

GUATEMALA

Important steps forward in movement to Stop Dirty Gold.
Indigenous from 60 communities gather to say *¡No Más!*

IRTF's RRN has faxed several letters to Guatemalan officials since 2005 to protest abuses at an **open pit gold mine in San Marcos Department**. Soon after Glamis Gold (now Goldcorp) began exploration in 1999, local indigenous residents raised concerns about the harmful environmental impacts, including the controversial **use of cyanide** to extract the gold. The project is funded in part by the World Bank.

The Marlin mine has directly and indirectly caused **deforestation, community division and social breakdown, repression, water depletion, water and air contamination, health problems** (respiratory problems, skin disease, hair loss, eye problems, etc), destruction of homes, and more.

The deeper roots of the conflict and protest over this mining operation is the Guatemalan government's violation of the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO 169), i.e. **failing to undertake an adequate process of consultation with the indigenous communities affected by the mine.**

From San Miguel Ixtahuacan to Toronto; indigenous gather to say *¡No Más!*

[Thanks to Grahame Russell of Rights Action for this spring 2008 update]

On April 30, 2008, hundreds of community leaders gathered in the municipal gymnasium of San Miguel Ixtahuacan, raised their hands and voted to hold a legally binding referendum on whether or not to allow open pit mining to continue in their communities. The gym was filled with indigenous (Mayan Mam) women and men from some 60 villages who came to say that **not only do they have the right to be consulted** about whether or not they want large scale "development" projects in their territory, but that **they are now going to exercise that right.**

Then on May 20, Goldcorp, Inc. held their annual general meeting in Toronto's financial district. After listening to Chairman Ian Telfer and CEO Kevin MacArthur explain just how enormous their profits were in 2007, **shareholders** raised their hands and **approved every motion to the effect that Goldcorp Inc. should continue with its mining operations** in San Miguel Ixtahuacan (Guatemala), in the Siria Valley (Honduras) and across the Americas.

Important steps forward to Stop Dirty Gold!

June 12, 2008: Representatives from various indigenous groups and Community Development Councils (COCODES) accompanied residents of San Juan Ixcoy, Huehuetenango, to call on the Guatemalan Congress to **respect local opinions and decisions regarding mining activities** in their respective communities. The residents requested that the government stop approving mining licenses without first consulting those who live in the region and **urged Congress to make local referendums legally binding**.

In Chiantla, Huehuetenango, **247 communities are preparing to hold public referendums on proposed or current mining activities in their communities**. In Tajumulco, San Marcos, 2,000 people protested the establishment of strip mines within their municipality. Municipal leaders supported the objections presented by the community, issuing a statement that outlined their opposition to mining.

June 16, 2008: **Environmental groups claimed victory** over the recent Constitutional Court (CC) decision regarding seven articles within the Mining Law. The CC, the highest court in Guatemala, ruled that the articles were partially unconstitutional, **leaving open the possibility of developing new mining regulations**. The CC argued that mining activities may have a serious impact on natural resources, some of which are not renewable, and therefore the environmental impact of a mine must always be taken into account when granting concessions. Yuri Melini, the director of the Center for Legal, Environmental, and Social Action (CALAS), stated that after three years of studying the proposed law, CALAS filed a motion regarding its unconstitutionality in 2007. The CC handed down its ruling in April 2008, although the parties were not notified of the decision until mid June.