

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS NETWORK

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**
Aotearoa New Zealand



Dear *|FNAME|*,

EDITORIAL

A UN statement at the launch of the Year of Biodiversity 2010 declares:

“Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, is essential to sustaining the living networks and systems that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel and the vital services our lives depend on. Human activity is causing the diversity of life on Earth to be lost at a greatly accelerated rate.

These losses are irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life support systems we rely on every day. But we can prevent them.”



The Year of Biodiversity presents challenges for the human species. If the human rights, which Amnesty International campaigns to uphold, receive greater respect, it is a good step towards respecting the rights of other species.

How will EDeN respond to this challenge? We will continue to act on behalf of environmental defenders at risk - the people who put their lives on the line for a habitable world. We will continue to challenge companies like Shell, Barrick Gold and Vedanta to live up to the standards of corporate responsibility they profess to uphold. We will continue to pressure governments to protect the environment and human rights of their people.

We have a lot to do.

TAKE ACTION

Papua New Guinea

Last year EDeN took action on allegations that police raided villages around the Porgera gold mine in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, burning down buildings and forcing out families from their homes, including young children, pregnant women and the elderly.

In a recently published report AI has called on the government of PNG to investigate the conduct of police who burnt down homes and threatened people with guns while illegally evicting them from land next to one of the biggest gold mines in the country. Amnesty also has



concerns regarding ongoing support to the police by companies involved in the mine after the companies

became aware of the police activity in the area.

Read the full report here <http://bit.ly/9q8vcc>

TAKE ACTION: Urge the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare to take a stand against forced evictions and police violence in the Porgera area. <http://bit.ly/d2oog7>

Link to AI Canada Valentines Day action: <http://bit.ly/8Z8DCE>

India

Amnesty is taking action on concerns that a major mining project by Vedanta Resources and its subsidiaries will negatively impact the human rights of the communities who are dependent on the Niyamgiri hills as a source of water and for their livelihoods and culture.

The proposed mine could have grave repercussions for their human rights to water, food, health, work and other rights as an Indigenous community in respect of their traditional lands. International law requires that governments seek their free, prior informed consent before beginning such projects.



In Lanjigarh, at the foot of the Niyamgiri Hills, air and water pollution from an alumina refinery run by Vedanta Aluminium are threatening the health and well-being of local communities.

Read the full report here <http://bit.ly/cJdEBa>

TAKE ACTION: Download postcards and send them to the Indian authorities expressing your concern about the effects of mining in the Nyamgiri hills on the Indigenous community. <http://bit.ly/9QPnsp>

Nigeria

Work continues on this action which focuses on the oil industry in the Niger Delta and the chronic effects that oil-related pollution has on the human rights of people living in the region. This campaign is also a key feature of our University group's Orientation Week outreach.

In reaction to Amnesty International's 2009 report, *Petroleum, Pollution and Poverty in the Niger Delta*, Shell has made a number of email statements to the media. Amnesty International takes this opportunity to set the record straight. Read more at <http://bit.ly/cPQF92>

TAKE ACTION: A set of three postcards for sending to the Nigerian authorities and Shell are downloadable from <http://bit.ly/cbMYt1> . If you need larger quantities for events please contact Chris Kerr via chris.kerr@amnesty.org.nz. Please keep sending the postcards to help maintain the pressure.

Many of you will have received letters from Shell in response to postcards and letters. If you wish to reply to the issues Shell has raised in their responses or simply wish to know more, please view <http://bit.ly/aYMi6o>

REPORTS AND UPDATES

Israel-Occupied Palestinian Territories

The right to water is a focus of AI's Demand Dignity campaign and as part of this EDeN is publicising the discriminatory Israeli policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) which are the root cause of the striking disparity in access to water between Palestinians and Israelis.

Chronic water shortages affect crucial aspects of life including hygiene, agriculture and industry. The report on this issue, *A Thirst for Justice*, is available on our webpage <http://bit.ly/aQnp5l>

China: Tan Zuoren

Tan Zuoren was one of the first environmental defenders that EDeN campaigned on behalf of, and news that he has been sentenced to five years jail after a grossly unfair trial is very saddening. His lawyers reported they were unable to present their defence. They were prevented from calling their witnesses to testify in court or showing the video footage they had prepared, and they were unable to present their defence.



Tan Zuoren was convicted for criticising the Chinese Communist Party and the government through his articles and diaries posted on-line and on overseas websites concerning the authorities' handling of the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

His arrest was originally in connection with his investigation following the Sichuan earthquake, of the collapse of many school buildings due to corruption.

Tan Zuoren is a prominent environmentalist who has criticised the pollution caused by heavy industry in Sichuan. Read more here <http://bit.ly/dmKiKu>

Turkmenistan: Andrei Zatoka

In the last newsletter we featured the case of Andrei Zatoka, a 53-year-old environmentalist, who was arrested in Turkmenistan. On 29 October, he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment after an unfair trial. On 6 November, Andrei was released after he paid a fine of about US\$350.

According to sources in Turkmenistan, his release was on the condition that he renounced his Turkmen citizenship and left the country. Having paid the fine, Andrei Zatoka and his wife left Turkmenistan for Russia on 7 November.

Thanks to all those who took action on behalf of Andrei Zatoka.

Corporate responsibility

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, AI Canada are supporting a bill before the Canadian parliament which seeks to hold Canadian mining and oil companies responsible for the impact of their overseas operations on human rights and the environment. This could be significant to some of the cases EDeN has worked on, like Papua New Guinea. Bill C-300 will again go for review in Committee when the Canadian Parliament returns in March. Before the Parliament's holiday break, the mining industry was stepping up its lobbying efforts to oppose this Bill. We continue to monitor the bill with interest. View <http://bit.ly/947Hiw> for more information.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Links to interesting news articles and websites:

- Time to redraw the battle lines: <http://bit.ly/bGm379>
- IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, helps the world find pragmatic solutions to our most pressing environment and development challenges: <http://www.iucn.org/>
- International Year of Biodiversity: <http://www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/>
- Oxfam's recently released report on how poor people can and should benefit from the revenues of

extractive industries: <http://bit.ly/asbVli>

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Keep writing letters and sending postcards (if you receive replies to your appeal letters, please forward copies to the AI office).
- Volunteer to attend events as an EDeN member.
- Share with us your specialised skills or knowledge in human rights and the environment.
- More resources are available on the AIANZ website, www.amnesty.org.nz . Keep checking the site eden.amnesty.org.nz regularly for more information.

Want to do more?

We are very interested to hear from you if you would like to take a more active role in EDeN. We would like to expand the co-group to include two or three more people who bring new skills, energy and enthusiasm to our team. We meet every six weeks at the Amnesty office to plan actions, discuss strategy and coordinate the network. Some areas we are interested in developing are: membership support, utilising social networking sites, event coordination, newsletter editing, policy and strategy.

If you would like to know more please email eden@amnesty.org.nz

That's all for this edition.

Regards,
Nick Keenleyside.

The Environmental Defenders Network (EDeN) is co-ordinated by Kit Howden and Nick Keenleyside in conjunction with Research & Advocacy Co-ordinator Chris Kerr. You can contact us by email at info@fragileworld.org.nz or eden@amnesty.org.nz

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