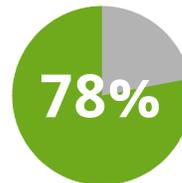


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San Juan Sacatepéquez



RICARDO MAYOL-
BRACERO



SUPPORT PLEDGED



IBEROAMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

On one of these days, we went to San Juan Sacatepéquez, and we heard the voices of the communities that make up that municipality, their sorrows and their hopes.

They told us that before 2007, the families lived quietly on their lands where they worked, planting flowers. However, that year stranger people entered, cut their flowers and began cutting their trees and digging their mountains. Surprised, they went to the municipality to ask the mayor for what happening. He did not respond.

Faced with the non-response of the authorities, the communities chose to come together to analyze what was happening and to cast a vote for or against it in a community consultation. Analyzing the situation, they realized that a cement and open pit mining company was entering their land with the intent to take away from them their mountains and lands.

The vote cast was 8,946 residents with a resounding NO to mining, aware that the cement company pollutes, takes away water and violates their rights. Only 4 residents were in favor of this project. The organized communities took the results of the consultation to the municipality, Congress and the Ministry of Energy and Mines. To all these entities they said our word is clear, we rejected mining and asked for the withdrawal of the project. They continued insisting on that, with marches and prayers, demanding that the consultation be heard.

What they received in response were incarcerations and arrest warrants, and the installation of military camps in their territory. Instead of addressing the claim, the cement platform was built, the company began to buy up properties and to construct a road to take away the cement. Instead of listening to and responding to community demands, with bribes, the community leadership took the position of the company and betrayed their people.

Nonetheless, communities continued to struggle. They filed their complaint with the UN Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples. He declared the community consultation official and called for the immediate withdrawal of the project. Repression followed, harassment, assassinations, arrests, and provocations to organized communities. However, they sowed trees to oppose the cutting of the forest and declared themselves guardian of the forest. They left and raised their voice of denunciation in the capital. Women rose and transgressed the police siege. They marched for life, for the dignity of flowers and for water. And they invited us to listen to their pain and their hopes, they asked us to become their companions.

Behind these breaches there are very powerful interests. This cement company, Cementos Progreso, belongs to the Novella family. The Novella, related to the Castillo family, owners of Cervecería Centroamericana, are the great consortium of the powerful castes of Guatemala.

Communities invited the Christian Ecumenical Council of Guatemala, and it was accompanied by one of its members, the Conferencia de Religiosos y Religiosas de Guatemala (Conference of Clergy and Nuns of Guatemala) CONFREGUA and of Global Ministries and International Ministries, because I was present. We heard them and told them, all of Guatemala is wounded. What do you think if we came together to examine the extent of the siege of the territories? We reiterate, the churches are with you in your pain, and we will be with you, light that illuminates darkness and salt that prevents corruption. We told them, here we are.

To you who read this, realizing that the situation is dangerous, we ask you to be vigilant. Be guardians of your brothers and sisters of San Juan Sacatepéquez and of their companions. Stop Cain from raising his murderous hand upon Abel; be a community that restrain violence and builds justice and dignity, sons and daughters of peace.

Mission Partner in Guatemala:

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More information on Guatemala: <http://www.globalministries.org/guatemala>

International Ministries and Global Ministries Mission Coworker in Guatemala:

Ricardo Mayol has been appointed to serve with the Ecumenical Christian Council of Guatemala (Concejo Ecuménico Cristiano de Guatemala [CECG]). His appointment is made possible by your gifts.