



## Illegal Logging

**Logging needs to be better regulated because it is a serious threat to ancestral lands and the lives of indigenous communities.**

- Logging leads to soil erosion and dry water sources, which result in landslides and forest fires.
- Money lost due to illegal logging is being misdirected from the people of Central America.
- Logging gangs bring violence to indigenous communities.

*Deforestation, mostly due to illegal logging, decreases biodiversity, causes dry conditions and contributes to soil erosion. Illegal logging activity brings violence into regions, and destroys regions originally inhabited by indigenous communities.*

Deforestation is an important environmental issue, as it **decreases the biodiversity** of a region. Deforestation also **causes water sources to dry up** and the resultant dry conditions can contribute to the outbreak of destructive forest fires. A representative from the Environment Movement of Olancho (MAO), a group fighting against logging in the region of Olancho, Honduras, explains “in north Olancho, wherever there has been logging, after two or three years there is no water.” Deforestation is also directly related to soil loss and soil erosion, which induces floods and landslides that wreak havoc on local communities.

Logging is the clear-cutting of forests and is thus the main cause of deforestation. The construction of roads for logging further contaminates water sources used by local communities.

### *Illegal Logging*

The main issue involving logging is the large presence of illegal logging built into the logging industry. Illegal logging is when timber is harvested, transported, bought or sold in contravention of national laws. While governmental agencies claim to control the amount of logging occurring in a region in accordance with environmental contracts, this only refers to legal logging. Companies participating in illegal logging activities will cut in excess of the permitted limits, often under-report the amount of timber cut, or may cut from a protected area or territory. Illegal activities usually flow through the entire chain of the industry, including corrupt transportation officials and illegal export and sale. Economically, illegal logging results in a huge loss of revenue for governments, **taking away from funds desperately needed to provide essential services like health care** to their people.

Illegal logging brings violence to regions because **gangs often terrorize rural communities** where they are logging, in order to force peasants to sell their trees.

Illegal logging is notorious for being a problem in Indonesia and Malaysia, but it is also present in Latin America. In 2007, Mexican officials reported that illegal logging destroys 26,000 hectares of forest each year, although environmentalists claim it is much higher. According to Greenpeace, nearly half of all timber harvested in Mexico is done illegally. From 1990-2005, Honduras’ forests diminished by 37%.

In Nicaragua, new bans on logging permits have encouraged increased illegal logging throughout the country, particularly in the Bosawáas forest reserve. In a 2010 report, IPS news found that 11,000 sq km out of the 20,000 sq km region had been damaged through the expansion of the buffer zone by illegal loggers. **This region has lost a staggering 60% of its forest cover.**

## ***Steps toward Progress***

In response to some of these issues, the USA adopted a revised version of the Lacey Act in May 2008, banning all sales of, and trade in, illegally harvested timber and products such as furniture and paper. Recently, in July 2010, the EU followed with a ban prohibiting timber importers from selling illegally harvested timber. Important progress is being made, but logging still needs stricter regulation.

Case 1: [The Environment Movement of Olancho \(MAO\) in Honduras](#)

Case 2: [Ildefonso Zamora and family in Mexico](#)

Case 3: [The Ayoreo in Paraguay](#)

### ***Honduras: The Environment Movement of Olancho (MAO)***

*An eighth member of MAO is assassinated, as MAO persists in their resistance of logging companies in the Olancho region of Honduras*

In Honduras, the Environment Movement of Olancho (MAO), a community-based movement, has been fighting against logging due to its drastic effect on the water sources in the region of Olancho. MAO claims that half of the water source losses in west Olancho can be blamed on pine logging. In protest, MAO has blocked highways and bridges to logging trucks, and has inhabited city halls in Olancho. Their members have faced a long history of assassinations and death threats, including the murders of Carlos Luna, Carlos Roberto Flores, and Mauricio Hernandez.

On May 8, 2010, Adalberto Figueroa, a leader of MAO was ambushed and shot dead by people wearing ski masks. Figueroa joins 8 other environmentalist MAO compañeros who have been assassinated. He leaves behind 4 children. A member of MAO explains, “We know that behind his murder was a well orchestrated plan hatched by logging companies, who he was facing while defending the rights of the communities from unsustainable exploitation of forest resources in this area.”

MAO explains that since the coup d’etat, logging operations have intensified, making their struggle even more pertinent.

*Learn More. Take Action to Stop Threats to the Environment and Human Rights.*

#### ***Get educated.***

*Learn how logging is threatening indigenous peoples and the land.*

#### ***Speak out.***

*Write letters to government officials in Honduras and the US to protect native peoples and their ancestral lands. Write to corporations demanding more ethical business practices.*

#### ***Take action.***

*Find out how you can get involved in current campaigns to protect people and their land against the human and environmental destruction caused by logging.*

*These groups have people on the ground in Honduras, working in collaboration with indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples who tell us how we in North America can act in solidarity with them.*

[www.resistenciahonduras.net](http://www.resistenciahonduras.net)

[www.hondurashumanrights.wordpress.com](http://www.hondurashumanrights.wordpress.com)

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

[www.amnestyusa.org/all-countries/honduras/page.do?id=1011167](http://www.amnestyusa.org/all-countries/honduras/page.do?id=1011167)

[www.hrw.org/en/americas/honduras](http://www.hrw.org/en/americas/honduras)

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

IRTF’s **Rapid Response Network (RRN)** mobilizes the voices of people here to speak up on behalf of people being threatened throughout Central America, Colombia, and southern Mexico.

[www.irtfcleveland.org/action/rrn](http://www.irtfcleveland.org/action/rrn)

Link to the article about the Environment Movement of Olancho (MAO) described above:

(Original Spanish article) <http://www.cubadebate.cu/noticias/2010/05/10/honduras-asesinaron-a-otro-dirigente-ambientalista/>

(English translation) <http://quotha.net/node/938>

### ***Mexico: Ildefonso Zamora and family***

*Zamora's resistance against illegal logging in the Oculin community near Zempoala Lagoons National Park has resulted in threats from loggers. Zamora's son, Aldo, was murdered by a group of illegal loggers.*

Ildefonso Zamora has been working with his family and community of San Juan Atzingo, located in the Oculin municipality of Mexico, actively fighting illegal logging in the community. The region borders the Zempoala Lagoons National Park, which has been identified as one of the 15 most critical regions affected by illegal logging in Mexico. Ildefonso and other leaders have received death threats by loggers in the region, including gunshots fired outside homes, and confrontations by vehicles along the highway. In May of 2007, Ildefonso's 21 year old son, Aldo, was murdered by a group of illegal loggers. Ildefonso's other son, Misael, was seriously injured and hospitalized from the attack.

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<http://www.chiapas-support.org/>

<http://www.laht.com/>

<http://www.coha.org/category/browsebycountry/categories-m-z/mexico/>

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/all-countries/mexico/page.do?id=1011200>

<http://www.hrw.org/en/americas/mexico>

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[www.irtfcleveland.org/action/rrn](http://www.irtfcleveland.org/action/rrn)

Link to the article about Ildefonso Zamora described above:

[http://centroprodh.org.mx/english/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=185&Itemid=82](http://centroprodh.org.mx/english/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=185&Itemid=82)

### ***Paraguay: The Ayoreo***

*The Ayoreo region is being clear-cut for cattleranching land purposes, with many isolated peoples, such as the Totobiegosode, having outside contact forced onto them.*

The Ayoreo, a previously uncontacted indigenous tribe in Paraguay, has been forced out of their forest territory beginning in 1969. Almost all of the Ayoreo land has been sold to private landowners and cattleranching businesses, who are clear-cutting valuable timber from the forested region, and setting up cattle ranches. The Ayoreo are fighting for the rights to a fraction of the territory. Paraguayan law and the country's constitution recognize the Ayoreo's right to their traditional lands, but private landowners are working to stop this lawsuit. Many landowners have already been illegally bulldozing forest areas.

The most isolated subgroup of the Ayoreo, the Totobiegosode, is under direct threat from the bulldozers of a Brazilian company Yaguarete Porá, who owns a 78,000 hectare plot in the middle of Ayoreo territory. Yaguarete Porá announced to the public its plans to create a nature reserve, but instead intends to destroy approximately two thirds of the forest. The Totobiegosode are being forced out of isolation, and their traditional culture is being torn from them.

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[www.irtfcleveland.org/action/rrn](http://www.irtfcleveland.org/action/rrn)

Link to the article about threats to the Ayoreo described above:

<http://www.survivalinternational.org/tribes/ayoreo/crisispoint#main>

LINKS for logging background

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN0837957320070608>

[http://www.illegal-logging.info/approach.php?a\\_id=77](http://www.illegal-logging.info/approach.php?a_id=77)

[http://www.illegal-logging.info/approach.php?a\\_id=78](http://www.illegal-logging.info/approach.php?a_id=78)

<http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=50175>

<http://www.eia-international.org/cgi/news/news.cgi?t=template&a=604&source>

<http://www.eia-international.org/cgi/background/background.cgi?t=template&a=23>