



## **PRONOUNCEMENT OF HORONAMI YANOMAMI ORGANIZATION ON THE PRESENCE OF ILLEGAL MINERS IN THE UPPER OCAMO REGION**

Today, the 25th of September of 2012, we, the Yanomami Indigenous People represented by **HORONAMI Yanomami Organization** and gathered in Puerto Ayacucho, want to state the following pronouncement about the PRESENCE OF ILLEGAL MINING IN THE UPPER OCAMO, Upper Orinoco Municipality:

1.- Our Yanomami organization HORONAMI has as its general objective to “achieve the integral strengthening and defence of the life of the Yanomami People in their ancestral and traditional territory, in accordance with indigenous peoples’ rights recognised in the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela”. All of the members of HORONAMI have an oath to fulfil this.

2.- Once again we acknowledge all the efforts made by the Venezuelan State's officials, in particular of the Bolivarian Armed Forces, the Public Ministry, and the CICPC, that went to the headwaters and mountain range of the Upper Ocamo, travelling the region during 5 days in the company of representatives of Horonami.

3.- We consider it fundamental, for the commission of State officials that went to the region to issue the corresponding report with the results of the investigation that led to ruling out the denouncement presented by the Yanomami. We, as Horonami Yanomami organization, have already presented a report to the officials with competency in this matter (Public Ministry, Defensoria del Pueblo, 52<sup>nd</sup> Brigade of Jungle Infantry and the Indigenous Peoples Commission of the National Congress), requesting an investigation regarding the presence and impacts of illegal mining in the Upper Ocamo region, and the adoption of the necessary measures by the Venezuelan State's organs.

4.- We consider that, if up to this moment circumstantial evidence of the occurrence of a massacre has not been determined, which is for us a motive of joy, we want to let it be known to the general public that there is an abundant presence of illegal miners, that are coming from Brazil, and have been camped in the Upper Ocamo region for several years. It has been said in the media that ‘there is nothing’ happening in the Upper Ocamo, that all is tranquil and the people are happy. We, the Yanomami of Horonami that participated in the commission, saw the camps of the illegal miners, we saw a small airplane pass, we saw a clandestine air strip, and we saw some miners fleeing from the commission that was walking through the forest. We have the evidence of what we are saying. The members of the Armed Forces, the Prosecutor and CICPC agents that were on the commission witnessed all these also and can provide their testimony.

5.- It's very easy to think that the Yanomami and their organization Horonami are lying because the commission found no massacre of Yanomami Indians. This news that reached us about violent acts are not lies, they are clear signs that there is much conflict in the Upper Ocamo region. The lie is to say that in this region everything is well.

6.- We do not want to attack our President Hugo Chavez Frias, nor do we want our situation to be manipulated as an electoral episode. The truth is what we have to show, and our motivation is the defense of our people, our habitat and our land which is being seriously pillaged and polluted. We request that the Venezuelan State respect our Horonami Organization; we express our total willingness to collaborate with the government agencies to solve this matter. We reject the attempts of the Minister Nicia Maldonado to divide our organization and we repudiate the mass media and other people who have manipulated the information for political purposes, trying to link us with opposition actors, taking advantage of this serious situation for electioneering purposes.

7.- We recognize the efforts of the Bolivarian Army Forces during the years 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 for attending to the declarations of the Yanomami and their Horonami Organization related to the *garimpeiros* presence in our area. We also heard of the recent actions of the Brazilian State through Operation Xawara for withdrawing *garimpeiros* from our lands. But we must insist on the need to take permanent and coordinated policy measures between Brazil and Venezuela to control the massive and harmful presence of illegal miners who for several years have entered Venezuela, our country, from Brazil, representing a serious threat to the integrity and life to the Yanomami people.

8.- We want to explain that when the *garimpeiros* live near Yanomami communities, they threaten them in order for them to say nothing to the authorities when asked about the presence of mining camps. This is the reason that a rapid visit with authorities unknown to the Yanomami will not succeed in finding spontaneous complaints by the Yanomami. When we went with the commission, the Horonami members stayed up all night long talking to the Yanomami of the communities, it was at that time when the government agents and military officials slept, that the Yanomami indeed, told us detailed information of the presence of illegal miners.

9.- Although the information about violent facts was not confirmed at this meeting, many conflicts regularly result between the Yanomami and the *garimpeiros* because of the large numbers of these illegal miners in the zone for several years now; furthermore, they split the Yanomami communities and harm our families. These are the conflicts which may be underneath the information about the killings and abuses of all kinds. We cannot rule out, in the current state of the investigation so far that killings, rapes, threats, and other abuses are not happening to the Yanomami in the areas visited by the commission. On the contrary, the whole context of the region tells us that there is a continuing conflict between miners and several communities in Upper Ocamo.

10.- It is also well known that the presence of ilegal miners among the Yanomami generates serious health consequences (foci of transmission of malaria and venereal diseases, and mercury pollution, among others). When visiting the area we found communities with serious health problems that need urgent medical attention.

11.- Degradation of the habitat on which Yanomami depend to feed themselves, to drink water and to live, is also a consequence of the presence of illegal miners, their machinery and mercury contamination.

12.- This kind of news would not reach our ears without illegal miners being established in the zone threatening and exploiting the Yanomami, and also damaging nature. The Yanomami of these remote areas are at the mercy of the miners. We can not say that the news reaching the mass media were "lies of the Yanomami", "lies of the Horonami organization," or "lies of the Amazon Indigenous organizations". In an area of ongoing conflict such news must be taken very seriously. We have the 1993 Hashimu massacre very present in our memory. These are not lies, but they are clear signs of the conflict.

13.-We request to continue the permanent and sustained patrol for the final eviction of illegal mining camps in the Upper Ocamo and other areas of the Upper Orinoco, as Hashimu, Cerro Delgado Chalbaud and Siapa River, among others. This must be a joint effort set between the Bolivarian Armed Forces and our Yanomami organization Horonami, since we know our people and our territory.

14.- We ask for a continuous and efficient health care plan for the Upper Ocamo region. In order to improve health and to prevent the return of illegal miners in the area health care with well trained Yanomami community members as health providers as well as the installation of radios are essential requirements.

15.-Given the sensitivity of these issues, we request a more careful and extensive investigation into possible acts of violence and other possible abuses of the *garimpeiros* in the Upper Ocamo region, with more calm and rigor, and with the participation of the Horonami Yanomami themselves, taking into account all of the time the cultural character of the Yanomami people.

16.- We will not give further statements, we want that the mass media to refer just to the content of this document.

The Yanomami people and communities continue to struggle to defend our habitat and territories. If we do not do this, what are we going to leave to our grandchildren?

## **HORONAMI YANOMAMI ORGANIZATION**

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