



# "WE WILL NOT BE SILENCED OR HUMILIATED"



**On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June Honduran soldiers roused President Manuel Zelaya from his bed and exiled him at gunpoint Sunday to Costa Rica, halting his controversial push to redraw the constitution but spurring fresh concerns about democratic rule across Latin America.** The Honduran armed forces chief who ousted President Manuel Zelaya said the decision to throw him out of the country was made by "the state" to save lives, because violence would have erupted had he remained.

News of the coup has been met by international condemnation. Barak Obama denounced the coup as illegal and has stated that the USA will not give recognition to the military government. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on Sunday put troops on alert after a coup in Honduras and said he would respond militarily if his envoy to the Central American country was kidnapped or killed.

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COPINH (Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras), a broad-based grassroots organisation with its own radio station, and with whom ENCA has been working over the last year, has also been quick to denounce the Coup. COPINH was founded in 1993 in the Honduran southwest with the goal of obtaining land rights, protecting the environment and preserving Lenca culture. They also aim to improve the living conditions of indigenous people and their access to health care and education. On the 29<sup>th</sup> June they issued a statement calling for action against the coup. 'COPINH condemns the cowardly and dirty coup d'état against the Constitutional President of the Republic Manuel Zelaya Rosales. We denounce the fascist and terrorist role of the armed forces, of the national congress headed by Roberto Michelletti Bain, of the communications media, of sectors of the ultra-right, and of the rest of the institutions submissive to the interests of the oligarchy and imperialism that this morning kidnapped the President and took him by the air force, prior to the initiation of the popular consultation in which the people actually are participating — even with the repression unleashed, even as the campaign of fear continues, and even when faced with the butt of the rifles of the soldiers'.



Reports from Honduras talk of a state of siege in the capital and the rest of the country; electricity being cut, and of lists of leaders to be captured. Those Hondurans who are bravely demonstrating in front of the presidential residence are surrounded by tanks and helicopters. On the 29<sup>th</sup> June COFADEH reported that The Honduran National Congress had announced a 48 hour State of Siege for the whole country. The State of Siege prohibits any presence or movement in the streets after 9pm, until 6am. Under the State of Siege, individual guarantees are suspended: personal liberty (69), no limit to time of detention (71), freedom of thought (78), freedom of association (81), freedom of movement (84), detention liberties (84), inviolability of the home (99), right to private property (103). Congressional leader Roberto Micheletti has been placed in command of the country until the end of Mr. Zelaya term in January. Mr. Micheletti and others have said that they are the defenders, not opponents, of democratic rule.

Manuel Zelaya was quick to issue a statement calling for an end to the coup and to defy the military. He made an attempt to return to Honduras on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July, his aeroplane flew over Toncontin airport a couple of times before aborting landing attempts and heading for Managua, Nicaragua. The plane was not given permission to land as military personnel and vehicles blocked the runway. His plans for a return to Honduras are not yet known at this time.

### First hand account

**“The armed forces have fired live rounds against unarmed civilians. For over five hours, the protesters behaved respectfully of the army and police. There had been no confrontations. No one had sticks or guns. The march’s organisers had even decommissioned stones from a few protesters. But the army shot at us just like that, in cold blood. There was no need to shoot! Yes, some had started to cut and remove the barbed-wire fence [so as to enter the landing strip], this cannot be denied. But it was not necessary to shoot civilians with live rounds. Once again, so that the people of Honduras will remain united: the blood of a martyr is the seed for many Hondurans who will stand up and remain firm against such de facto government – this government of delinquents. We are only following Article 3 of our Constitution: ‘Nobody should obey a Government which has reached power by means of usurpation.’”**

**-Cesar Omar Silva, television journalist for State-owned Channel 8.**

## Zelaya's Significance

Despite being a wealthy logger and rancher from the centrist Liberal Party, Zelaya has moved his government well to the left since taking office in 2005. During his tenure, he raised the minimum wage and provided free school lunches, milk for young children, pensions for the elderly, and additional scholarships for students. He built new schools, subsidized public transportation, and even distributed energy-saving light bulbs. He also had



Honduras join with Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Cuba, and three small Caribbean island states in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), an economic alliance challenging the neoliberal orthodoxy that has dominated hemispheric trade in recent decades.

None of these are particularly radical moves, but it was nevertheless disturbing to the country's wealthy economic and military elites. More frightening was that Zelaya had sought to organise an assembly to replace the 1982 constitution written during the waning days of the U.S.-backed military dictator Policarpo Paz. A non-binding referendum on whether such a constitutional assembly should take place was scheduled the day of the coup, but was cancelled when the military seized power and named Congressional Speaker Roberto Micheletti as president.

Calling for such a referendum is perfectly legal under Article 5 of the 2006 Honduran Civil Participation Act, which allows public functionaries to perform such non-binding public consultations regarding policy measures. Despite claims by the rightist junta and its supporters, Zelaya was not trying to extend his term. That question wasn't even on the ballot. The Constitutional Assembly would not have likely completed its work before his term had expired anyway.

Edited by Doug Specht

Sources: Tikkun Magazine, James Rodríguez, Periodista Oficina de Divulgación e Información Universidad de Costa Rica, Friends of the Earth Latin America and the Caribbean, COPINH

## F.O.E. STATEMENT

Friends of the Earth (Latin America) has issued its firm rejection of the fascist coup staged against the people and the government of Honduras, which led to the kidnapping of President-elect Manuel Zelaya, who was later flown to Costa Rica, to the aggression of the ambassadors of the ALBA member countries in Honduras and the current repression in the streets. The Latin American society expresses "its opposition to this new attempt to stop the social advances proposed by the social movements in this fellow country, and it cannot remain silent to such an attempt against the dignity of the brothers and sisters of Honduras. We immediately call all our fellow organisations of Friends of the Earth International to organise activities in solidarity around the globe, to stop this new militarist wave in the continent.

We demand the Honduran Armed Forces to immediately re-establish the social peace in Honduras and the respect for the elected authorities, and to not be manipulated by the oligarchy and the economic power that pressure to continue benefiting from the neoliberal model installed in this country and the neighbouring countries. The Honduran Army should respect the physical integrity of the social movements and organisations, and of the demonstrators who are defending the institutional order and the popular consultation called for this Sunday 28th, and called off by the coup.

We report that all the activists of the grassroots movements and organisations of Honduras are suffering persecution and repression by the sectors promoting the coup, which should lead to the immediate action of all the human rights organisations of Latin America and the world to defend the lives of their comrades."

These desperate military actions take place as the Honduran government has taken measures to benefit the poorest sectors of the country, which imply adhering to ALBA, reforming the Honduran state to stop being part of the neoliberal system, so as to become a modern state at the service of the citizens.



# EU Acts Like A Shark At Trade Talks

This spring saw trade talks between the European Union and five Central American countries, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Guatemala. The talks however were marred with problems, at one stage the Nicaraguan representative walked out of the talks, with President Daniel Ortega saying that 'The EC wants to impose a free trade agreement where the shark eats the sardines'.

The talks which were being held in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, were intended to look at a number of issues such as sanitary norms, technical norms, customs proceedings and access to markets. However Roberto Echandi, chief negotiator for Costa Rica says that by the time the talks fell apart they 'haven't had the chance to tackle products emblematic to Central America such as bananas, sugar, meat, rice and rum'. Agricultural goods make up the bulk of exports from Central America, while manufactured goods make up the majority of imports.

Nicaragua formally walked out of the talks on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno was quick to issue a statement in an attempt to save the talks, 'we want to make clear the suspension of one round is not the end of the negotiations, no one country has the power of veto in order to stop negotiations'. Nicaragua's grievances centred around a free trade agreement and financial aid for development. Nicaragua had requested €60 billion for combating poverty and encouraging development throughout Central America, through majority funding by the EU (90%) an amount the EU claims is not feasible. Ortega issued a statement via the presidential website stating that 'they want to put us in a free trade agreement where the shark swallows the sardine. We cannot negotiate with a gun to the head'. European representatives of Foreign Affairs, Benita Ferrero-Waldner and International Trade, Catherine Ashton issued counter statements in the Salvadoran press expressing a 'sincere hope that [negotiations] could be renewed in the near future'

Nicaragua did indeed return to the negotiating table when talks reconvened in Brussels. Manuel Coronel, vice minister of foreign relations for Nicaragua travelled to Belgium to discuss the future of the negotiations. All head negotiators from the EU and Central America met in Brussels on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> April. Progress would appear to have been made after a bi-regional working group was established to investigate the financial mechanisms for development of Central America. Guatemala's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs points out that this creation of a working group does not necessarily accompany the closing of the agreement.

Edited by Doug Specht

Sources Tico Times, Nicanet Hotline, BBC News online



Delegates from Central America and the EU meet to discuss FTA and poverty alleviation

Photo: European Commission

## Via Campesina Denounce Trade Talks

**The Social movement Via Campesina, a global movement, released a declaration on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2009 which denounced the trade talks as 'nothing more than a Free Trade Agreement that has liberalisation in favour of multinational companies and the privatisation of natural resources and public services as main goals'.**

"The EU tries to push the neoliberal agenda which is outlined in its "Global Europe" strategy through these agreements, a strategy which has already failed at the WTO and they now wish to pursue bilaterally. Even though this agreement includes human rights or environmental clauses, it is clear that the goal is to allow the multinational companies to take power over public services, natural resources, the financial system, biodiversity and the genetic resources that are abundant in the Central American region. We support the decision of the Nicaraguan government to abandon the negotiating table and we call on all the Central American governments to take into account the needs of their people and to not defend the interests of multinational corporations."

"In the field of agriculture the interests of the agro-industry are clear in attempting to impose a predatory, agro-export orientated model highly dependent on European technologies and financial capital. Through patenting legislation this agreement would create the risk that the Central American region would lose its native and indigenous seeds,

ancestral knowledge, peoples sovereignty and production of healthy food."

*Continued...*

“On top of that, the agreements would threaten to prevent peasant communities from exercising their main function of food provision at the local level. In reality, what is at stake with the FTA with Europe are two totally different models: the EU pushing for an agro-industrial export model and the peasants and indigenous peoples, men and women, of Central America and Europe, who opt for a model based on Food Sovereignty.”

“European Coordination Via Campesina and Via Campesina in Central America with other social movements from the region reject unequivocally any attempt to reactivate the negotiations within the conditions of inequality in which they took place - completely undermining the sovereignty and integration of the Central American people.”

Reproduced from a statement issued by Via Campesina

## Coup Halts Talks

After consulting the Central American governments and in agreement with the EU Member States, the European Commission has decided to postpone the 8th round of negotiations in view of an Association Agreement with Central America, due to take place in Brussels from 6 to 10 July 2009. The negotiations should resume as soon as possible.

Foreign Ministers of the European Union have strongly condemned the military actions which were directed against democratically elected President Zelaya and part of his cabinet and which have violated the constitutional order of Honduras. The EU urges the immediate release of all detained governmental representatives and calls on all relevant parties and institutions to refrain from violence and to strive to find a swift and peaceful solution to the current situation. This should be in accordance with the existing constitutional order of Honduras, the principles of rule of law and democracy.

Source: European Union, Office of External Relations

# “LARGE-SCALE TOURISM COMPLEXES ARE TREMENDOUSLY DESTRUCTIVE”

*This article is a brief summary of an interview published in June 2008 in Revista Ecotopía 207. Sirel, the Chief Coordinator of one of the most important environmental organisations in El Salvador, the Salvadoran Ecological Unit, details the environmental and social consequences associated with an open tourism model.*

### What is the focus of the Salvadoran Ecological Unit?

On 5<sup>th</sup> June 1987 various Salvadoran environmental organisations came together to unite with hopes of becoming stronger and more influential. This move created the Salvadoran Ecological Unit, a *second-level* environmental NGO made up of various types of environmental and non-environmental organisation who all share the same goal, addressing El Salvador's environmental problems. The unit is now 21 years old and continues to focus on political advocacy in environmental legislation. For example, the Environmental Law passed in 1998 was a result of a tremendous amount of hard work that UNES presented to the Legislative Assembly in the form of our draft bill. We also focus on helping people to protect

themselves against environmental contamination and we also support communities who want to undertake projects that will improve their living conditions without damaging the environment.

### After incidents of lead contamination, mineral extraction, deforestation and a growth in tourism, what is the current state of El Salvador's natural environment? And the country's environmental fight?

The state of the environment in El Salvador is extremely critical. Unfortunately the country has been dominated by a group that will go to any lengths to make a profit and sadly, this attitude has destroyed the environment many times over.

From the days of slavery, decisions have been made in the interest of gaining as much profit as possible and sadly our legal system is designed in this way. With significant business interest in such a small country it is no surprise that development is destroying the natural environment. Original forests that once covered El Salvador have changed and now only cover 2% of the country. This fact alone gives an idea of the scale of environmental damage that El Salvador continues to experience.

*ENCA Newsletter, July 2009, p.5*

**Do you believe that there is impunity with respect to the environmental crimes in El Salvador?**

Yes definitely. In the legal history of El Salvador there has only been one case that had been won by those affected by contamination and pollution. All of the others have never been brought to justice.



Eco Tourism at Contapeca in El Salvador. The park features nature trails, guides and educational facilities. *PHOTO: Doug Specht*

**What would you say to the politicians who are endorsing and promoting tourism on a grand scale?**

There are many types of tourism but when you say that tourism is going to develop in El Salvador, many people imagine the ecotourism model of Costa Rica. However what El Salvador wants to develop is practically an open tourism market which will allow large corporations to build grand-scale, fun loving complexes in the country's most pristine and protected areas. They will be allowed to build bars, discos, artificial swimming pools and areas for speedboats and water sports; all of which destroy the surrounding environment. This type of tourism is extraordinarily damaging.

**Something similar happened in Mexico. Investment into developing the most beautiful and richest beaches such as the Mayan Riviera, created many serious problems which start with the likes of solid waste management. In this case, powerful, unjust politicians implemented and endorsed these huge projects, what is the case for El Salvador?**

Everything here in El Salvador is for show, some places even hold dolphin shows. This clearly isn't natural; it is a drastic manipulation of the natural environment as the dolphins are

practically trained as puppets. Those who design these complexes are hiding behind the argument that this is what the public like and so this is what they offer. Unfortunately we cannot offer ecological tourism because we do not have the ecosystems to show off, we are not like Costa Rica and we cannot say to the tourists 'come and experience the forests of El Salvador' because they do not exist. The sad thing is, the ones that do exist are likely to be destroyed and exploited.

**In the case of San Salvador, the city already has a serious problem of managing solid waste. Do you think that grand scale tourism will aggravate this problem?**

I am sure that the hotels will be very beautiful but everything that is consumed within these complexes unfortunately will be thrown outside, and many municipalities do not even have the capacity to manage its own solid waste. In some cases, they will look for a place to throw the waste on the sand. Hotels and complexes situated directly on a beach do not have black water treatment and there have been many cases where solids have been washed up on the same beach. We believe that the Environmental ministry of El Salvador does not have the adequate infrastructure to supervise all of the new projects to see that they comply with the environmental law.

**Given the evidence of the initiatives from the Ministry of Tourism, what alternatives do the people of these municipalities, civil societies and environmental organisations have?**

Firstly, people in these zones should organise themselves and fight for their right to survival. There are many examples of companies funding projects that relocate individuals and build a small house. However, a simple house does not guarantee their survival. Therefore, these people should organise themselves and stay where they are. I believe that people have to react and become stronger. These are the individuals that are suffering the battles of displacement; they are Salvadorans and we too are Salvadorans, yet these hotels are funded and managed by international and foreign investors.

We need to pray for environmental protection because these hotels are going to be developed in El Salvador's last remaining natural resources.

*Translated and Edited by Tobie Roffey*



# Report to the Environmental Network of Central America from the Permaculture Institute of El Salvador

*ENCA member Peter Bloodworth writes on how ENCA donations have enabled the Permaculture Institute of El Salvador, IPES, to support communities.*

The main news of the year 2008 is IPES's relocation to Suchitoto, which took place in April. Less than one year later, we can report that three major demonstration plots have been cleared, soil conservation and fertility measures are in place, diverse crops have been sown in guilds, and significant crops of maize, rice, beans and squashes have been harvested, both for seed and as food crops. Groups of visitors are regularly coming to the Centre to see these results and are going away determined to put Permaculture into practice. A temporary training centre has been constructed on site. Students can be accommodated there and in rented offices in Suchitoto 10 km away. Easier road access means that our promoters can travel more easily to the home villages of students to hold local training sessions and to support local initiatives. The communities close to Suchitoto, with whom IPES works, have formed the Ecological Network of Suchitoto. This meets regularly at the Centre to learn, to plan their outreach to new communities and to work on projects which have made a significant impact on the development of the site. A second Network has been established in Morazán and this model will be followed, as communities develop in other Departments. New communities are being supported with seed and seedlings grown on the Centre.

In the future we see the work of IPES as a combination of education and practice in the Centre, followed up by training and support in the community. During his visit in November IPES were pleased to show ENCA member, Martin Mowforth, this model in practice, with a visit to the Centre and to the



Education plays a key part in the way IPES works

community of Papaturro, where members of the Ecological Network are cultivating home gardens.

## How the ENCA donation has been invested

In response to ENCA's request that the money go directly to a community, the project to construct raised beds in the home gardens of the community of Tres de Marzo in the Department of San Vicente was selected. In practice the money went further than this for reasons which will become clear in the following visit reports:-

## Visit to Tres de Marzo

On behalf of ENCA I visited Tres de Marzo on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2008 in the company of IPES President Daniel Rosales and community workers Miguel Suarez and Conchi who have been working there since 2006.

The community is situated some 50 km east of the capital and some 65 km south east of Suchitoto. Its lands lie just off the busy Coastal Highway which connects the three ports of the country. Tres de Marzo, as its name makes clear, was founded on a 3<sup>rd</sup> of March – in 2003. Some land previously farmed for cotton was sold off in plots and 42 families originally settled on the land. It did not prove easy to put roots down in this place and five years later only 17 of the original families remain. One villager was eloquent about the reasons for the drift away. Despite the heavy traffic roaring by, Tres de Marzo feels "far from civilization". There is no electricity, no source of clean drinking water and little topsoil. It is not easy to live there and less easy to grow food.

The residents paid tribute to IPES, whose arrival at their request in 2006 brought new hope and a reason to persevere. Our training visits through 2006 and 2007 had motivated them to grow their own food, but the paucity of the soil meant that without raised beds gardening was unproductive. The money from ENCA has provided breeze blocks to raise the beds and hoses to irrigate them. We were able to visit seven gardens and see ongoing work on these beds.

We had arrived after much of the vegetables had been cropped. Several beds were under reconstruction, with an extra layer of breeze block being added and fresh soil being moved in by wheel barrow. This was because the floods had proved too deep for the original beds, and some precious topsoil had been washed away.

I left Tres de Marzo moved by the spirit of these people, struggling in a difficult place, even by Salvadoran standards. They are grateful to IPES for helping them to help themselves. They are grateful to ENCA, IPES' friends in the UK for providing the funds which will continue to give them food and

hope. They asked me to pass their warmest thanks to you.

### Visit to Santa Teresa

Santa Teresa has also benefited from your generosity, as IPES were able to stretch ENCA's donation to provide more raised beds for them as well.

Although only a few hundred yards away this community is in a different setting and has a very different ambiance. Santa Teresa looks and feels like a planned new town set down in a prairie. It has a grid of streets with a school and churches at key intersections. Rectangular plots are marked and divided by barbed wire. Some houses are well constructed and well maintained. There is an electricity supply and clean water from a well some 80 metres deep. On the face of it, it has the hallmarks of the "civilisation" which Tres de Marzo lacks.

Villagers under the guidance of Miguel and Conchi have been compiling a plan for Santa Teresa. This includes a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, charts showing the agencies which have already helped their community and potential sources of help. It culminates in a set of values, a vision and a mission for Santa Teresa. This work stemmed directly from training which IPES had organised for community leaders as part of the Institute's strategic plan. Miguel and Conchi were observing and assisting, but it was clear that the community members owned the process and its results.

Amongst their evidence was a topographic and thematic map of the village. It showed clearly in colour the PROGRESS which the community had made under IPES' guidance:-

- 14 compost latrines and 5 improved cooking stoves constructed (with funds from the Big lottery Fund UK)
- 34 home gardens improved with blocks provided with funds from ENCA, 16 of them with drip irrigation systems
- 34 families have begun to practice ecological agriculture
- 102 families have clean drinking water

These are major steps towards the community's vision to develop a community which renews itself, with ecological values, which cares for its natural resources and which can be sustainable and visionary.

IPES started working in Santa Teresa eighteen months before Tres de Marzo. This and the fact that the floods were not so serious here meant that there were many more crops to be seen – tomatoes, beans, lettuce, herbs and medicinal plants.

The area is surrounded by huge fields which are still being exploited for the cash crop cotton and aerial crop spraying has taken place as recently as 2007. Soil samples in this area have shown that there is a total absence of living organisms in the soil –the result of the intensive application of chemical fertilisers, herbicides and fungicides.

This means that the soil contained by breeze blocks and watered by drip irrigation systems are indeed oases of fertility and health. The seeds – organic and metaphoric - which are being planted in ENCA'S raised beds are the best hope for all generations in the community.

As we left, the campesinos and campesinas of Santa Teresa asked me to pass on their thanks to you. I knew that I had seen Permaculture in practice. This means more than just some organic gardening. I had seen all three ethics of Permaculture in action.

- **Care for the soil** – within those breeze block walls and in the larger plots where organic fertiliser has been applied
- **Care for people** – in IPES' concern for the health needs in Tres de Marzo and in their diplomatic handling of marital difficulties in Santa Teresa
- **Fair shares of resources** – best exemplified by the photos of the sharing of seeds and plants and by the availability of IPES's support to all members of both communities.

I returned to my work on the land at IPES, sure that the next priority in the development of our site should be the construction of a model home garden, so that on their next visits to the Institute, the villagers can be further inspired to take their home gardening to the next level.

Written by Peter Bloodworth  
Adapted by Doug Specht



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## Camp Nemagon Fights on

*ENCA has long been following the plight of the Banana workers of Chinandega. This spring has seen another set back in their struggle for justice.*

In April Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Victoria Chaney threw out two consolidated lawsuits by Nicaraguan banana workers after the Dole Food Company accused two lawyers of recruiting clients to give false testimony that the pesticide DBCP (Nemagon) used by the company had made them sterile while working in its banana fields in Nicaragua. Dole said that only one of the Nicaraguans party to the case had actually worked for banana companies and that the men were paid and trained by attorney Juan Dominguez and his colleague in Nicaragua Antonio Hernández. Judge Chaney said that the court was "profoundly concerned about the possibility that fraud could have occurred and that this could extend to all the Nicaraguan cases pending before this court." In November of 2007, a jury awarded US\$6 million to six of twelve Nicaraguan banana workers who said that they were rendered sterile by the pesticide. Dole appealed the verdict. Judge Chaney held three days of hearings last week to explore the allegations of fraud and issued her ruling in favour of Dole at the end of those hearings.

In Chinandega, attorney Antonio Hernández responded to the accusations of fraud and conspiracy saying that if anyone prepared a conspiracy, it was Dole and not he nor any of his colleagues who are defending the affected farm workers. Hernández said that Dole orchestrated a conspiracy using two Mexicans and a Costa Rican to offer a few Nicaraguan banana workers money, houses, and U.S. visas to testify against the plaintiffs, their former comrades, and destroy the case that they had been working on for seven years. Hernández said, "Judge Chaney judged Juan José Dominguez and me, sentenced us and sent us to the electric chair without hearing us." He noted that Nicaraguan Judge Socorro Toruo, who was cited by Judge Chaney as having acted incorrectly in a banana worker case, has never ruled in such a case. He said that he was surprised by the change in Judge Chaney who had issued a ruling favourable to six workers in the Tellez vs. Dole Foods case.

According to the Bloomberg News Service, "at least 16,000 Latin American workers sued in the U.S. in the past two decades seeking damages from chemical companies that made the pesticide." Michael Axline, the lawyer who currently represents the Nicaraguan plaintiffs, said, "We are shocked and saddened at the allegations against third parties in this case, including our former co-counsel [referring to Dominguez]."

Dole Food Company reveled in its victory. With its US\$7.6 billion in net profits in 2008, Dole is the largest marketer of fruit and vegetables in the world. At Camp Nemagon in Managua, banana workers said they would not give up the fight for justice.

The ruling was celebrated at Dole's central office in Westlake Village in Los Angeles County, CA, and in Managua. "The ruling of the court confirms that Dole, our co-defendants [Dow Chemical and the Amvac Chemical] and the Superior Court were all victims of fraud on a large scale as well as obstruction of justice," said Dole's general counsel Michael Carter in a note released by the company in Managua. Another Dole attorney, Scott Edelman, said that Dole had tried to work with the government of Nicaragua to detect those who had truly been affected by the pesticides, but that the Nicaraguan authorities



showed no interest in a just solution, but rather, based on Law 364 (Law for Cases of Persons Affected by DBCP), they have not guaranteed due legal process for Dole and other companies. Law 364 is the first law passed in a country where banana workers were affected by DBCP that has given workers a chance to prevail against transnational companies in legal cases.

Judge Chaney said that this month she will initiate new procedures to determine if fines should be imposed against the plaintiffs and their lawyers. Attorney Antonio Hernández, who with Los Angeles attorney Juan José Dominguez had brought the cases against Dole, said that they had used specialised laboratories in Nicaragua and the United States which proved that the plaintiffs were sterile and suffered other physical and mental conditions due to their exposure to Nemagon and Fumazone. He said that although they had presented evidence that Dole had tried to suborn testimony. He urged the government of President Daniel Ortega, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman and the Foreign Ministry to protest the decision.

Source: Nicanet Hotline

An interview conducted within Camp Nemagon, Managua, is available from  
[www.ca-dvd.co.uk](http://www.ca-dvd.co.uk)

# FMLN Victorious

*ENCA member Doug Specht was in El Salvador during the Presidential Elections in March to work with the CIS as an election observer. Here he recounts some of the process and problems encountered in the lead up to the FMLN victory, as well as highlighting the distinct lack of environmental policy on the part of either party.*

The Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad, CIS, has been running election observation missions since the end of the Salvadoran Civil war. Its original mission statement was to protect the leftist FMLN party who until 2009 have been unsuccessful in winning the presidential elections, largely because of unfair and undemocratic elections. This year the CIS provided the largest international delegation of observers and was ratified as being independent by both parties (only two parties, ARENA, and the FMLN put forward

candidates for the Presidential Elections), the only organisation to achieve this.

The Environment did not feature heavily in either parties policies, social change taking priority at both ends of the political spectrum. A trip to Tonacatepeque however revealed the plight of many Salvadorans. The Tonacatepeque community is made up of a number of families who were displaced during the civil war. After a period of nomadic style living, the families came together and set up their community on an area of land north of San Salvador. Not wishing to squat the community has made many attempts to buy the land upon which they now live, however they have been blocked at each turn by the ARENA government who had offered the land for sale at a cost of \$11 per hectare to a corporation , but £1100 for the same area to the community. The main driving force behind the acquisition of land at Tonacatepeque, Raul Acevedo, explained that the government was denying them water in an attempt to move them on. The community currently use a stream for washing water, and only have access to drinking water from another community at pre determined times. The Community were hopeful of an FMLN win as they believed this would help to alleviate their problems.

There were a great many concerns about the way in which the elections may be conducted, including, dead people voting, bribing with food or money, threatening, bussing in Nicaraguan or Honduran workers to vote, military presence, road blocks and mis-information. All of these were seen at various points during the lead up to election day and during polling itself. Some of the starkest and most concerning being the buying up of buses by ARENA, meaning that the FMLN was not able to provide transport to polling stations. Food tokens being handed out at orientation stations, bearing the logo of one party or the other. The USA also would not deny that Salvadoran immigrants would be expelled from the US if the FMLN won, something they had threatened in the previous election, and in fact this year a number of US senators reiterated the point. Despite these issues and an attempted kidnapping of a member of the CIS delegation, the whole process seemed to be more even handed than any previous year and improvements made because of other observation missions were very effective in reassuring voters that they would not be intimidated because of their vote.

The results were processed quickly and Mauricio Funes of the FMLN was declared the winner by 11pm on polling day. It was by a narrow, less than 3% margin, however the will of the people would seem to have been done and the FMLN have power for the first time since before the civil war.

How this will affect the poor of El Salvador remains to be seen, hopes are high among the people and the parties continued long into the night.

*ENCA Newsletter, July 2009, p.10*

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## Polluted Water Blamed for Blisters and Welts

**Guatemala** – North America based NGO *Rights Action* has released photos showing what they claim to be the effects of water pollution from Marlin Mine in Guatemala. The mine is owned by a Canadian Corporation called *Goldcorp*, and is run 24 hours a day extracting gold. The company has issued a statement in response to these claims, stating that 'comprehensive sampling conducted by the technical staff of the Public Ministry in Guatemala as well as by the Marlin environmental department has confirmed that river water quality is not adversely impacted by mine operations'. The company also point to a lack of medical evidence. However critics have also pointed to Goldcorp's unfair land purchase practices, human rights violations and environmental damage to the area surrounding the mine. Goldcorp has experienced a threefold increase in profits during 2008, yet the majority of these profits are leaving the already impoverished indigenous communities and Goldcorp is putting very little back into the area.



All of these claims are to be examined by a Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) committee, which has been funded by Goldcorp. Professor Cassel, of the University of Notre Dames Centre for Civil and Human Rights, among others has expressed concerns that this funding structure and the terms set out by Goldcorp will not result in a 'full and independent picture emerging'.

Goldcorp continues to insist that is a socially responsible company. This is not an opinion shared by the respected Canadian Jantzi Social Index which rates companies for investors on how socially responsible they are. Last year Jantzi kicked Goldcorp off the index, citing, among other issues, opposition to the mine from local indigenous communities.

Adapted from a BBC News Report  
11 March 2009

## Three wounded in confrontation over lobster prices in Bilwi

**Nicaragua** – On June 9, three protesters were wounded in Bilwi (Puerto Cabezas) and two vehicles belonging to lobster companies were damaged in a confrontation over the price of lobster which dropped from US\$4 to US\$2 because of lowered demand on the world market. The protesters were wounded when the crowd tried to enter the offices of the Copescharle lobster company. The Miskito Council of Elders supported the lobster divers and fishers who carried out the protest. The protesters overturned two company vehicles but were prevented from pushing them into the sea by police.

Rev. Ismael Ramírez of the Council of Elders said that the protesters are not delinquents or gang members as some have called them. Rather they are demanding recognition of their labor rights because the situation of families on the Coast is getting worse each day. He went on to say, "The companies sign agreements and commitments on safety for the divers and they never follow through. Some 150 people in recent years have been injured and a number have died, affected by the depth and by the lack of equipment, but no institution looks out for them."

Later that same day, protesters took prisoner the mayor of Bilwi, Guillermo Espinoza, and held him for 18 hours until he was rescued by members of the Moravian Church led by Rev. Cora Antonio. There was reportedly substantial damage to the city offices and warehouses. Five people were reported arrested from the violence of June 9.

From Nicanet Hotline 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009

## Government projects benefit 30,000 small producers

**Nicaragua** – The Ortega government has invested more than US\$6 million to increase the productive capacity of more than 30,000 small farmers in the Departments of León and Chinandega, the same region where the now-cancelled US Millennium Challenge grants were expended. From 2007-2009, the Programme of Rural Productive Reactivation has carried out projects worth US\$2.008 million from which 4,236 producers have benefitted directly and another 8,400 indirectly. Josefa Torres, executive director of the Rural Development Institute (IDR) said that from the beginning of the Ortega government, they have implemented 210 productivity projects, under a host

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of programme names, at a cost of US\$6 million and another US\$3 million in upgrading farm-to-market roads in León and Chinandega.

IDR has constructed two collection centres, one for fish in Corinto and the other for shellfish in Realejo, directly benefiting 60 producers and indirectly benefiting 3,000 people. IDR also made grants to eight projects to increase competitiveness totalling US\$225,000. The projects for small and medium producers included black shells El Realejo, fish of Corinto, better seeds in the municipality of Chichigalpa, wine processing in Chinantlan, dairy projects in El Sauce and Achuapa, yucca in Chacra Seca, and "Fruticola" in Telica and Quezalaguaque. The IDR's development projects benefit poor families, especially the women and children. It has provided funding for the production of sorghum in Chinandega for which the IDR spent US\$500,000 for infrastructure improvement and another US\$400,000 for fine salt in El Tamarindo.

From Nicanet Hotline 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009

## Central American Scientists presented climate perspective

A group of technicians and scientists presented a document containing the current atmospheric and oceanic conditions and its applications in predicting rainfall patterns at the 27<sup>th</sup> Forum of Climate Central America,

The official document was presented by Patricia Ramírez from the Regional Water Resources Committee, CRRH; based in Costa Rica; and Engineer Eddy Sánchez, Director National Institute of Seismology, Volcanology, Meteorology and Hydrology, INSIVUMEH, Guatemala; the document will serve as a basis for strengthening the capacity to issue regular updates and check the weather in Central America and its applications to agriculture, fisheries, water resources management, risk management and food security.

According to the results, the prospect raised at the Central American countries, three scenarios were identified for the first part of the rainy season, these being:

Rain above normal in all regions of the territory of Belize, northern Guatemala and the Caribbean, the

departments of Copan, Santa Barbara and Cortés in Honduras.

Within the normal rainfall in the regions of the central plateau to the Pacific coast of Guatemala; departments of Choluteca, Valle, Ocotepeque, Lempira, Intibucá and part of Santa Barbara in Honduras; throughout El Salvador, parts of the Pacific Central and Northern Nicaragua. Autonomous areas; north side of the Caribbean, South Pacific and Central Pacific of Costa Rica, all the territory of Panama.

Rainfall below normal in the plains regions of the Caribbean, northern, eastern and northern interior, department of Yoro, Olancho and El Paraíso in Honduras, and northern North Atlantic Autonomous Region in Nicaragua, and North Pacific central valley in Costa Rica.

From Guatemala Times, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2009

## Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador initiate "Mangrove Corridor"

With Spanish assistance, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador have initiated the "Mangrove Corridor" as part of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor to protect the environment and enable sustainable development in an area of the Pacific Coast dominated by poverty. The project incorporates the Jiquilisco-Xiriualtique Biosphere in El Salvador, the wetland systems of Honduras, and the deltas of the Estero Real and the Apacunca plains in Nicaragua. Most of the mangrove swamp areas are along the shores of the Gulf of Fonseca shared by the three countries. Rich in molluscs and crustaceans, they provide significant livelihoods for small scale fishers.

Thousands of poor families depend on the swamps for subsistence and the area is attractive to investors in harbours and in tourism and other commercial enterprises which represent both a threat and an opportunity depending on how the natural resources are managed. "What we are looking for is to give the population alternatives that permit a reduction in extractive activities," said Roberto Rodríguez, representative of the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development (CCAD).

From Nicanet Hotline 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009

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