: “offers of market-mediated inclusion also contain within them the conditions for ever-greater forms of exclusion and stratification.”<sup>10</sup>

An even more brutal kind of property rights evolution has taken place in the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) — of which REDD/REDD+ could soon become a part. In the beginning, sellers of CDM carbon credits were supposed to be local developers of renewable energy, community-friendly tree-planters and other actors who could help the South move toward a low fossil-fuel development path while defending local rights. Given the realities of buyers, developers, lawyers, brokers, bankers and consultants, this turned out to be unworkable.

Transaction costs and the predicament of political bargaining, measurement, contracting, investment, cost control, “risk management” and regulation meant that the sellers turned out instead to be the big-corporates Jindal

Vijaynagar Steel in India, Rhodia Group that makes speciality chemicals, Tata Group, a conglomerate of corporations in India, and the Votorantim Group, the largest private economic conglomerate in Brazil, all in the business of collecting a premium for activities that on the whole thwarted the struggle to moderate climate change. Nor was it usually possible in practice for carbon money to be used to benefit local people. Instead, carbon money has harmed them and rewarded their oppressors.<sup>11</sup>

The pattern is already being repeated in REDD. Out of 100 pilot projects — almost all of them connected with carbon trading — many are already stained with the blood of the Indigenous and other peoples they claim to benefit, involving land grabs, evictions, human rights violations, fraud and militarization. In Kenya, the Mau forest is being made “ready” for a UNEP-funded carbon offset project by forceful and often violent eviction of its inhabitants, including the Indigenous Ogiek People.<sup>12</sup> In Papua New Guinea, carbon traders are accused of coercing villagers to “to sign over the rights to their forests” for REDD/REDD+.<sup>13</sup> The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) was explicit at the Bali climate negotiations in 2007:

“REDD/REDD+ will not benefit Indigenous Peoples, but in fact will result in more violations of Indigenous Peoples’ rights. It will increase the violation of our human rights, our rights to our lands, territories and resources, steal our land, cause forced evictions, prevent access and threaten indigenous agricultural practices, destroy biodiversity and cultural diversity and cause social conflicts. Under REDD/REDD+, states and carbon traders will take more control over our forests.”

(3) REDD/REDD+’s very design ensures that money will flow to forest destroyers, not to forest protectors. To create a REDD/REDD+ commodity, precise measurements of how much deforestation REDD/REDD+ projects prevent is necessary. That market requirement automatically produces a

perverse incentive for countries with low levels of deforestation to cut more trees now in order to be able to claim later that they are sharply reducing deforestation and thus deserve more REDD/REDD+ finance.<sup>14</sup> These perverse incentives are already at work in Guyana, where President Jagdeo has launched an “avoided threatened deforestation” scheme.

An editorial in Guyana’s *Kaieteur News* in May 2009 argued that Guyana “should precede full steam ahead with the exploitation of our forestry resources. In addition to placing our future development more firmly in our own hands, it will ironically make our arguments for REDD/REDD+ even stronger.”<sup>15</sup> Adding to the likelihood of REDD/REDD+ money flowing to the worst forest destroyers is the definition of “forests” used by the UNFCCC, which includes monoculture tree plantations and clearcuts (euphemistically referred to as “temporarily unstocked areas”).

Under this definition, the Brazilian government’s plans to replace part of the Amazonian forest with oil palm plantations would not count as deforestation.<sup>16</sup> Industrial loggers could also benefit from REDD/REDD+ by claiming to be practicing “sustainable forest management,” while criminalising Indigenous agricultural and forest practices.

***REDD/REDD+ can’t be fixed by saying that efforts are being made for REDD/REDD+ projects to require the “Free Prior Informed Consent” (FPIC) of affected communities or compliance with the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) or other codes or principles:***

(1) To act as if REDD/REDD+’s structural dangers could be “controlled” by pressing for principles such as FPIC, UNDRIP or World Commission on Dams standards to be applied is to indulge corporations and governments in a false-sense of hope that could damage millions of people’s lives. First, many countries do not even recognize the existence of Indigenous Peoples, let alone their rights, so neither the principle of FPIC nor UNDRIP will act as protection. Neither FPIC nor UNDRIP are considered legally binding by the

Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC nor by any state except Bolivia. During the Nairobi climate negotiations, the President of the Executive Board of the CDM stated publicly that the “Clean Development Mechanism has nothing to do with human rights.”<sup>17</sup> In recent negotiations in the “REDD text” within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’s Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action, efforts by Indigenous Peoples to negotiate strong language on indigenous rights in accordance with UNDRIP has resulted in attempts by the US and other countries to respond with weakened language. It is important to be mindful that the right to FPIC has already been violated in REDD/REDD+ pilot projects and in preparatory plans in several countries.<sup>18</sup> Other internationally-recognized principles such as the standards urged by the World Commission on Dams have similar limitations.

(2) Even if FPIC and UNDRIP magically became legislated, implemented and be enforceable law across the world within the next few years, it is our opinion as an Indigenous-based advocate organization that they would have to be applied to all the communities affected by each REDD/REDD+ project, not just the one hosting the project. For example, to get the free prior informed consent of Indigenous communities affected by the Northern Australia fire management offset project, the consent of Indigenous communities affected by ConocoPhillips operations in North America would also need to be obtained, as well as other communities damaged by ConocoPhillips practices elsewhere. This would obviously make REDD/REDD+ commercially unviable: either REDD/REDD+ or FPIC would have to be scrapped. Hence, to avoid delay, it would be more practical to oppose REDD/REDD+ straightforwardly, at the outset.

(3) Whatever the merits of FPIC and UNDRIP, they are, again, incapable of forcing REDD/REDD+ projects to address the underlying causes of deforestation. Even if it were possible to make compliance with the principles of FPIC and UNDRIP a condition for every REDD/REDD+ project, REDD/REDD+ would remain a contributor to both deforestation and global warming, as well

as an additional piece of artillery for the use of the corporate and nation-state forces that oppose Indigenous rights. To proceed as if FPIC and UNDRIP could “fix” REDD/REDD+, therefore, is ironically ultimately to endorse the violation of the rights of Indigenous people as well as all others who value climatic stability.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

The bottom line concerning the question of how to address the issues of increasing climate change is to stop extracting and combusting fossil fuels. There are no other solutions. REDD/REDD+ is not a solution. The push at the Cancun UNFCCC 16th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 16) will be to reach an agreement on a REDD-plus (REDD+) mechanism in Cancun, Mexico. The UN-REDD Programme, the World Bank and others want to launch the REDD+ readiness initiatives. The link between emissions trading and the world of offsets to the vested interests of the pro-REDD marketers is deeply rooted. Real alternatives to the carbon market mechanism of REDD/REDD+ cannot simply become a re-spin of REDD. It is not enough to add a clever adjective, purport to be “fund-based”, get certified or pretend to not ultimately rely on the carbon market and the privatization and commodification of trees, forests and air.

### *Fortunately, real alternatives to REDD/REDD+ already exist and include:*

Focusing on land tenure dilemmas in forested countries. Collectively demarcating and titling Indigenous Peoples’ territories and land where most of the world’s forests are found. This has proven to be one of the most effective measures for reducing deforestation;

Implementing at the global, national, regional and local levels the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other relevant international human rights norms and standards which establish moral and legal obligations to protect and promote the full enjoyment of Indigenous Peoples rights and sovereignty in all issues related to climate change, including rights to lands,

territories and resources, their traditional knowledge and their free, prior and informed consent;

For other forest dependent communities, ensure the implementation at global, national, regional and local levels international human rights norms and standards which establish moral and legal obligations to protect and promote the full enjoyment of human rights related to climate change, land, water, and a healthy environment; Efforts to stop deforestation must address the underlying causes of deforestation and focus on ending the demand-side drivers in importing countries;

Addressing governance and poverty;

In so far as finance is required to stop deforestation, funds should be invested in national programmes and infrastructure that directly support alternative rights-based forms of forest conservation, sustainable management, natural regeneration and ecosystem restoration that are already known to work, such as community-based forestry.

Slashing demand for beef, pulp, lumber, palm oil and agrofuels;

Drastically reducing monoculture plantations and logging concessions;

Declaring a moratorium on new fossil fuel and mining extraction and dam construction on or near indigenous land; and

It is becoming clear that to separate REDD/REDD+ from the carbon market, it would need to be totally reframed and renamed within the debates and UNFCCC negotiating texts. This would be difficult within the UNFCCC “Bracket-UN-bracket Community” and would require countries with political will to step up to this need.

The mining and combustion of fossil fuels must be drastically reduced with a commitment to a carbon-free economy by 2050. Within the UNFCCC, the

governmental parties to the climate negotiations must be lobbied to target aggregate GHG emissions of developed countries by 50 per cent from 1990 levels by 2017.<sup>20</sup> The world governments must commit to the global goal of preventing Mother Earth’s temperature from rising more than 1° Celsius. Given the important role the Arctic plays in the global climate system, a precautionary approach would therefore suggest a long-term target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and stabilize atmospheric CO2 concentrations at levels at or below 300 parts per million (ppm).<sup>21</sup> This is more aggressive than the 350ppm target, but mitigating the climate crisis demands drastic action. This would rule out a domino effect of sea-ice loss, what is called an “albedo flip”, a warmer Arctic, a disintegrating Greenland ice sheet, black carbon (black soot), more melting permafrost, and further secondary or “knock-on” effects of massively increased greenhouse gas emissions, rising atmospheric concentrations and accelerated global warming.<sup>22</sup> It must be noted that industrialised developed countries are advocating for only a 450ppm stabilization goal.

The “Shared Vision” text within the UNFCCC Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action (AWG-LCA) must have strong language mobilized by the People of the World undertaking a balanced, comprehensive series of financial, technological and adaptation measures, measures addressing capacity building, production patterns and consumption, and other essential measures such as recognition of the rights of Mother Earth in order to restore harmony with nature and to save our native forests.

There is a need for a new paradigm in this world, in relation to how it defines its’ relationship to Mother Earth. This paradigm requires a change in the human relationship with the natural world from one of exploitation to one that recognizes its relationship to the sacredness of our true mother/grandmother — Mother Earth. Economic globalization and industrialized societies’ economic system is not sustainable.

**“We confront the terminal crisis of a civilizing model that is patriarchal and based on the submission and destruction of human beings and nature that accelerated since the industrial revolution. The capitalist system has imposed on us a logic of competition, progress and limitless growth. This regime of production and consumption seeks profit without limits, separating human beings from nature and imposing a logic of domination upon nature, transforming everything into commodities: water, earth, the human genome, ancestral cultures, biodiversity, justice, ethics, the rights of peoples, and life itself. Under capitalism, Mother Earth is converted into a source of raw materials, and human beings into consumers and a means of production, into people that are seen as valuable only for what they own, and not for what they are.”**

*– Cochabamba Peoples’ Agreement (Accord), April 2010*

Mother Earth is turned into nothing more than a source of raw materials. Human beings are seen as consumers and a means of production, that is, persons whose worth is defined by what they have, not by what they are. Humanity is at a crossroads: we can either continue taking the path of capitalism, depredation and death, or take the road of harmony with nature and respect for the Circle of Life.

The world must forge a new economic system that restores harmony with nature and among human beings. We can only achieve balance with nature if there is equity among human beings. The industrialized economic system has imposed upon us a mindset that seeks competition, progress and unlimited growth. This production–consumption regime pursues profits without limit, separating human beings from nature. It establishes a mindset that seeks to dominate nature,

turning everything into a commodity: the land, water, air (carbon), forests, agriculture, flora and fauna, biodiversity, genes and even indigenous traditional knowledge.

**Note:** Footnotes from this article, a truncated version of an essay that was a collection of articles and essays from the REDD READER can be read here:

<http://www.ienearth.org/docs/REDD-Reader-1.pdf>

*Publication contributors included: REDD Monitor, Global Justice Ecology Project, Diego Alejandro Cardona, Tatiana Roa Avendaño, Honduran Garifuna Organization, World Rainforest Movement, Carbon Trade Watch, Brihannala Morgan, ETC Group and Indigenous Environmental Network.*

## Beyond Their Wildest Dreams

JAY TABER

Collective amnesia and social attention deficit often erase the memory required to understand where new phenomena like [green greed](#) came from. Of course, greed isn't new, nor is fraud, but this particular combination might be new to those just encountering it. It's why we have memory systems like archives, stories and films.

In the 20th century, industrial extraction was unapologetically brutal – hiring propagandists, ideologues, field agent provocateurs and thugs to silence critics and crush opponents. They still do that, but now they deny it, or conceal it with confusing cover stories.

Likewise, they always co-opted less committed critics, but not to the present degree of comprising [vertically-integrated](#) industries where they have their own green NGOs and news services that enable them to promote green greed as sustainable, even humanitarian.

Initially, the [Wise Use](#) movement in the 1980s sought to intimidate community activists opposed to environmental destruction, literally threatening and assaulting them. After Congressional hearings on this extraction industry-financed thuggery in the 1990s, they trotted out the concept of Free-Market environmentalism, whereby extraction industries and real estate developers could cash in on public environmental sentiments with minor concessions – often little more than public relations gimmicks. With the development of climate change scams like [REDD](#) – perhaps the epitome of green greed – securities traders and other sectors of the financial services industry are now getting in on the action.

Looking at the lineup of players involved, the overlap between REDD and Wise Use is remarkably consistent; even the usual suspects in the bank bailouts that led to global austerity measures have a continuous presence.

One interesting aspect of REDD and Wise Use is the fact that both are anti-democratic by design – thereby corrosive of accountable governance – and both view Indigenous peoples rights and [Fourth World](#) sovereignty as targets to be strategically undermined and destroyed. In the 1980s and 1990s, extraction industry-financed organizations and networks were used to foment racism and violence against American Indians over treaty-protected resources. The same funding went to political campaigns to elect anti-Indian officials willing to thwart federal law on behalf of the industries.

Building on their earlier success, they have now corrupted international institutions like the United Nations, facilitating the development of anti-democratic, anti-Indigenous, anti-environmental programs under the guise of saving the planet – a public relations ploy perhaps beyond their wildest dreams as little as a decade ago. Then again, maybe not.



# It's Time To Build A Continental Indigenous Communications Network

JOHN SCHERTOW

Late in 2010, more than 200 Indigenous organizations and 79 different nationalities came together in La Maria Piendamó, Cauca, Colombia for the [First Continental Summit of Indigenous Communication](#) in Abya Yala (the Americas).

Delegates at the four-day Summit, which was hosted by the [Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca](#) (CRIC) and the [National Indigenous Organization of Colombia](#) (ONIC) discussed a wide range of issues, including: the Rights of Mother Earth and collective rights to communication; Discrimination and the distortions of institutionalized media; Aggression towards Indigenous media producers; and the Right to Communication and Information at the international level.

However, the cornerstone of the Summit was surely the Continental Indigenous Communications Network.

Over the years, such a network has been [discussed](#) at numerous conferences. At one point the United Nations even talked about setting up such a network for Indigenous Peoples, though nothing ever came of it. Most recently, the idea of a continental network was discussed at the [Fourth Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples](#) of Abya Yala, held in the department of Puno, Peru. That particular discussion helped form the basis for the Summit in Colombia.

Delegates at the Summit inevitably came to an agreement that worked in the best interests of Indigenous Peoples. As stated in their [Declaration](#), they committed to building “a continental platform in order to give direction and articulate our efforts at the level of Abya Yala, so that indigenous communication

is always at the service of our Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities in reflection of our legitimate aspirations.”

“As a first step”, the Declaration continued, “we have decided to establish a continental indigenous communications network Abya Yala that articulates the diverse networks, processes and experiences of our Indigenous Peoples and Nations.”

Perhaps it goes without saying, but there's a need for a communications network on every continent, especially since the lines of communication are so limited for all Indigenous Peoples, whether they're in Peru, Colombia, Tibet, West Papua or Congo. It's the same thing every time. Indigenous perspectives, concerns and opinions, like basic rights, are constantly trivialized and suppressed by the media.

These and other limitations even exist in Canada and the United States. While there are hundreds of radio stations, newspapers, websites, and even television networks—like the [Aboriginal Peoples Television Network](#) (APTN)—here, the flow of information is heavily restricted at the local, national, and international levels. As members of the Canadian-based [Media Co-op](#) have pointed out, this is especially true in northern Canada, where indigenous communities are more isolated.

In the last 5 years, we've also seen a ten-fold increase in irrational right-wing rhetoric in Latin America, especially [Peru](#) and Ecuador. How Indigenous Peoples are “lunatics” and “terrorists” who are we're being “controlled by external

forces”—is also quite common in Botswana, Papua New Guinea, India, West Papua, Burma, Australia, and China. It’s starting to gain a foothold in Canada, too; far more than we’re willing to admit.

An Indigenous Communications Network, like the one that was proposed in Colombia, enables us to counter insane rhetoric on our own terms, in a manner that we can control. And, in the long-run it gives us immediate access to each other, which is essential for organizing and standing in solidarity with our Brothers and Sisters around the world. After all, it doesn’t do anybody any good to find out about a malicious attack or a peaceful blockade two weeks after the fact..

That said, it’s going to take a few years to build up the Abya Yala Network. There’s a lot of work to do! For instance, they will have to build a lot of support for the initiative, petition governments for funding and resources and create new alliances with NGOs and universities.

According to the declaration, they are also going to build a virtual platform and a “mobile school” to train people in communications as well as a “continental archive” to house indigenous media. And, among other things, they’re going to push for 2012 to be “the International Year of Indigenous Communication.”

As much time as it will take to move such a monumental network forward, it will be time used well; because, in the end, it will enable them and empower them to move in their own direction: to protect their territories, to preserve their legacies, and to live beyond mere survival.

## Power of Moral Sanction

JAY TABER

The power of moral sanction as a penalty of conscience for violations of our sense of decency – based on a belief in the application of justice – has been essential to struggles for autonomy and dignity since the Middle Ages, and is, in my opinion, central to the struggle of rebuilding democratic society today. An examination, therefore, of the strengths and weaknesses of this tool of social change is warranted.

Moral sanction, alone, may be insufficient to constrain political violence or official repression, but it can bring significant pressures to bear on public behaviour as well as within institutions under the control or influence of civil society. Indeed, both reform and revolutionary movements – as well as all forms of resistance in fundamental conflict with tyrannical powers – rely on moral sanction as an essential component of warfare.

Resistance warfare may take different and multiple forms: war of position, based on a principle (i.e. boycotts); war of movement, uniting affinity interest groups (i.e. strikes); civil disobedience, to garner attention to an issue or recognition of the aggrieved; underground warfare, to subvert illegitimate authorities (i.e. sabotage); or open conflict, to challenge the police powers of these authorities (including riots and armed insurrection), but the degree of commitment by the oppressed participants, and the approbation of non-combatants and potential recruits, is largely determined by the ability of resistance leaders to articulate and disseminate the moral values at issue.

In this way, resisters gain not only attention, but also recognition of the validity of their grievances. At the same time, the moral prestige of the oppressive or repressive state is diminished, and opportunities to obtain concessions or to leverage discussion and dialogue are enhanced. The danger encountered at this

fulcrum point is in allowing mediation of communication to divert attention from the revolutionary movement toward an often fraudulent negotiating process. Bad faith offers of conflict settlement by official parties are usually welcomed with open arms by observers and less committed allies. The psychological warfare, the war of ideas, and the war of maneuvers are constant; those committed to and capable of seizing power must, thus, continue intelligence and self-defense activities in anticipation of future attack.

The strongest movements will, I believe, combine all forms of warfare, emphasizing the appropriate form at the appropriate time. Highly-principled charismatic leaders, such as Gandhi may, unfortunately, become dismayed by movement shortcomings, but this is the unavoidable paradox of leadership: visionaries are essential to inspiring altruistic action, yet the visions are always betrayed; the quest for justice is what motivates the multitudes, but a better deal that can be built on is sometimes all that can be gained. Chief Joseph came to understand these aspects of the march of human folly, accepting his responsibility toward the survival of his people in order to hope for better times. A much younger and less socially burdened Joan of Arc did not.

Conflicts with authority and struggles for autonomy take many forms: arguing for temperance in the application of justice, as in the case of Antigone; maneuvering for institutional reform, as in the case of St. Teresa D'Avila; withdrawal of allegiance and the institution of new government, as with Gandhi and the Indian National Congress; declaring war without negotiation or possibility of truce, as in the case of Joan of Arc; or conditioning one's assent to truce, subsequent to warfare over irresolvable differences, as in the case of Chief Joseph. Indeed, a single movement of liberation may include all of these forms as it matures and evolves; witness Mandela and the African National Congress.

The patterns of cultural preference, consciously articulated as values, provide continuity and grounding in times of social disintegration, turmoil, and

transition. The core values expressed in acts of moral sanction – even if they at times motivate righteously indignant believers to commit violence – are ultimately the foundation on which a new society can reintegrate around altered relationships of the old. As such, communication of these values leads to the empowering acts of individuals that develop commitment to a process of transformation they believe will lead to greater fulfillment of these values. Faith in the possibility of justice, despite the evidence of history, is sometimes all that prevents the complete annihilation of human dignity. Hence the ethical imperative to fight for lost causes.

Core values of a society – when superseded by false values or fraudulent representations of true ones – occupy the collective subconscious and create a cognitive dissonance that prepares a population to accept expressions of dissent that reaffirm their most deeply held beliefs. To stir these thoughts and compete with official obfuscation and spectacle, resistance leaders must be selected who can not only access these depths, but who also have organic credentials to speak with authority on the topic.

Paving the way for leadership today – networked as well as charismatic – thus requires the subversion of establishment media by the uncensored, unmediated, exchange of news and information, combining emerging technologies and underground networks to inform and engage people through existing social centers such as churches and schools. In this way, leadership can emerge, be exercised, and find expression in multiple venues, while retaining a base of operations, funding, and social support with potential for mobilization.

Making room for the spirit of reflective, conscious, self-disciplined thought that leads to political engagement is a leadership task that combines both facilitative as well as inspirational talents, and may not be found in a single individual; hence, the advantage of networked, shared, cooperative leadership that has the diversity of experience and perspective to develop activities and actions that serve to enact the collective vision, that in turn catalyze movements in quest of truth, liberation, and reconciliation.

Leaving room for the intuitive in the arts and sciences of leadership, leaders are well-advised to methodically prepare themselves, their followers, and their allies for the eventuality of attack and counter-attack. The degree of commitment and courage among their supporters will vary greatly, ebbing and flowing with the tumultuous circumstances of conflict. Oppressive regimes and ideologues are well-versed in the use of fear, hate, and revenge as a formula for undermining and destroying opposition; terrorism is used because it works.

Fear blocks intelligence and leads people to seek reassurance from sometimes dangerous authorities; isolation of this social pathogen, inoculation of those most susceptible to official rhetoric, and education of those looking for certainty, are essential programs of revolutionary movements. Integration of the nodes of resistance, open dialogue and discussion, as well as courageous denunciation and defiance of transgressions of societal norms, are all requisites of the public health model of social change. In the end, all reform and revolution comes down to a war of ideas. Networking amongst the nodes builds a sense of solidarity based on ideas, and allows groups to develop more effective strategies based on the experience of other people similarly engaged.

Dissent without resistance, it should be noted, is a form of consent. If official acts offend our sense of decency, moral sanction must be enacted, and justice applied through punishment and restitution, or one's words have no meaning but to flatter one's sense of piety. Autonomy, human dignity, integrity, and justice cannot be obtained without accountability. Thus there are distinct limits to a strategy of moral theatrics in containing such things as the neurosis of militarism and the associated pathogen of aggression; at some point, risks must be taken to curtail systematic global violence.

The problems of terrorism, foreign and domestic, lay and official, I would observe, promise to get worse until the popular desire to be either righteous or reassured is surpassed by a popular desire to be informed and effective; faith

in piety or patriarchy is not conducive to personal growth. Reflective analysis is the antidote to doctrinaire strategy and tactics. Examples of moral resistance to injustice in the last millennium, and the associated lessons of leadership, are now examined for insights and essential truths we will need in order to keep our bearings in the next.

For Mahatma Gandhi, like other great souls, the act of resistance was a reclamation of the soul of his community – the Indian people. In fact, he was chosen to lead, by his mentors and advisors, because of his spirit, patience, and powers of analysis in communicating the radical, indigenous vision of transformation – an autonomous unified sub-continent achieved through the use of moral sanction, and fought by a war of position and movement, until the colonial power itself was transformed. Gandhi's approach of converting, as opposed to annihilating, one's opponent, allows for a more permanent reconciliation. The practical application of this approach begins, from my perspective, in simultaneously converting conscientious officials, as well as, the individuals and institutions of civil society that hold influence over them.

This vision of transformation, articulated by Tagore, and enacted by Gandhi, was thus able to seize the initiative in proclaiming a war of ideas, rather than a war of individuals – a conflict in which ordinary individuals could both participate in a national movement as well as grow in self-worth. With the help of international media that was yet to become amoral, the injustice was made visible to the world, and the power of moral sanction was exercised.

Key to Gandhi's success in mobilizing world opinion and the Indian people, were his notion of ripeness of one's issue and the discipline of preparation, essential tools of public interest litigation in which he had initially engaged in South Africa. He realized that people needed time to absorb new ideas, and to develop convictions based on these ideas, before they could be effectively mobilized. From his experience in the judicial system, he also knew the importance of

honoring the positions of all parties in a dispute as a means of constructing consent to the resolution reached. A significant aspect of Gandhi's philosophy – rare in the cynical populism of America as we enter the era of demise of our empire – was his implicit trust in human nature to want to do what is morally right once the truth is revealed. What today seems naïve is, I propose, misunderstood; Gandhi was referring to the human nature of people living and acting in harmony with their beliefs – not to the perverted acts of the desperate, of sociopaths, or of neurotics.

Britain and Europe, as such – much like the United States and its client states today – lost their formal moral prestige, however shallow, and were for a time seen realistically as upholders of race supremacy and exploiters of other peoples.

Moral sanction, in the case of St. Joan, took more time to fully play out. Preparing the way for those who would follow, she, consciously or not, initiated the removal of ideological barriers to liberation.

While we tend to focus on heroes at the moments of final victory, the development of moral sanction often evolves over several generations: witness the progression of acknowledgment and understanding by the dominant society of the suasions of civil rights protagonists from Frederick Douglass through Martin Luther King. And while it is true that preparing new leaders and battling societal mythology takes many years, we must recognize the role of impatient, sometimes martyred leaders, such as St. Joan, in helping to define and make visible the social forces in conflict.

In the case of modern conflict tactics – like civil disobedience and civil resistance (sometimes referred to as direct action) – repeated exposure to inappropriate or severe official reaction helps to make patterns of oppression recognizable. Repression and censorship only serve to reinforce the sense of betrayal felt as observers first become aware or conscious of a particular injustice. It is at this point that individuals become potential recruits to a community of socially-based participants engaged in experimenting with the tools of moral sanction.

The observation that superior wits find it hard to understand the fury roused by their exposures of stupidity, and consequently fail to adequately appreciate the fear they inspire, can lead to tragic failure in a most crucial role of leadership – to anticipate. Ironically, St. Joan's enormous self-confidence and lack of caution or scholarship in battling both foreigners and moral authorities, served to exacerbate tensions and to accelerate the process of societal evolution, ruthlessly dramatized by her explosive violence.

Colonialism takes away a subdued people's place of communal interaction; this removal of meeting places destroys their cohesion. As the first step in the process of disenfranchisement, the erosion of the land base of an enemy leads to the severing of their philosophical roots and the abolishment of orally conveyed cultural lessons that demoralizes the vanquished and prepares them for conversion to the dominant mentality. In the wake of such callous brutality, atrocities are perhaps inevitable. Subsequent attempts to reclaim the souls and diminish the trauma of both the oppressors and the oppressed -- such as truth and reconciliation processes -- are dangerous, and must be carefully designed to avoid the eruption of acts of vengeance or reactionary terrorism.

The clarity of argument for moral sanction against aggression is most pronounced in the case of classic colonialism, where a foreign power occupies, or controls by its military force, the territory of another people. It is less clear in the case of neoliberal economic colonialism that often relies on puppet regimes, economic penalties, and mercenary or paramilitary forces to suppress the fulfillment of social needs. But it is most obscured where the descendants of colonists – through the passage of time and consolidation of control – manage to assuage their collective conscience regarding their inherited privilege. The evolution of their mythology in rationalizing the acts of their ancestors during the process of invasion and conquest is a continuous, semi-conscious, collective effort at avoiding moral sanction.

The dissonance of conscience provoked by this mechanism of self-delusion is most dangerous when confronted with the reality of resistance by those deprived – particularly when the violated claims of indigenous populations are codified by statute and treaty, as they are in the US. The determination of American Indians to reclaim their heritage, their right to exist as a people and culture, has never wavered. Empowered by their knowledge of history, an authentic philosophy, and overarching relational values of integrity and sharing, they have persistently awoken a moral position in our conscience.

Indigenous statesmen, during the initial internment to reservations, faced the formidable task of forbearance while laying the groundwork for future reclamation. However conscious indigenous leaders like Chief Joseph were of the sacrifices his people would make for the right of self-governance, the courage they manifested in positing their relationship with the United States in moral terms, made it difficult at first, and ultimately impossible to deny their humanity. Everyone knows truth when they hear it.

Moral sanction, however, is not expressed solely in words; to be made visible; it must be dramatized in deeds. Despite the spiritual challenge, bewilderment, and trauma associated with diametrically opposed values, witnessing the murder of elders, women, and children, Joseph's resilience, and steadfast commitment to the apparently lost cause of Native American sovereignty, served to disturb authorities of his era and document the unresolved grievance for ours. The message of moral sanction, communicated through the acts of resistance by Makah whalers, Navajo lawyers, and Iroquois warrior societies, demonstrate the moral imperative of self-determination.

*\*This essay was initially published by Design Posse Press in conjunction with the Peace Resource Center at Western Washington University for the Confronting War Without End teach-in held on November 16, 2002, and is included in the 2005 book [War of Ideas](#).*

## How To Learn To Stop Worrying And Love The Oil Sands

JOHN SCHERTOW

**“Communication might be understood as both the conduit for and the actual substance of human culture and consciousness. Psychological warfare is the application of mass communication to modern social conflict.”**

– Science of Coercion, Christopher Simpson, American University

Tendencies of psychological warfare (U.S. Army War College):

1. Destroys will and ability of enemy to fight
2. Deprives enemy of support of allies and neutrals
3. Increases internal will to victory

Effects of psychological warfare (U.S. Army War College):

- Dissension
- Distrust
- Fear
- Hopelessness

*Given the challenges that we face as Indigenous Peoples in Canada, it's important to take a step back every now and again, if only so we make sure we know what exactly is being placed in front of us. If we don't then we run the risk of wasting what little time and resources we have to stop an untenable project like, for example, the proposed [Enbridge pipeline](#) – a project that threatens our cultural heritage, our health, the environment and our ability to exist as distinct Peoples.*



The goal of this article is to explore one of the most far reaching obstacles around, which happens to be blindsiding us this very moment. I refer here to the psychological war that has been waged on us by the government of Canada, oil companies and proponents of the tar sands.

Most of the time, governments and corporations will pretend that we don't exist, for reasons that are fairly straightforward. They want to take something on our land and they don't mind sacrificing us in the process. So, instead of engaging us like the law says they're supposed to, they strive to do as much as they can as quietly as they can for as long as they can get away with it.

However, as soon as the tide begins to turn and we start presenting obstacles of our own, they can no longer afford the luxury of silence. And if we somehow manage to get the public's attention – with reason and empirical evidence in hand – they give us their full and undivided attention. In a colonial state like Canada, where indigenous land rights are constantly being suppressed, that usually means they're going to try to take us down.

That said, it's pretty clear there's a critical mass on the way; especially when it comes to the Enbridge pipeline. Opposition to the controversial project has brought together an unprecedented number of First Nations across the country. One could even say that it's just a matter of time before the project is tossed into the garbage can, where it rightfully belongs.

At this point, there isn't a heck of a lot that the proponents of the tar sands can do stop it. They've already tried suppressing damaging reports, discrediting doctors, and dismissing health concerns as fair trade offs for a few hundred jobs. Many lawsuits have also been thrown out of the courts, no contest. About the only thing they can do now is escalate the psychological war that is already well underway.

Enter Ethical Oil. A friend and colleague of mine at the Public Good Project, Jay Taber, hinted at the effects of the psychological war in his recent analysis of

the Ethical Oil ad, which first appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Network in August 2011.

Writing at the [Fourth World Eye](#), Taber states:

[...] one is hard pressed to comprehend how the oil companies in Canada actually believed their television ad Ethical Oil could succeed in duping American liberals into believing the Tar Sands nightmare equates to a human rights initiative. Then again, it wasn't all that long ago that a candidate for US President ran on a platform of hope and change that had liberals swooning.

I could come up with other examples of phony PR campaigns that hoodwinked liberals into supporting such frauds as the wars on Iraq, but I think you get my point. No matter how fraudulent, immoral, or simple minded, Madison Avenue has the upper hand when it comes to baffling liberals. All they have to do is invoke saving the panda, children, women or whales, and liberals will fall all over themselves to support warmongers and planet destroyers without a second thought.

However, Taber's concern goes much deeper than liberals being 'hoodwinked'. He later explained to me, "My main concern is ... that the Harper administration and the extraction companies he works for might be able to mobilize resentment against indigenous peoples and thus foment violence. Secondly, I am concerned that neutralized liberals might let it happen."

Taber also pointed to the mechanics of Psychological Warfare, according to Paul Linebarger, who literally [wrote the book](#) on the subject. According to Linebarger, psychological warfare or "psywar" is a continuous process rather than a single event like a television ad. "Psywar," says Linebarger, "has in private media facilities, in an open society, a constantly refreshed source of new material that, when selectively censored, can prevent non-governmental materials from circulating."

Discussing the mechanics of psywar, Taber comments [...] he talks about psywar analysis using questions such as, What is the targeted audience? What is the intended response? What is the motivation for that response? Is the operation a black op (counterfeit), gray op (misleading), or white op (forthright)?

Using the Ethical Oil ad as an example, we might determine that it was a gray op, since the premise was true (Saudi Arabia is not a democracy), but the conclusions were not (killing Cree is not ethical, destroying Alberta will not make Canada energy independent, Americans do have a stake in this issue due to trans-shipment, etc.).

Since the TV ad was broadcast on Oprah Winfrey Network, we can assume the target audience was liberal American women. The intended response was likely to get them to back off demanding Obama and the oil companies not build the pipeline to the Gulf of Mexico. Motivation is human rights consumerism, something that is a powerful force when deployed intelligently and courageously--something liberals rarely if ever do.

This got me thinking about a key concept that always seems to be on the tip of my mind-- one that Noam Chomsky has helped popularize among activists. The "imperial grand strategy" [Chomsky reminds us](#), aims to "deny, delay, deceive, disrupt, destroy, exploit and neutralize" any target that a government wishes. It's a far reaching strategy, to say the least! But the government isn't the only one who uses it. Corporations and lobby groups use it too.

"Ethical Oil" is a good example. In addition to the troubling effects of the ad that Taber highlights, it launched a [certain clearly-well-funded organization](#) to the forefront of the tar sands debate; It attempted to undermine the credibility of everyone that's peacefully opposing the tar sands; and, by counter-posing oil in Canada with oil in Saudi Arabia, it was proposing that if you are against the tar sands than you are for Saudi Arabia. That last one's a pretty thin puddle; but it's more than enough to poison the minds of people who aren't well informed or prepared.

Enter Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver. Earlier this week, Minister Oliver took it upon himself to turn that 'puddle' into a lake of, well, oil, [asserting in an open letter](#) that foreign-funded "radicals" are trying to undermine Canada's economy.

"Unfortunately, there are environmental and other radical groups that would seek to block this opportunity to diversify our trade," Oliver proclaimed. "Their goal is to stop any major project no matter what the cost to Canadian families in lost jobs and economic growth. No forestry. No mining. No oil. No gas. No more hydro-electric dams."

Who knows if we'll ever find out what drove the Minister to issue such an outlandish claim. Perhaps it doesn't matter, since we can easily recall many other instances where politicians have made the exact same claims (in India, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, the Philippines, Bangladesh and elsewhere). Each and every time it was a lie and we knew it.

The facts alone aren't enough to justify projects like the tar sands. They have to offer incentives to key players like free hockey rinks, brand new cars, cash payouts; and disincentives to key opponents by ignoring them, dismissing their concerns, humiliating them, discrediting them, and by turning them into enemies. That said, I don't think anyone believes Oliver is consciously trying to wage a psychological war of his own; nevertheless he is helping to create an even more hostile environment in Canada by turning indigenous peoples, advocates, social groups, and others into full-fledged "enemies of the state."

The respected environmentalist David Suzuki said in a statement to the CBC that he was "puzzled" by Oliver's language. "Environmentalists want to 'live within our means,' 'save some for tomorrow,' think about the 'legacy we leave for our children ... That's what environmentalists are concerned about and the minister's diatribe prevents us from having this important discussion of values and balance."



PHOTO: DELICIOUSTARSANDS.JPG

Dr. Pamela D. Palmater, a Mi'kmaw lawyer and member of the Eel River Bar First Nation in New Brunswick, took [a more satirical stand](#) against the assertions.

Somehow this gigantic, ideologically, culturally, socially, politically and legally diverse group form a "radical" group of people who, according to Conservative Minister Oliver: "don't take into account the facts but are driven by an

ideological imperative." This imperative is to "block trade" and "undermine Canada's economy." This out of control group "threaten to hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda."

[...] Imagine the level of sophistication, planning and education that allowed such a dangerous group to read and understand those millions of regulations. The sheer level of dedication to their terrorist plot to protect the environment, the health of the residents or Indigenous lands is astounding.

Don't let this insurgent group's reliance on research data, scientific studies, academic publications, and internationally recognized reports fool you. They are not basing their ideology of sustainability and human rights on "facts" – they are, instead, blindly following a radical ideology which is intent on destroying Canadians – i.e., those that voted Conservative in the last election.

Dr. Palmater's words may have confused any reader who isn't well-acquainted with satire; but it was more than appropriate, given how she appears to be an object of investigation-- along with hundreds of other individuals, organizations and communities across the country. Indeed, for the past 5 years, the Harper government has been spying on Indigenous Peoples and

any one else they deem to be "of interest".

Last December, [Defenders of the Land](#) warned that the RCMP is even sharing its findings with private industry. The average person isn't so lucky. When Dr. Palmater found out that Cindy Blackstock, a well-rounded advocate for First Nations children, was being spied on, Dr. Palmater decided to approach CSIS,

INAC, RCMP and DND to find out if she was also being targeted. “To date, only CSIS has responded,” Palmater notes, in her recent article, [CSIS and me](#). However, CSIS was only willing to release a few tidbits of information.

[...] They would not release the whole file so as to protect Canada from my alleged ‘subversive or hostile’ activities. This, to me, is like being judged without knowing what I am accused of, and then being sentenced to ongoing spying on undisclosed activities for an undetermined amount of time so as to reduce the security risk to Canada in relation to my peaceful Indigenous advocacy activities.”

The psychological effects of this ongoing surveillance operation are threefold:

1. While some of us wear it like a badge of honour; in others it generates doubt, suspicion, distrust and fear.
2. It sends a clear message to the general public that they need to “be careful” because “we are dangerous”. After all, the government doesn’t investigate law-abiding citizens, right?
3. It lays a foundation from which companies, lobbyists, the government and the media can launch new offensives.

Speaking of new offensives, Gerald Amos, former Chief Councilor of the Haisla First Nation warns that a series of attack ads [have now been launched](#) in northern communities, “where opposition to the Enbridge project is fiercest”, Amos observes. It’s a “desperate attempt”, says Amos, “to change the minds and hearts of the hundreds of thousands of people who oppose this project. It is also, clearly meant to divide us and weaken our resolve.

The attacks will continue, because, as Amos says, they are desperate. They really don’t have any more options, unless, of course, they decide to take a heavy-handed approach.

On the other hand, we have more than enough options. In fact, it sort-of feels like we haven’t even gotten started. However, we have also been pushed into an almost-permanent defensive position in which we have to constantly vindicate ourselves while struggling to inform the public about the facts and the real issues.

Maybe it doesn’t matter. As Taber advises; it might be better if we just remain focused on our necessary work for the water, the trees, the animals, fish and birds, our families, our communities and nations, our cultural heritage, our health, our history, our rights and our ability to exist as distinct Peoples.

The pro-tar sands apologists, official and advocacy organizations, are on the ropes in the court of public opinion. That’s why they’re trotting out such lame PR. My advice to activists and analysts is to stay the course, not become defensive and allow the industry and corrupt officials to set the terms of the debate. This requires discipline, restraint, and intelligence, not something in abundance in most advocacy groups (the Indigenous Environmental Network being an exception to the rule).

The inflammatory terms radical and hijack are standard red-baiting remarks that are best left ignored. Remember, repetition sinks in to psyches---repeating your enemy’s accusations works to their advantage, not yours. Better to stick with the message and documentation of irresponsible industry, government fraud, and wilful violations of human rights and international law. The rogue state status of Canada as anti-Kyoto/anti-Indigenous is readily available.

Let them attack the whistleblowers, and make an issue of that abuse of power in defense of the criminally insane policies and conduct of the corporate state. Don’t get into a defensive posture such as that of Suzuki. He’s a good man, and knows his science, but not the science of psywar.

## Extinguishing Sovereignty

JAY TABER

There's a term in law to describe coercion to extract something of value from someone under the threat of the commission of serious harm. When the threatened party has already experienced egregious harm by the threatening party, the reality of the threat is taken into account when determining the punishment of the perpetrator. Depending on the degree of threatened harm, extortion can comprise a form of terror, in that it is conducive to extreme anxiety, insecurity and unrelenting fear of reprisal. When the perpetrator of extortion is a member state of the United Nations, and the victim is an ethnic or racial minority within that state, UN bodies like the Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Council have jurisdiction.

Since 2007, when the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, member states like Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States have implemented measures to counter this human rights initiative--both overtly and covertly. Initially opposing the international law head-on, these four rogue states later decided to pay it lip service, while simultaneously denying its application in state policy. As with other human rights initiatives since the founding of the UN, they found it more advantageous to manage the public relations of their non-compliance, than to actually comply. Five years down the road under UNDRIP, that hasn't changed.

In the BC treaty process, designed by the federal government of Canada in collusion with the province of British Columbia, extortion has taken on the form of extinguishing First Nations sovereignty using poverty and debt as a tool to coerce these Indigenous peoples into relinquishing their inherent territories

and rights under international law. As Kerry Coast [reports](#) in *The Dominion*, the government – with assistance from the First Nations Summit advisory body – is proceeding with the project of their dissolution and termination. A genteel way of saying ethnic cleansing.

With the appointment of the First Nations Summit chair – the lawyer Grand Chief Edward John – as chair of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the UN itself has taken sides in the struggle between Indigenous nations and UN member states. Like its member Canada, the UN has chosen to engage in PR crisis management, rather than uphold international law.

For Indigenous peoples in Canada and elsewhere, this signals a willingness of the UN to abet their long-term impoverishment by its member states, using those who sell out as a model comprising surrender as consent. The problem with such non sequiturs in human rights is that the result is cultural genocide.



## Underreported Struggles, June 2012

*In this month's Underreported Struggles: China announces plan to extinguish the nomadic way of life in Tibet, Uyghur, and Inner Mongolia; Indigenous communities gain access to land rights in Tanzania and Panama; anti-mining activists shot in Mexico and Guatemala.*

To the shock and dismay of Indigenous Peoples throughout Australia, the **Australian Senate** rushed through a new law meant to extend the despicable **Northern Territory intervention** for **another ten years**.

The Xavante territory of Marãiwatsede in western Brazil was **occupied by a group of armed ranchers**. The invaders are said to have dug trenches in a local highway and burnt bridges to prevent access to nearby towns. The desperate action is aimed at preventing the Xavante from gaining legal recognition of their territory. A month earlier, the Regional branch of Brazil's Federal court recognized the Xavante's demands for the removal of any illegal invaders of their territory. The risk of violence in the situation is considered to be extremely high.

A US-based human rights group **condemned the Chinese government's plan to extinguish the nomadic way** of life in Occupied Tibet, Inner Mongolia and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The so-called "Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Project on Resettling Nomadic People within China" aims to send more than a million people to permanent settlements over the next 3 years.

A group of Tla'amin (Sliammon) First Nation citizens **stopped a controversial treaty vote** from taking place in south-western British Colombia. The peaceful protest ignited a fairly heated debate across Canada concerning the **BC Treaty** process. First Nations in British Colombia are forced to participate in the treaty process, by the Canadian government. The treaties are often aimed at

**extinguishing sovereignty** in exchange for a few pleasant-sounding promises and short term kickbacks.

Hundreds of Indigenous Peoples from the **Xingu River Basin** occupied the Belo Monte Dam construction site on Pimental Island in Pará, Brazil. Initially the protest was led by a group of about 150 Xikrin Peoples; but **after successfully managing to paralyze work at the construction site**, the group was joined by representatives from the Juruna, Araweté, Assurini and Parakanã. Representatives from all 34 villages in the middle of Xingu River basin are now expected to join the protest.

A consortium of indigenous and non-governmental organizations have sounded the alarm over a disturbing new eco-tourism scheme by the **Madhya Pradesh Forest Department (MPFD)**. The MPFD, a government agency responsible for managing all forest areas in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, says it wants to lease out 50 to 150 sq km bricks of land to interested tourism companies. **Those companies would then be free to change the livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples** to something more 'compatible' with conservation.

After waiting for decades in despair, the **Barbaig Peoples** in Tanzania's Mbulu district **finally secured a Certificate of Customary Rights of Occupancy (CCRO) to safeguard their threatened grazing land**. The CCRO, will protect nearly 38, 358 hectares of land from being encroached upon by competing land users.

Yolanda "Yoli" Oquely Veliz, a human rights and environmental activist in Guatemala, was **shot three times** as she left a resistance blockade near the entrance to the **Radius Gold**-owned El Tambor gold mine in San José del Golfo, Guatemala. She is currently in stable but serious condition.



In Oaxaca, Mexico, another [two activists were shot](#) as they casually stood with friends in front of city hall in the town of San José del Progreso. Bertín Vázquez Ruiz was shot in the abdomen and Guadalupe Vázquez Ruis took bullets in his leg and hand. Both are members of the Coalition of United Peoples of the Ocotlán Valley (CPUVO), which has been actively protesting **Fortuna** Silver Inc.'s Trinidad/Cuzcatlán mine. They, too, are in stable condition.

The international spokesperson of the **KNPB**, the National Committee of West Papua, announced that all members of the [KNPB will surrender en masse to the police in Papua](#). The unprecedented action is in response to a series of violent acts that have occurred in Jayapura. The spokesperson insists the KNPB are not responsible for the acts, but are rather the work of 'mysterious' or unknown people who are now being referred to across Papua by the acronym "OTK": Orang Terlatih Khusus or Specially Trained People.

A group of Indigenous Elders are [raising questions](#) about the possible environmental impacts of a proposed geothermal plant in the province of Kalinga, Philippines. More than anything, the Elders want to know what Chevron, the company behind the project would do if their geothermal drilling operations trigger a **volcanic eruption**.

At least eight police officers and nine peasant farmers were killed in armed clashes during a land eviction in **Paraguay**, marking [one of the worst such incidents in the country for two decades](#). The eviction was requested by a local businessman who complained that a group of about 100 families had invaded his property. Peasant rights groups, however, say the prime farmland was taken during the 35-year dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner. Paraguay's President promised "sweeping agrarian reform" during his election, but so far that promise has not been fulfilled.

Affected community members, scientists, spiritual leaders, journalists, human rights advocates and others will soon gather in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos, Guatemala, for the much-anticipated **Peoples' International Health Tribunal** (PIHT). The community-driven [tribunal will address the health and social impacts of Goldcorp Inc.](#), especially with regard to the Marlin mine in Guatemala, the Los Filos mine in Mexico and the San Martín Mine in Honduras. The entire event, which runs July 14–15, will be streamed live on the internet.

A US federal court [rejected the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's attempt](#) to store spent nuclear fuel at the Prairie Island Nuclear Plant for another sixty years. The **Prairie Island Indian Community** has since called on the US government to fulfill its promise and legal obligation to remove the nuclear waste from the reservation.

Barriere Lake spokesperson [Norman Matchewan was acquitted of all charges](#) stemming from a 2009 blockade that was set up to defend the Algonquin First Nation's territory from illegal logging. A man working for **AbitibiBowater**, the company behind the logging, was kind enough to help the courts arrive at its decision, albeit reluctantly.

Three environmental groups filed a lawsuit to [stop a controversial forest-to-vineyard conversion](#) project in northwest Sonoma County, California, USA. The proposed land conversion – which is funded by one of the world's largest corporate wineries, **Codorníu S.A.** – would devastate the local forest ecosystem, reduce local water quality and threaten the endangered coho salmon. It would also obliterate archaeological sites and diminish the history, identity and cultural practices of the Kashia Pomo.

[Three years have passed](#) since the Peruvian police opened fire on a group of Awajun and Wampis protesters near the town of **Bagua** in northern Peru. The

violent clashes that ensued left 34 dead and over 200 injured in the worst violence that Peru has seen in recent history. Despite a few minor advances, very little has changed since the tragic confrontation; least of all government policy towards Indigenous rights.

The controversial **Prawer plan** was recently been passed into law by the government of Israel, [paving the way](#) for the full-scale theft of Bedouin lands and the destruction of Traditional life in the Negev desert. Israel will now move to forcibly relocate upwards of 40,000 Bedouin to various designer settlements.

After a 30-year struggle, two indigenous **Wounaan** communities in the eastern Panamanian province of Darién [finally received titles from the government](#) to their traditional lands. Thousands of other Wounaan and Emberá are awaiting their own titles in another 39 communities.

The Northern Land Council, which represents native title claimants in the Arnhem Land region of Australia's Northern Territory, decided to extend the boundaries of the world-heritage-listed Kakadu National Park to include a 1200-hectare uranium deposit. The decision brings the Koongarra uranium deposit one step closer to being permanently safeguarded from the French uranium mining giant AREVA.

Members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) [found two grotesquely deformed, lesion-covered Fish](#) in Lake Athabasca near the community of **Fort Chipewyan**, Alberta. The Suckerfish and Jackfish were found on the same day, at two separate locations in Lake Athabasca. They are now stored in the community and will be sent for analysis at the CCWHC lab in Calgary.

## Videos of the Month

[Belo Monte, An Announcement Of War](#) – an independent, crowd-funded, feature-length documentary about the largest ongoing construction project in Brazil and the permanent struggle to stop it.

[Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign](#) – In this video, Andy Mager, the Syracuse Peace Council coordinator for Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON), talks about the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign planned for 2013

[Fractured Land](#) – Fractured Land follows the courageous journey of a modern Indigenous warrior to preserve his people's land and culture from the forces of neocolonialism in Canada.

*Underreported Struggles is a monthly report of censored and under-reported news compiled by Intercontinental Cry. You can view [previous months on our website](#).*

# Acknowledgements

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# Further Resources

## AFRICA

First People of the Kalahari	<a href="http://www.iwant2gohome.org/">http://www.iwant2gohome.org/</a>
Friends of Lake Turkana	<a href="http://www.friendsoflaketurkana.org/">http://www.friendsoflaketurkana.org/</a>
Afrol News	<a href="http://www.afrol.com/">http://www.afrol.com/</a>
African Unchained	<a href="http://africaunchained.blogspot.ca/">http://africaunchained.blogspot.ca/</a>
Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee	<a href="http://www.ipacc.org.za/">http://www.ipacc.org.za/</a>
The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People	<a href="http://www.mosop.org/">http://www.mosop.org/</a>
The Ogiek People	<a href="http://www.ogiek.org/">http://www.ogiek.org/</a>
Friends of the Congo	<a href="http://www.friendsofthecongo.org/">http://www.friendsofthecongo.org/</a>
Pambazuka News	<a href="http://pambazuka.org">http://pambazuka.org</a>

## ASIA

Jharkhand Mines Area Coordination Committee	<a href="http://www.iwant2gohome.org/">http://www.iwant2gohome.org/</a>
India UnHeard	<a href="http://www.friendsoflaketurkana.org/">http://www.friendsoflaketurkana.org/</a>
The Cordillera Peoples Alliance	<a href="http://www.afrol.com/">http://www.afrol.com/</a>
Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities	<a href="http://www.ipacc.org.za/">http://www.ipacc.org.za/</a>
Sarawak Report	<a href="http://www.mosop.org/">http://www.mosop.org/</a>
Sanhati	<a href="http://www.ogiek.org/">http://www.ogiek.org/</a>
Radio Free Asia	<a href="http://www.friendsofthecongo.org/">http://www.friendsofthecongo.org/</a>
Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network	<a href="http://pambazuka.org">http://pambazuka.org</a>

## ASIA

Saami Council	<a href="http://www.iwant2gohome.org/">http://www.iwant2gohome.org/</a>
Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North	<a href="http://www.friendsoflaketurkana.org/">http://www.friendsoflaketurkana.org/</a>

## LATIN AMERICA

Honduras Resists	<a href="http://hondurasresists.blogspot.ca/">http://hondurasresists.blogspot.ca/</a>
Indigenous News Chile	<a href="http://indigenousnews.org">http://indigenousnews.org</a>
Toba Qom	<a href="http://lmaiaciaqom.blogspot.com/">http://lmaiaciaqom.blogspot.com/</a>
Save Rapanui	<a href="http://saverapanui.org/">http://saverapanui.org/</a>
The Cofan Survival Fund	<a href="http://www.cofan.org/">http://www.cofan.org/</a>
Amotocodie Initiative	<a href="http://www.iniciativa-amotocodie.org/">http://www.iniciativa-amotocodie.org/</a>
Xingu Forever Alive	<a href="http://www.xinguvivo.org.br">http://www.xinguvivo.org.br</a>
Wirikuta Defense Front	<a href="http://frenteendefensadewirikuta.org/">http://frenteendefensadewirikuta.org/</a>
Bolivia Rising	<a href="http://www.mapuche-nation.org/">http://www.mapuche-nation.org/</a>
Mapuche International Link	<a href="http://www.mapuche-nation.org/">http://www.mapuche-nation.org/</a>
Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca [es]	<a href="http://www.nasaacin.org/">http://www.nasaacin.org/</a>
Rights Action	<a href="http://rightaction.org/">http://rightaction.org/</a>
Upside Down World	<a href="http://upside-downworld.org/">http://upside-downworld.org/</a>

## MIDDLE EAST

Electronic Intifada	<a href="http://electronicintifada.net">http://electronicintifada.net</a>
The Palestine Monitor	<a href="http://www.palestinemonitor.org/">http://www.palestinemonitor.org/</a>
Bedouin-Jewish Justice in Israel	<a href="http://bedouinjewishjustice.blogspot.ca/">http://bedouinjewishjustice.blogspot.ca/</a>

## NORTH AMERICA

Barriere Lake Solidarity	<a href="http://www.barrierelakesolidarity.blogspot.com/">http://www.barrierelakesolidarity.blogspot.com/</a>
Defenders of the Land	<a href="http://www.defendersoftheland.org/">http://www.defendersoftheland.org/</a>
Owe Aku (Bring Back the Way)	<a href="http://bringbacktheway.com/">http://bringbacktheway.com/</a>
Indian Law Resource Center	<a href="http://www.indianlaw.org/">http://www.indianlaw.org/</a>
Justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women	<a href="http://missingjustice.mvmnt.ca/">http://missingjustice.mvmnt.ca/</a>

## NORTH AMERICA

Haudenosaunee Confederacy	<a href="http://haudenosauneeconfederacy.ca">http://haudenosauneeconfederacy.ca</a>
Forgotten Navajo People!	<a href="http://www.forgottennavajopeople.org/">http://www.forgottennavajopeople.org/</a>
Protect Our Manoomin	<a href="http://www.protectourmanoomin.org">http://www.protectourmanoomin.org</a>
O'dham Solidarity Project	<a href="http://www.solidarity-project.org/">http://www.solidarity-project.org/</a>
Indigenous Action	<a href="http://www.indigenousaction.org/">http://www.indigenousaction.org/</a>
Save the Fraser River Watershed	<a href="http://savethefraser.ca/">http://savethefraser.ca/</a>
Honor the Earth	<a href="http://honorearth.org/">http://honorearth.org/</a>
Last Real Indians	<a href="http://www.lastrealindians.com">http://www.lastrealindians.com</a>
Isuma TV	<a href="http://www.isuma.tv/">http://www.isuma.tv/</a>

## OCEANIA

Act Now PNG	<a href="http://actnowpng.org/">http://actnowpng.org/</a>
Our Generation	<a href="http://www.ourgeneration.org.au/">http://www.ourgeneration.org.au/</a>
West Papua Media Alerts	<a href="http://westpapuamedia.info/">http://westpapuamedia.info/</a>
Papua New Guinea Mine Watch	<a href="http://ramumine.wordpress.com">http://ramumine.wordpress.com</a>
Aboriginal Tent Embassy	<a href="http://www.aboriginaltentembassy.net/">http://www.aboriginaltentembassy.net/</a>
Porgera Alliance	<a href="http://www.porgeraalliance.net/">http://www.porgeraalliance.net/</a>
Stand for Freedom	<a href="http://standforfreedom.org.au/">http://standforfreedom.org.au/</a>
Crocodile Islands Initiative	<a href="https://crocodileislandsrangers.wordpress.com/">https://crocodileislandsrangers.wordpress.com/</a>
The Watut cries	<a href="http://thewatutcries.blogspot.com/">http://thewatutcries.blogspot.com/</a>
Treaty Republic	<a href="http://treatyrepublic.net/">http://treatyrepublic.net/</a>
The Koori History Project	<a href="http://www.kooriweb.org/">http://www.kooriweb.org/</a>

## INTERNATIONAL

Indigenous Environmental Network	<a href="http://www.ienearth.org">http://www.ienearth.org</a>
Center for World Indigenous Studies	<a href="http://cwis.org">http://cwis.org</a>
Roma Rights Network	<a href="http://www.romarights.net/">http://www.romarights.net/</a>
Unrepresented Nations and Peoples	<a href="http://www.unpo.org/">http://www.unpo.org/</a>
Mines and Communities	<a href="http://minesandcommunities.org/">http://minesandcommunities.org/</a>
World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples	<a href="http://www.wamip.org/">http://www.wamip.org/</a>
WW4 Report	<a href="https://crocodileislandsrangers.wordpress.com/">https://crocodileislandsrangers.wordpress.com/</a>
Protest Barrick	<a href="http://protestbarrick.net/">http://protestbarrick.net/</a>
Real World Radio	<a href="http://radiomundoreal.fm/">http://radiomundoreal.fm/</a>
Indigenous Permaculture	<a href="http://indigenous-permaculture.com/">http://indigenous-permaculture.com/</a>
Indigenous Peoples Issues and Resources	<a href="http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/">http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/</a>
International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs	<a href="http://www.iwgia.org/">http://www.iwgia.org/</a>
Cultural Survival	<a href="http://www.culturalsurvival.org/">http://www.culturalsurvival.org/</a>
Mining Justice Solidarity Network	<a href="http://www.solidarityresponse.net/">http://www.solidarityresponse.net/</a>
Society for Threatened Peoples	<a href="http://www.gfbv.de">http://www.gfbv.de</a>
Earth Peoples	<a href="http://earthpeoples.org/">http://earthpeoples.org/</a>
The Wrong Kind of Green	<a href="http://wrongkindofgreen.org/">http://wrongkindofgreen.org/</a>
CorpWatch	<a href="http://corpwatch.org">http://corpwatch.org</a>
Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society	<a href="http://decolonization.org">http://decolonization.org</a>



## IC ESPAÑOL { *es.intercontinentalcry.org*

Intercontinental Cry siempre se ha encargado de mantener a la gente informado. Ahora, ese esfuerzo no acaba con el mundo anglófono.

\* Intercontinental Cry has always been about keeping people informed; Now that effort is no longer limited to the English-speaking world.



### English

w: [www.intercontinentalcry.org](http://www.intercontinentalcry.org)  
e: [info@intercontinentalcry.org](mailto:info@intercontinentalcry.org)  
t: @indigenous\_news @intencry  
f: [www.fb.com/Intercontinental.Cry](http://www.fb.com/Intercontinental.Cry)

### Spanish

w: [www.es.intercontinentalcry.org](http://www.es.intercontinentalcry.org)  
e: [ic.espanol@gmail.com](mailto:ic.espanol@gmail.com)  
t: @ic\_espanol  
f: [www.fb.com/ICenEspanol](http://www.fb.com/ICenEspanol)