



June 2009

Co-ordinators – Kit Howden and Nick Keenleyside

EDITORIAL

The role that large corporations take in undertaking their commercial activities is the issue we cover in this newsletter on environment and human rights. Even though some corporations may have good policies on environmental protection and social responsibility how much is "EcoGloss or HRGloss" ? The effects of large mining operations on local communities are significant and can be very damaging as well as controversial. No longer can corporations say, "We are just following the law of the land". There are greater environmental and human right principles at stake as seen in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Earth Charter. A change is needed and you can help in just taking on one action each month.



Kit Howden for EDeN

TAKE ACTION

DEATH THREATS ON ACTIVISTS STANDING UP TO MULTINATIONAL MINING IN ECUADOR

A government official has threatened to kill human rights defenders Joel Vicente Zhunio Samaniego[m] and Wilmar Fernando Mejia Reinoso [m]. Human rights defender Etelvina de Jesus Misacango Chuñir has been threatened and assaulted because of her work. All three are in grave danger. Read more and take action at: <http://tinyurl.com/lakr6o>

PAPUA NEW GUINEA: FORCED EVICTIONS AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY BY POLICE IN PORGERA MUST END

Amnesty International calls for immediate action to protect more than 1,000 people who have been left homeless after police officials in Papua New Guinea forcibly evicted them by burning down their homes.

On 27 April 2009 police officials burned down 50 houses within the Porgera mining area, owned and operated by Canadian-based Barrick Gold Corporation. More than 200 police had been sent to the area as part of an operation to deal with the law and order situation in Porgera District, Enga Province. The police alleged that people living in these homes were squatters responsible for illegal mining and other criminal activities. A further 300 houses of villagers living near the mine are also reported to have been burnt down as part of the same operations. Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/lmgtn>

There have also been allegations regarding guards and police killing locals and raping women. Read the Statement to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (Eighth Session May 27th 2009) about this at: <http://porgeraalliance.net/%20>

"Last year, I explained that mine guards and police were killing locals and raping our women; there have been five more killings and many more rapes since" - Jethro Tulin, Executive Officer of Akali Tange Association (Porgera, Enga Province, Papua New Guinea)

On the other hand the corporate responsibility policies of Barrick Gold are good. Read more at: <http://www.barrick.com/CorporateResponsibility/Environment/default.aspx>

What has gone wrong? It identifies the complexity of development/environment /indigenous rights and human rights.

Additional reading:

PORGERA IN FLAMES: Mining Multinational Ordered Military Force burns down hundreds of homes in PNG: <http://indymedia.org.nz/article/76885/porgera-flames-mining-multinational-orde>

TAKE ACTION: Please write to Peter Munk, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Barrick Gold Corporation. You can copy and paste the letter below:

Dear Mr Munk,

I am a member of EDeN, a new group of Amnesty International New Zealand concerned with protecting the environment and human rights. I read with great concern the reports of 50 houses being burnt down and 1000 people who have been left homeless as a result of forced evictions by police officials in Porgera mining area owned and operated by the Barrick Gold Corporation.

According to reports received by Amnesty International, these evictions were carried out in breach of international law, without giving prior and adequate notice, and without consultation with those affected. The families have not been provided with any alternative accommodation.

I am also concerned by allegations of reports of killings and rape alleged to have been caused by the impact of mining on the community, stated by Jethro Tulin, Executive Officer of Akali Tange Association, to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. On the other hand I read of the good corporate social and environmental policies your organisation aspires to.

I urge you to apply the principles set out in the voluntary principles on security and human rights, as well as your policies. I would welcome receiving your policies and what measures you are taking to stop the alleged killings and rapes that are blamed on the impacts coming from your mining operations.

*Yours sincerely,
[Your name]*

Please send letters to:

Peter Munk - [Founder & Chairman of the Board]
Barrick Gold Corporation
Brookfield Place
TD Canada Trust Tower
161 Bay Street, Suite 3700
P.O. Box 212
Toronto, Canada M5J 2S1

INDIA: ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE FOR MINING PROJECT

In April 2009, the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India granted an environmental clearance to establish the Lanjigarh bauxite mining project in the Niyamgiri hills. Amnesty International requests that the clearance be withdrawn until all necessary measures are taken to ensure that the mining project will not negatively impact the human rights of Indigenous and other communities who may be affected.

Read Amnesty's open letter to authorities at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA20/004/2009/en>

TAKE ACTION: Please write immediately to the National Environmental Appellate Authority, urging them to:

- Withdraw the environmental clearance for opening a mine on Niyamgiri hills until all necessary measures are taken by the government to ensure that the mining project will not negatively impact the human rights of Dongria Kondh and other communities who may be affected by the mining operations;
- Undertake an independent and impartial human rights and environmental impact assessment of the bauxite mining proposal on the local communities including the attendant risks, which Dongria Kondh and other communities have an opportunity to participate in, and to make the findings public;
- Ensure that these findings are disseminated to the communities in an accessible manner, especially to those who are not formally literate, to provide them with information towards a genuine process of consultation;
- Set up a genuine process of consultation with Dongria Kondh and other communities who may be affected by the proposed mining project and provide them with full, accessible and adequate information about the mining project and its risks;
- Ensure these communities are fully engaged in decision making through fair and free processes that provide them the opportunity to develop mitigation measures to ensure that risks and potential impacts are as far as possible avoided; Ensure that decisions are taken on the development and use of the traditional lands of Dongria Kondh communities with their free, prior, informed consent.

Please send appeals to:

Chairperson
National Environmental Appellate Authority
J. L. Nehru Stadium, Gate No. 31,
Lodi Road, New Delhi 110003, India
Salutation: Dear Sir/Madam

OTHER AMNESTY WORK

FROM AIUSA - THE ROLE OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

"Amnesty International USA works on issues related to the environment and human rights as part of their Business & Human Rights Program. The military, diplomatic and economic power of the United States is often exercised through the actions of multinational corporations with ties to the US government. This is true in an increasing number of countries around the world, including many the US identifies as allies. How multinational corporations conduct business and how and whether the United States holds them accountable are matters of great consequence for both human rights and the environment."

Read more at: <http://tinyurl.com/lhd78a>

HOT ISSUES

TOURISM THE NEO COLONIALISM OF PACIFIC ISLANDS?

Foreign investors exploit cheap Vanuatu land - Australian Broadcasting Corporation Broadcast: 20/04/2009
Reporter: Kerri Ritchie

Foreign investors, mostly Australian are snapping up dirt-cheap land leases in Vanuatu. In one village tensions are rising after a development company run by expat Australians cleared land right beside a world heritage listed area. Villagers say the developer is silencing them with threats of legal action, while their future goes for a song. Read more at: <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2009/s2547853.htm>

UPCOMING EVENTS

EDEN MIX N' MINGLE

EDeN are hosting a social evening at the Amnesty office to hear about this newly established specialist

network, meet other EDeN members, Amnesty staff and like-minded people who have an interest in the environment and human rights. A time to network with other environmental groups and organisations, discuss issues, and mix n' mingle.

EDeN coordinators are particularly interested in hearing what issues you think the network's focus should be.

You are welcome to forward this invitation to friends, colleagues or organisations that are interested in the environment. Drinks (koha bar) and nibbles will be provided.

When: Wednesday 17 June, 5pm - 7pm

Where: Amnesty International offices, 68 Grafton Road, Grafton, Auckland

Please RSVP to Olivia Rope at olivia.rope@amnesty.org.nz before 15 June.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

PRINCIPLES ON ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

"With the goal of establishing a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people,

Working towards international agreements which respect the interests of all and protect the integrity of the global environmental and developmental system,

Recognizing the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth, our home..."

Read more at:

<http://www.unep.org/Documents.multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=78&ArticleID=1163>

Earth Charter

"We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations..."

Read more at:

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/The-Earth-Charter.html>

This newsletter prepared for Amnesty International by Kit Howden.

Contact us by email - info@fragileworld.org.nz