



## Why We Need to Shout Out Against Mining Injustice

Last September, Council of Canadians National Chairperson Maude Barlow travelled to Guatemala to bear witness to the struggles of communities fighting to preserve their environment and protect their health against destructive Canadian mining projects. Barlow visited Goldcorp's Marlin Mine, which continues to operate its cyanide-leaching open pit mine despite a May 2010 order from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to suspend operations. She heard the harrowing accounts of community activists who have been viciously attacked for speaking out against the mine.

Sadly, the situation in Guatemala is far from unique.

Canada's reputation throughout the Global South is tarnished by the human rights and environmental violations of its mining companies abroad. Seventy-five per cent of the world's mining and exploration companies are Canadian. And according to a 2009 industry report leaked by Mining Watch Canada, Canadian mining companies have the worst record in the world, even by our own country's modest corporate social responsibility standards.

### Violations of the right to water

Many of the community struggles against mining companies have been about threats to water.

In February 2012, Montreal-based Osisko Mining Corporation's proposed Famatina gold mine project in Argentina was suspended due to widespread concern over water use and pollution. Protests against the proposed mine included a demonstration of more than 300 people in front of the Canadian embassy in Buenos Aires.

At the same time, thousands of people in Peru embarked on a nine-day march for water to protest President Ollanta Humala's 50-billion-dollar mining plan and demand that water be recognized as a human right.

And here in Canada, the Council is working with communities like the Tsilhqot'in First Nation in British Columbia, who are fighting a proposal by Vancouver-based Taseko mines for a copper-gold project on their territory that would severely damage water sources which are vital sources of food security and have great cultural and spiritual significance for the community.

The Council of Canadians has joined with groups and organizations around the world to demand that governments put an end to the destructive activities of extractive industries and recognize water as a human right.



*A sculpture depicting the poisonous effects of mining in San Pedro, Mexico.*



### **Paving the way by undermining local democracy**

Canadian mining companies are benefiting from neoliberal policies and trade agreements that have severely weakened local democracy and the ability of communities to protect their environment.

For example, B.C.-based Pacific Rim is challenging the El Salvador government for refusing a permit for a gold mine in Cabanas that would use and pollute 30,000 litres of water per day from the community's only source of drinking water. In order to take advantage of investor-state dispute mechanisms within the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) that would allow it to challenge the Salvadoran government as a U.S company, Pacific Rim opened up a subsidiary company in Nevada. Three people on a trade tribunal in Washington will now decide the fate of the water supply for people in Cabanas.

Despite the profoundly anti-democratic nature of these mechanisms, Canada has actively pursued bilateral trade deals around the world that would ensure these same rights for Canadian companies in countries where there have been fierce battles against mining. Here in Canada, companies like Taseko have benefited from a loophole in the Fisheries Act called "Schedule 2" that allows metal mining companies to dump mining waste in lakes and rivers, bypassing provisions within the Act that would otherwise prohibit the poisoning of fish-bearing waters.

### **No accountability**

In many countries of the Global South, Canadian mining companies are not held accountable for environmental destruction. Many have also refused to collaborate in investigations into allegations of human rights violations, which include the murders and assaults of anti-mining activists.

In 2009, the Canadian government failed to pass Bill C-300, a modest bill aimed at holding extractive companies accountable for their actions abroad by denying them financial and political support if they are found in violation of international human rights standards.

### **There are solutions**

The Council of Canadians supports communities struggling for justice against big mining corporations. We are excited to launch a mining justice campaign with this "Shout Out Against Mining Injustice." Together, we will raise public awareness by allowing impacted communities to share their stories and by developing joint strategies with social justice, environmental and labour allies against the injustices of mining companies in Canada and abroad.

*For more information about the Council of Canadians' mining justice campaign, visit [www.canadians.org/mining](http://www.canadians.org/mining)*