"You are just a woman"
Criminalized and threatened, women stand their ground against the Goldcorp mine in Guatemala

By TRACY GUYON

San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Guatemala – Carmen Maja walks two hours to work every day. She is a member of an organization currently under attack because of its support of indigenous communities living near the gold mine. Maja, 53, is a mother of five who learned about the dangers of mining from a friend who was killed by a mining company. She is one of many women who have been threatened or attacked by the mine.

On April 21, 2010, the San Miguel Ixtahuacán Goldcorp mine, which opened in 2005, produced 250,000 tons of gold per year. The mine is operated by a subsidiary of the Canadian company Goldcorp. The mine, which is located in the Western Guatemalan highlands, has been operating for 20 years. It is required to pay only 1% of its profits to the communities where it operates.

Maja and several other women were charged on Earth Day, April 21, 2010, with obstructing the mining operations. The women claim that they were protesting against the destruction of their land and the contamination of the local water supply. They are demanding the return of the lands to the communities.

In 2008, eight indigenous women known as the Goldcorp 8 were charged with obstructing the mining operations. They claimed that the mine was destroying their land and contaminated their water supply. The women were sentenced to two years in prison, but they were released on appeal.

The Goldcorp 8 were protesting against the mine, which is located in an area that is considered sacred by the local communities. They demanded the return of the land to the communities and the protection of their water supply.

Goldcorp and the authorities deny assertions that at least 100 houses have been damaged by the explosions near the mine. They blame rain, poor construction, and loud music from the churches. Photo by James Rodriguez, mimundo.org.

Tenant rights still far from protected in NB

By ANNE OREA ALLISON

Renter and boarders now have more protection because of changes to New Brunswick’s Residential Tenancies Act. The changes, however, fail to make key improvements for renters. The updated act still fails to protect tenants from landlords who refuse to return deposits. The act also fails to protect tenants from landlords who refuse to make necessary repairs.

The Residential Tenancies Act outlines the rights, obligations, and restrictions that landlords and tenants must follow. Anti-poverty organizations were successful in having key improvements made to the act for the first time since 1973. At a public hearing held on April 21, 2010, landlord and tenant representatives from the New Brunswick Public Housing Authority argued that the act should be amended to include provisions that protect tenants from landlords who refuse to return deposits.

Fredericton area residents who attended the session were encouraged by some of the new protections, but were concerned by the failure of the new changes to address important problems facing tenants. According to tenants who attended the session, landlords sometimes force tenants to pay $500 for a “key deposit.” Tenants reported that landlords sometimes do not return this “deposit,” even after the key has been returned.

Another intrusive change made to the act is a fee of $75 for having a “friend over for dinner.” Tenants asked Mr. Landry, who was present, if such charges are legal. If they are set in advance and tenants sign them, they are legal, said Landry. He also welcomed tenants and landlords to contact the Residential Tenancy Office for further clarification before signing a tenancy agreement.

The update to the tenancy act also fails to include price increases for rent. Rent increases are now limited to the number of days in a month, without any limit on the number of days in a month. An anonymous tenant who attended the session said, “I think it’s a good thing to have a limit. It will increase my rent in one year!”

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