

## Ecuador: Occidental Signs Unconscionable and Fraudulent Agreements in the Amazon

US-based transnational OCCIDENTAL is currently negotiating with Indigenous communities in Ecuadorian Amazonia, offering little more than twentieth century trinkets—chainsaws, medicine chests, and rain-coats—in exchange for undefined access to Indigenous territory for “petroleum activities.” OCCIDENTAL is one of the world’s largest oil companies, currently operating in over eleven different countries outside the US, and extracting over 200,000 barrels of crude per day. Indigenous communities have been pressured to sign completely inadequate agreements, in the presence of the military—agreements which oblige the communities to allow the companies to carry out undefined petroleum exploration and extraction activities for undefined periods of time.

Occidental has used various forms of coercion to secure agreements with the leaders of the Indigenous communities. Leaders of the Secoya report that prior to negotiations, the legal representative of Occidental threatened to bring the military to the community. Occidental’s legal representative also told Secoya community leaders that “they did not want to see anyone else at the discussions.” Such statements amount to coercion and directly violate the Secoya people’s right to independent consultation.

In one instance, Occidental brought a draft agreement to the negotiations and was very reluctant to include any of the proposals made by the community. In the end, only a vague reference to the possibility of temporary employment was included. In previous discussions, Occidental had told the community that the company only wanted permission to do seismic testing. However, the agreement signed permits Occidental to carry out any form of “petroleum activity.” A Secoya leader later realized that the granting of permission for “petroleum activities” was a mistake, and asked Occidental to change the agreement.

Occidental also reportedly told Secoya leaders that the company could not pay in advance because they didn’t have the money. To explain this situation, the company used the analogy that “a farmer cannot pay the rent for the land until he’s harvested all the corn.” The company also told the Secoya leaders that if they did not grant permission, the Ecuadorian government could expropriate the land and the community could lose its territory.

Occidental operates in an area of over 200,000 hectares called Block 15. This block includes a part of the Limoncocha Biological Reserve, a protected area, and part of the Secoya, Siona, and Quichua Indigenous territory. Occidental signed an agreement with the Ecuadorian government that grants the company extraction rights for 20 years. Using Occidental’s own estimates of the existing reserves, the entire production of Block 15 will supply the equivalent of US oil consumption for just 12.7 days.

*Information from: Carlos Sergio Figueiredo Tautz*

*Write letters to the directors of occidental corporation denouncing the immoral and illegal way in which they are carrying out negotiations. demand that they suspend negotiations and conduct all future negotiations ethically and legally: Ray R. Irani, President and Chief Executive Officer, Occidental Petroleum, 10889 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90024-4201; Mastonn Cunningham, Occidental Exploration and Production Co., Av. Amazonas 3837 y Corea, Casilla 17-15-0095-C, Quito, Ecuador*

## Chile: South and North American Indigenous Peoples to Protest Chilean Dam Project

An historic meeting of Indigenous peoples from North and South America has been scheduled to coincide with the annual meeting of the world’s largest association of dam construction and hydroelectric technology companies. At issue is the planned construction by ENDESA, Chile’s largest private company, of Ralco Dam, the second in a series of six dams planned for the Biobío River, ancestral Andean homeland of the Pehuenche Indians

The Indigenous delegation will begin its activities in Chile on October 9 in Santiago, culminating in a demonstration at the annual meeting of the International Consortium on Large Dams (ICOLD) in Santiago on October 16.

Despite the fact that 100 Pehuenche Indian families, Chile’s most traditional Indigenous group would have their villages flooded by the project, no relocation plan was included in ENDESA’s environmental impact statement, which was submitted in April to Chilean environmental authorities. The Pehuenche say they are determined to exercise their rights guaranteed under Chilean law to remain on their ancestral lands, and have called for support from North American Indigenous people, many of whom have personally experienced the impacts of large dams.

Nine native peoples from the North will be making the trip to meet the Pehuenche, and to participate in political discussions, spiritual ceremonies, and public demonstrations. The delegation includes prominent leaders from diverse Indigenous communities and nationally-based Native American organizations.

Ralco would be a 155 meter-high dam with a 3,400 hectare reservoir. The dam would generate 570 Megawatts of electricity at a cost of \$500 million. The dam would also flood over 70 km of the river valley, inundating the richly diverse forest and its wildlife, and leaving downstream portions of the river dry for months at a time, devastating fish stocks. The first dam on the Biobío, called Pangue, was constructed after the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank assured investors that it would be the only dam built on the river. In response to a complaint by the Pehuenche and Chilean environmentalists, the World Bank has now initiated a formal inquiry into irregularities in the Pangue loan.

Environmental groups and Chilean Energy Commission officials have questioned the need for construction of Ralco,



citing plans for construction of two trans-Andean gas pipelines importing natural gas from Argentina, and the planned construction of new gas-fired powerplants. The US-based Natural Resources Defense Council recently concluded a study demonstrating that improvement of energy delivery systems in Chile would make Ralco unnecessary.

The International Commission on Large Dams is an organization of engineers from 79 countries which promotes construction of dams throughout the world. Founded in 1928, it is headquartered in Paris, France.

*Information from: International Rivers Network (IRN), 1847 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, California 94703 USA; Tel: (+510) 848-1155; Fax: (+510) 848-1008; email: irn@igc.apc.org; Lummi Indian Nation, 2616 Kwina Road, Bellingham, Washington 98226, USA; Tel: (+360) 384-2288; Fax: (+360) 738-8863*

### **El Salvador: Deputies Threaten Indigenous Organization, Target Community**

The deputies Renato Pérez, Adolfo Varela, and activist in the rightist ARENA political party Jorge Ruiz are presently attempting to evict the Indigenous residents of the Las Hojas county of the San Antonio del Monte Sonsonate jurisdiction. Pérez, Varela, and Ruiz accuse the leaders of the National Salvadoran Indigenous Organization (ANIS) of being land thieves and murderers.

Through the Ministry of Agriculture and Ranching, the plaintiffs presented their accusations against the members of ANIS before the tribunals of Sonsonate. They are accused of violating the agricultural norms of the country. At this point 10 members of ANIS were summoned to appear before the Sonsonate courts to present their testimony regarding this situation, according to the president of ANIS, Fermin Garcia Guardado.

Several Indigenous nations inhabit Las Hojas county, including Nahuats, Lenkas, and Mayas. This region was acquired by ANIS in 1978 as a safe region in which to work with the communities. They organized cooperatives and are working communally. In this same spot, 74 Indigenous people were massacred in 1983 by the Salvadoran army. It remains today a sacred place for them and they ask that it be respected.

Since January a number of violent actions have been directed at the Indigenous people of the region, such as on January 27 when unknown masked individuals entered the community at midnight and fired bullets on the house of the spiritual leader and Indigenous leaders connected to ANIS. At the same time they threatened to repeat the bloodshed of 1983. At that time Amnesty International had led a campaign of informing human rights organizations to pressure the Salvadoran state to enforce justice.

On the 12 of March, the national police ransacked the office of ANIS and detained Rafael Arturo Pérez and

Armando Antonio Pérez, two members of ANIS. The Pérez brothers appealed to the Supreme Court of Justice, but to no avail; the court ruled to have them expelled from the community.

Presently, a warrant is out for the arrest of Don Adrian Esquino, president ANIS, on the grounds that he has stolen land and murdered. On May 3, an explosion tore through the house of the Esquino family, but caused only structural damage. Faced with this situation, Esquino is urging human rights organizations to pressure the Salvadoran state to protect the rights of Indigenous communities under fire.

### **Colombia: Another Zenu Leader Killed**

Before the very eyes of Indigenous and national authorities, one by one the members of the San Andrés de Sotavento Resguardo (Indian reserve), are being killed.

At 1:30 pm on Sunday, August 18, in the site known as La Arena (Córdoba state), two armed men on a black motorbike assassinated the Indigenous leader of the town council and mayoral ex-candidate of the town of San Andrés, Alberto Cheito Malo Alean.

The Zenu leader was 38 years old, married, and had two children. By profession, he was a civil engineer. He was the brother of Héctor Malo Vergara, Cacique (chief) of the San Andrés de Sotavento Resguardo, who was assassinated on March 26, 1994, along with three other Indigenous persons. This year 12 Zenu leaders have been killed.

The Zenu of the San Andrés de Sotavento protested the lack of any meeting with representatives of the state in search of solutions to this crisis of civil order. Their attempts have so far yielded nothing.

The Cacique Rosenberg Clemente confirmed that the Indigenous people are scared because they don't know who will be next or when.

He added that the massacres have continued unabated, aided by the indifference of the authorities. This comes after those same authorities had promised in a recent meeting in Martillo to establish a vigilante system and to assure peace and autonomy in the Resguardo.

The International Brotherhood of Human Rights has proposed the creation of a human rights commission in the area. The Church in turn has suggested that a Reconciliation Commission be set up in conjunction with international observers. Nothing has come of any of this, however.

The Cacique requested that impunity be stopped and that the results of the investigations of the murders under way be made public.

He also denounced the fact that there are heavily armed mercenaries in the majority of the ranches existing in the region of the San Andrés de Sotavento Resguardo in Córdoba and Sucre.

*Information from El Tiempo, Bogotá*