



# FOR THE SECOND TIME THIS YEAR THE NASO HAVE THEIR HOUSES DESTROYED TO MAKE WAY FOR A CATTLE RANCHING COMPANY



*A mechanical shovel, property of Ganadera Bocas, demolishes inhabitants' houses in San San Druy, November 2009.  
(Photo: La Prensa/Pedro Rodríguez)*

# Continued repression of the Naso

By Karis McLaughlin and Martin Mowforth

The indigenous Naso people occupy a region of north west Panama in the Bocas del Toro province, with a population of approximately 3,500. They live in 11 communities along the Teribe River and survive primarily as subsistence farmers. Their territory lies within two protected areas rich in biodiversity: the Palo Seco National Forest and La Amistad International Park. They are one of the few remaining indigenous peoples in the Americas to have a monarchy recognised by the state.



Police presence in San San Druy, 19 November 2009

Like many indigenous peoples, the problems faced by the Naso are rooted in their ongoing struggle for legal recognition of their traditional lands. The Naso people of the Bocas del Toro province in western Panamá never enjoyed the benefit of Omar Torrijos' 1970s designation of indigenous lands as *comarcas* within which they would enjoy a high degree of autonomy and in which land could be held communally rather than individually. As a result, they have had to continue their struggle to retain their territory since the 1960s. According to Osvaldo Jordan of the Panamanian NGO, Alliance for Conservation and Development (ACD):

“The Naso were unable to create sufficient public pressure for the creation of their *comarca* when the government still had a favourable opinion towards these autonomous territories.

Now, the public consensus has turned against *comarcas* and the Naso are left trapped in this situation.”<sup>i</sup>

Without official recognition of their *comarca* by the Panamanian government, the Naso stand in a weak position to defend their right to autonomy and self-determination. Without appropriate legal recognition and control over their territory, they feel unable to confront recent processes of acculturation and globalisation. Refusing legal title to the Naso territory constitutes a violation of the Naso's rights according to the country's constitution, as well as violating the American Convention of Human Rights.<sup>ii</sup>

Land conflicts with the livestock company Ganadera Bocas are ongoing and have often turned violent. The disputed land is claimed by the Naso on grounds of ancestral ownership, whilst Ganadera Bocas possess a property title stating legal ownership since 1962.<sup>iii</sup> Felix Sánchez, President of the Naso Foundation, explains the origins of the land ownership conflict:

“So, the Standard Fruit Company at that time [early 1960s] were the bosses, but at the same time they were not the owners; they were the nation's tenants and not the legitimate owners. But afterwards in the seventies, the company went up for sale as a business, changing its name to one which had possession of the land amidst a pile of rules and arrangements which they made. That's when it all started happening.”<sup>iv</sup>

On the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009, police and employees of Ganadera Bocas entered the Naso villages of San San and San San Druy with heavy machinery, destroying 30 homes and the Naso Cultural Centre. Protests continue at the time of writing, with a Naso camp based in Panama City, demanding that the government grant them the right to live on their land.<sup>v</sup>

In September 2009, the two ENCA members who authored this article visited the Naso village of San San Druy, attending a meeting of the villagers with the local mayor of Changuinola and interviewing King Valentín Santana and other Naso leaders.

Two months later on 19 November 2009, the police moved in again and allowed the Ganadera Bocas company to enter with their machinery to destroy the village for a second time this year.

This struggle has not been helped by a division within the Naso people between King Valentín Santana and King Tito Santana. Our interviews with Felix Sánchez and with King Valentín and the meeting with the local mayor that we attended made it crystal clear to us that the people of San San Druy community saw only King Valentín as their valid representative. Moreover, the villagers of San San Druy overwhelmingly saw Tito Santana as corrupt, having accepted money from Ganadera Bocas and having deserted the village. Doña Lupita from San San Druy, for instance, said: "King Tito says that he is the true king, but he is the government's king. We recognise Valentín Santana – he is our king because he [Tito] has left the community. ... We don't recognise Tito as king because he is selling us out."<sup>vi</sup>

The Naso's livelihoods and lands are also threatened by development megaprojects such as the \$50m Bonyic hydroelectric dam, sponsored by Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM). This project has caused deep rifts within the Naso people. Their former king Tito Santana collaborated with EPM, keen to embrace the advantages of modernity and development, including the offer of a school, clinic, jobs, infrastructure and university scholarships. His support for the project provoked a revolt and he was forced into exile in 2004, with his uncle Valentín Santana assuming his position, backed by opponents of the project. The government, however, continues to recognise Tito as the legitimate king.

Supporters of King Valentín Santana doubt that benefits will compensate for the environmental and social costs of the dam, and maintain that the project will destroy their cultural and natural heritage. A new highway will connect the population of the large town Changuinola with the dam, which will undoubtedly bring radical changes including migration. As Rory Carroll commented in the Guardian "the discord reflects an anguished debate about Naso identity and the balance between heritage and modernity".<sup>vii</sup>

The Bonyic dam is one of four planned in the Bocas del Toro province, with a combined

estimated capacity of 446 megawatts, equivalent to 30% of Panama's total production in the year 2004.<sup>viii</sup> However, as with most development projects, the costs and benefits are rarely equitably distributed and the Naso may stand to lose more than they gain.

Unfortunately, we were unable to contact Tito Santana who no longer lives in the Naso community from which he came.

The latest news we had on the repression faced by the Naso came from the Naso resistance movement, dated 30 November 2009. Extracts from their communication are given below.



King Valentín Santana's house in San San Druy, September 2009. It is unclear whether the King's house was also bulldozed by Ganadera Bocas in November

"Naso leaders of the San San Druy and San San communities have accepted the establishment of a round table of negotiation with the government on a possible *comarca* and under the coordination of the President of the Commission of Indigenous Affairs, Leopoldo Archibold. The proposal was accepted this morning in a meeting with the Indigenist Policy Group and the Vice-Minister of Government and Justice and to which the executive invited the illegitimate King Tito Santana, dismissed by the community and an habitual associate of Empresas Públicas de Medellín and Ganadera Bocas. The round table starts work on 11 December and is made up of 10 delegates of the legitimate King Valentín Santana and 10 of Tito Santana. Although these accords have been reached, the Minister of Government and Justice, José Raúl Mulino, insisted on calling the residents of San San Druy and San San squatters, and likewise his director of the Indigenist Policy Group, José Isaac Acosta, was contemptuous of the community

insinuating that they are incited by NGOs and foreigners. The Naso leaders accepted the round table although without much hope of reaching a good solution given the repeated failure of the government to comply with the most basic accords which have been reached over the previous eight months".<sup>ix</sup>

<sup>i</sup> Personal communication

<sup>ii</sup> Environmental Defender Law Center

<http://www.edlc.org/cases/communities/naso-of-panama/2/> (accessed 16 July 2009)

<sup>iii</sup><http://mensual.prensa.com/mensual/contenido/2009/05/31/hoy/pa/norama/1803560.asp> (accessed 16 July 2009)

<sup>iv</sup> Felix Sánchez in interview with Karis McLaughlin and Martin Mowforth, San San Druy, Panamá, 1 September 2009.

<sup>v</sup><http://mensual.prensa.com/mensual/contenido/2009/05/31/hoy/pa/norama/1844317.asp> (accessed 16 July 2009)

<sup>vi</sup> Doña Lupita in meeting with Mayor of Changuinola, Panamá, in the village of San San Druy, 1 September 2009.

<sup>vii</sup> Rory Carroll, 'Hydro plant splits jungle kingdom as tribe feels damned by new way of life', *The Guardian*, 16 June 2008

<sup>viii</sup> Cordero, S., Montenegro, R., Maffa, M., Burgués, I., and Reid, J. (2006) 'Análisis de costo beneficio de cuatro proyectos hidroeléctricos en la cuenca Changuinola-Teribe', *The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund* (July).

<sup>ix</sup> <http://resistencianaso.wordpress.com>

## Panama's Ngöbe Indians Win Major Victory at Inter-American Commission on Human Rights: Dam Construction Ordered Halted

*Whilst the case of the Naso (against a combination of big business and the Panamanian government) is rather disheartening at present, the struggles and campaigns of indigenous groups, even in the same region as the Naso, are not all in vain, as the campaign of the Ngöbe-Bugle against the construction of a dam for hydro-electric power production is showing. But all is not quite as it may appear from the hopeful note struck by the headline of this article, for the government of Panama has chosen to ignore the ruling of the IACHR and to go ahead with the construction regardless.*

*We are grateful to Peter Galvin for permission to reproduce his article (as follows) which was first published in June 2009 – <http://intercontinentalcry.org/major-victory-for-the-ngobe-of-western-panama> [ed]*

WASHINGTON— After two years of brutal government repression and destruction of their homeland, the Ngöbe Indians of western Panama won a major victory yesterday as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights called on Panama to suspend all work on a hydroelectric dam that threatens the Ngöbe homeland. The Chan-75 Dam is being built across the Changuinola River by the government of Panama and a subsidiary of the Virginia-based energy giant AES Corporation.

The Commission's decision was the result of a petition filed last year by the Ngöbe after AES-Changuinola began bulldozing houses and



"AES out of River Changuinola"

Photo: ACD, Panama

farming plots. When the Ngöbe protested the destruction of their homes, the government sent in riot police who beat and arrested villagers, including women and children, and then set up a permanent cordon around the community to prevent anyone from entering the area. In addition to threatening the community, the dam will irreversibly harm the nearby La Amistad UN Biosphere Reserve

"We are thrilled to have the Commission take these measures to protect Ngöbe communities," said Ellen Lutz, executive director of Cultural Survival and lead counsel for the Ngöbe. "We are hopeful that this will help the government of

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Panama and AES recognise their obligation to respect Ngöbe rights.”

The Commission, which is a body of the Organisation of American States, is still considering the Ngöbe’s petition and issued this injunction, called precautionary measures, to prevent any further threat to the community and the environment while the Commission deliberates on the merits of the case.

Specifically, the Commission called on the government to suspend all construction and other activities related to its concession to AES-Changuinola to build and administer the Chan-75 Dam and abutting nationally protected lands along the Changuinola River.

In addition to Chan-75, for which land clearing, roadwork, and river dredging are already well underway, the order covers two other proposed dam sites upstream. The Commission further called upon the government of Panama to guarantee the Ngöbe people’s basic human rights, including their rights to life, physical security, and freedom of movement, and to prevent violence or intimidation against them, which have been typical of the construction process over the past two years. The Commission required the government to report to it in 20 days on the steps it has taken to comply with the precautionary measures.

Chan-75 would inundate four Ngöbe villages that are home to approximately 1,000. Another 4,000 Ngöbe living in neighboring villages would be affected by the destruction of their transportation routes, flooding of their agricultural plots, lack of access to their farmlands, and reduction or elimination of fish that are an important protein source in their diet. It would also open up their territories to non-Ngöbe settlers.

The dam also will cause grave environmental harm to the UNESCO-protected La Amistad Biosphere Reserve, an international World Heritage Site that is upriver from the dam site. Scientists believe that there is a high risk of losing important fish species that support the reserve’s wildlife, including several endangered species, because the dam will destroy their migration route.

“The Panamanian government must follow the precautionary measures issued by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and

prevent further human-rights violations and environmental damage,” said Jacki Lopez, staff attorney at the Center for Biological Diversity, an organisation that submitted an *amicus curiae* to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in support of the Ngöbe.

The Ngöbe people’s situation was the subject of a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous People, James Anaya, made on May 12, 2009. Anaya concluded that the government ignored its obligation under international law to consult with the communities and seek their free, prior, and informed consent before moving ahead with the construction project. He urged AES-Changuinola to meet international standards for corporate social responsibility and not contribute, even indirectly, to violations of human rights.

*Further information can be sought from the author, Peter Galvin at [pgalvin@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:pgalvin@biologicaldiversity.org)*

*Partner Organizations:*

Centre for Biological Diversity –

[www.biologicaldiversity.org](http://www.biologicaldiversity.org)

Cultural Survival – [www.culturalsurvival.org](http://www.culturalsurvival.org)

International Rivers –

[www.internationalrivers.org](http://www.internationalrivers.org)

La Alianza para la Conservacion y Desarrollo –

[www.acdpanama.org](http://www.acdpanama.org)

Global Response – [www.globalresponse.org](http://www.globalresponse.org)

*It is interesting that this article generated some critical comments from proponents of the Chan-75 dam. These were based largely on the grounds that energy generation is for the whole of Panama’s population, that the general benefit is greater than the disbenefit to the Ngöbe-Bugle, and that hydro-electric power generation is much more acceptable on environmental grounds than fossil fuel power generation. But as one respondent to these critical points answers, “What’s the point of [passing] legislation [in favour of indigenous groups] if the government isn’t going to obey it?”*

***We shall try to find space and time to investigate and report on this conflict between the environmental arguments for hydroelectric power generation and the social and human rights of indigenous people in future issues of the ENCA Newsletter. [ed]***

# Is Central America returning to the dark days of authoritarianism? And if so, what does it signify for the environment?

*Comment by Martin Mowforth*

ENCA Newsletter readers will be aware of the illegal coup which took place in Honduras this year, led and directed by the Honduran business community and the Honduran oligarchy – more on this later in this article.

But fewer will be aware of the near-coup and social chaos which were caused in Guatemala in March 2009, an event or sequence of events which were designed to bring down the Guatemalan government of Alvaro Colom. It arose as the juncture of a number of forces came into operation.

- First, as we reported in ENCA 46<sup>x</sup>, drug trafficking cartels are moving into Guatemala in a significant way. A state of chaos will deflect attention away from their operations.
- Second, the recent crack-down on the drug trade in Mexico has forced some parts of the drug cartels to look southwards for less stressful areas in which to work, and Guatemala is the closest southern neighbour of Mexico<sup>xi</sup>.
- Third, since the end of the war in Guatemala the oligarchy has become accustomed to the idea that it can still rule in its own favour under a regime of western representative democracy as easily as it used to under a military dictatorship. So, the mild reforms to the tax system and Colom's slight turn towards social concern were perceived as a threat to the traditional power and privilege held by what has been called "one of the most corrupt Latin American oligarchies"<sup>xii</sup>.
- Fourth, the once powerful military which ran the police force as well as the armed forces and which served as the armed protector of the oligarchy's business interests and opulent lifestyle has suffered large reductions in numbers since the Peace Accords of 1996 and has lost some of its hold over the country's politicians and business

community. Some sectors of the military seek to regain this lost power.

- Fifth, although the impunity of those who have committed and continue to commit crimes against humanity still holds strong in Guatemala, under Colom's government tolerance of such crimes has diminished and a willingness to investigate and acknowledge past and present crimes has begun, falteringly, to surface.

Given these forces, perhaps it should not have come as a surprise that a concerted effort to bring about the resignation of Colom and the fall of his government was made. Essentially, the attempt involved the assassination of many bus drivers, paralysis of the transport system and a wave of criminal activity. Details of what happened in March were reported by *Guatemala News* and a few extracts from an editorial piece are included in Box 1 to give the reader a flavour of the chaos.

On 10 May, a further attempt to bring about the collapse of the Guatemalan government resulted in the assassination of lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg. Two days before his death, Rosenberg had made a video in which he directly blamed Alvaro Colom and the President's wife Sandra Torres, amongst others, for his assassination if it were to occur.

The assassination gave rise to a wave of indignation and protest against Colom along with calls for his immediate resignation. It was a severe political crisis within the country and at times it seemed hardly possible that Colom could survive. But within a few days critical and questioning voices began to raise the possibility that Rosenberg had been sacrificed by his own class.

These attempts to bring about the resignation of Alvaro Colom and the fall of a mildly reformist government failed, but weakened Colom and made it clear to the whole region that the oligarchies of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, who gained their wealth and power

through land deals, resource extraction and their association with transnational corporations (TNCs), are watching closely and waiting for their moments to take power. And if their power and privilege cannot be protected through democracy and the ballot box, then illegitimate means will have to be deployed.

These displays of muscle in Honduras and Guatemala have given notice that the right wing forces of the past are waiting for their moment to return; and there is little doubt that they are largely supported by the TNCs which operate

within each country with such disdain for the local populace and the local environments. (More is said of this link between the TNCs and the oligarchies in the next article on the effects of the coup d'état in Honduras.)

- x. 'Mayan Megatourism Resurrected, Pitting Private Sector Against Narco-Cattle Ranchers', ENCA 46, November 2008, p.5. (Information from Trópico Verde)
- xi. Jason Beaubien 'Mexico Drug Violence Spills into Guatemala', NPR Radio Report, 1 June 2009, [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104789349](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104789349)
- xii. Asdrúbal Marín Murillo "Colom y el crimen de Rosenberg", Semanario Universidad, San José, 17 June 2009.



## Box 1: Guatemala – in a state of emergency?

The evolution of the organised crime wave that started last year in Guatemala reached a boiling point yesterday. Gun fire attacks on buses and killings of bus drivers in several strategic locations in the capital virtually paralysed Guatemala City. It was a very well organised plan of attack, ... Guatemala City has over 4 million inhabitants, it is severely overcrowded and congested by too many cars ...

Yesterday, the local radio stations were reporting the attacks and the citizens of the capital started to have a feeling of being under siege by unstoppable crime. Rumours started to circulate and disinformation transmitted by the radios started to create a sense of panic in the population. Calls were made to local radio stations demanding the military to be put on the streets to bring order and for the government to impose a state of emergency.

The strategy of assassination of drivers of the public bus system started before the presidential elections in 2007. Some sectors accused one of the presidential candidates, ex-general Otto Pérez Molina, of being the brains of that particular strategy to create insecurity and fear in the population. (The accusation has not been documented or confirmed.) ...

In his message last night, broadcast on national television, President Alvaro Colom stated that the events that occurred yesterday are part of a strategy to destabilise the government. He insisted that it is a reaction of organised crime to the security actions taken by the government. ...

There are unconfirmed theories that the military and its usual sympathisers, certain power sectors of the country, want to establish military presence to control the security situation as soon as possible.

There are other theories that claim that the publication of the police files from the period of the civil war – when the police were under the control of the military – is causing concern among the people who then ruled the country officially and unofficially (1960 – 1996). The recent declassification of military files covering some operations during the same time period and the creation of a Presidential Commission to declassify more military files is making some people extremely nervous. ...

So, the question is: are yesterday's events of violence, reporting of the media and demands for military presence, just a coincidence, or were they orchestrated?

*The extracts above were taken from Guatemala News, 25 March 2009*

*As support for the de facto government in Honduras increases amongst the international community the poor and marginalised populations continue to be placed at a disadvantage and the environment is taking a back seat as people struggle to defy their new oppressors. There follows a number of examples of the pressures being placed upon the environment and marginalised populations in Honduras at this time [ed.].*

## Garífuna Culture Threatened by Coup

The Honduran de facto government under Roberto Micheletti plans to eliminate the Garífuna people and culture. Dr. Castillo, founder of the Latin American Medical Hospital (ELAM), has been targeted for assassination in order to decapitate the Garífuna leadership. He never travels alone; he never sleeps in the same place and keeps his appointments and engagements secret. This policy of targeted assassination of movement leaders is designed to leave organisations leaderless and more vulnerable to extermination.

The work of the Garífuna doctors has been very important in improving the health indicators of the Garífuna and Miskito communities since they began work in 2005. Their work has received increasing international recognition and support. Despite this the Garífuna doctors could soon see their hospital taken away by the criminal Honduran coup government in a scheme which has brought no protest from the U.S. State Department and the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

The life and culture of the Garífuna people are at risk as are democracy and justice for the Honduran people. The most efficient and effective way to prevent the genocide of the Garífuna is to return democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya to Honduras, punish Roberto Micheletti and the coup government and deflect the United States from its support of the Honduran coup government.

Original text by Willie Thompson, San Francisco Bay View  
Edited and revised by Doug Specht



## COPINH – Resistance Continues and Deepens

The Civil Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH) in a recent statement, timed to coincide with the commemoration of the date upon which the Honduran people and territories began to be the subject of genocide, exploitation, extraction and destruction, has denounced the Coup government.

“We condemn the political-military dictatorship which took power in Honduras through a cruel coup d’etat which has left a number of Hondurans dead and has seen many men and women beaten, tortured and politically persecuted. This coup d’etat is standing in the way of the emancipation of the Latin American peoples”.

‘We raise our voices of life, justice, liberty, dignity and peace’

Taken from a press release by COPINH  
Adapted by Doug Specht

## Call to End Human Rights Abuses in Honduras

Numerous press reports have described human rights abuses and violations of civil liberties during the three month period in which electoral campaigning is allowed under Honduras law, including illegal mass arrests, beatings, torture and shootings by state security forces, attacks on the freedoms of assembly, speech, and of the press.

Over 240 academics and experts on Latin America sent an urgent letter before the elections urging Obama to denounce the ongoing human right violations and to “side with democracy, along with every government in Latin America, or it can side with the coup regime, and further isolate itself from the rest of the hemisphere”.

Despite this, the Obama administration has yet to condemn the human rights violations, or to threaten sanctions or other strong action to force the coup regime to stop them.

By Authors Many  
13<sup>th</sup> November 2009



# Movement against the Las Crucitas mining project continues

*In ENCA Newsletter no. 47 (March 2009), ENCA reported on ecologists' efforts to charge Costa Rican President Oscar Arias and Minister of Environment Roberto Dobles with the perversion of the course of justice by their authorisation of the removal of 262 hectares of woodland in Las Crucitas to make way for an open cast mine operated by Infinite Industries, a Canadian company. We follow this up with extracts from a communiqué from the Front of Opposition to Mining in the Northern Zone.[ed]*

On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November, a group of people gathered outside the Constitutional Assembly in San José, Costa Rica, to make known their opposition to mining projects in the northern zone of the country, and in particular to the Las Crucitas mine.



The threatened lapa verde (Great Green Macaw) which depends on the yellow almond trees which have been and are being felled for the Las Crucitas mining project

“Mother Earth and our country cry out for the cessation of the endless, ill-fated projects which bring only more environmental destruction, social exclusion, the increasing concentration of land and all its resources and the corresponding proletarianisation of Costa Rican campesinos,” said the communiqué from the Front of

Opposition to Mining in the Northern Zone. “The Las Crucitas gold mining project of the Canadian transnational company Infinite Gold is the symbol of this logic of neocolonial looting and robbery which sparks the anger and drives

us to this committed and militant action,” states the communiqué.

“LAS CRUCITAS – ALL OF US – we are the people from Sardinal, the people who defend the aquifers of Braulio Carrillo, the campesinos and campesinas, the indigenous peoples and the ecologists who oppose real estate development along the southern coastal strip by men from afar, the campesinos and campesinas without land who demand a corner of the country which is today in the hands of foreigners, the campesinos and cattle ranchers marginalised and displaced by pineapple expansion, the indigenous peoples who request the return of their lands taken from them despite the law which prohibits it, women harassed and exploited in the melon fields, banana fields and pineapple fields, the hungry little girl who arrived today at the Cen Cinai eating place and found a damaged sign that said ‘closed due to lack of money’ ...”

“We arrive as best we can, by bike, by bus, on foot ... but we arrive and with us arrive whatever we can get hold of (blankets, leaflets, drums, trumpets, whistles, placards, etc, etc) and the unyielding demand: INFINITO INDUSTRIES, GET OUT OF LAS CRUCITAS”, was the call.

Sources:

‘Movimiento Social Mantiene Lucha Contra Proyecto Minero en Crucitas’, *Surcos*, Año 2, No. 17, Nov. 2009.

Drawing by Patricia Jiménez, Monteverde. Taken from fueradecrucitas.blogspot.com

See also ENCA Newsletter No.47 (March 2009), pp. 8-9.



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# ASSASSINATIONS

*The worst part of preparing each edition of the ENCA Newsletter is the regular news of assassinations in the region. After the ends of the wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala and the signing of the Peace Accords, one might have been forgiven for hoping that death squad activity might subside; but politically motivated assassinations continue with unerring regularity. There hasn't been an issue pass by without us having to consider whether to include news of another assassination of an environmentalist or social activist or indigenous representative. Most frequently these occur as a result of their opposition to some development. [ed]*

## Imer Orlando Boror Zet

Imer was killed in October. He lived in the Lo de Ramos community in San Juan Sacatepéquez, a community that is struggling against the installation of a cement corporation in their territory. This information comes from the Maya National Coordination and Convergence who state: "This assassination brings to ten those that have occurred this year at the hands of persons against the Maya peoples." The organisation also states that communities in San Juan Sacatepéquez suffer systematic persecution and intimidation by the Guatemalan state and the corporation Cementos Progresos.

*More information from the Research Centre on Investment and Trade (CEICOM) [www.ceicom.org](http://www.ceicom.org) ; also from Amnesty International AI Index: AMR 34/013/2009; also from Friends of the Earth International [www.foei.org](http://www.foei.org)*

## Fausto Otzín's murder

Fausto Otzín's murder on October 18, 2009, in San Juan Comalapa, Chimaltenango was a sharp blow to the Indigenous and Human Rights community of Guatemala, to which Otzín belonged and advocated for. Only 32 years old, Otzín had been named the first Executive Director of the Association of Mayan Attorneys and according to an Action Alert emitted by Human Rights First, "was heavily involved in promoting the rights of indigenous communities and victims of Guatemala's 36-year armed conflict."



*[Information from Jackie McVicar, in Breaking the Silence, 26.11.09 - <http://breakingthesilencenet.blogspot.com/2009/11/extrajudicial-assassination-of-fausto.html> ]*

Lawyer Carmela Curul, who like Fausto is member of the Association of Mayan Lawyers of Guatemala, talked about the career of her colleague as consultant on indigenous rights and researcher. "He was working as a consultant for the European Union's Program for Access to Justice, including basic rights such as access to land and sovereignty of Mayan native peoples. "Five lawyers of our organisation have been threatened with death", said Carmela in an interview by Victorino Tejasuc for Real World Radio.

*[Information from Human Rights First – [www.humanrightsfirst.org](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org) ]*



For up to date reports on environmental issues in Central America and back issues of the newsletter visit our website

[www.enca.org.uk](http://www.enca.org.uk)

## EVICIONS FOR A RICH MAN'S MARINA REVERSED

In June 2005, ENCA Newsletter No. 38, reported the struggle between two men over land required for the development of an exclusive marina in the village of Aserradores on the Nicaraguan Pacific coast. The two men are Roberto Membreño and Max Garay. Aserradores, north of the port of Corinto and in the Cosigüina Peninsula, was formerly a fishing village which used the Aserradores estuary as shelter for its boats.

Roberto Membreño is a wealthy US businessman who was born in Nicaragua and has returned there for his retirement. There are other investors in the marina, but it is very closely and personally associated with Sr. Membreño, and it is believed that he has invested at least \$100 million in the project, a sum which would be sufficient to pay for the provision of potable water to the whole population of the Cosigüina Peninsula, the majority of whom do not have access to this basic human need.

Max Garay and his family who live in the village of Aserradores do not object to the development of the marina, but they have felt threatened due to Sr. Membreño's aggressive pursuit of their land, and in particular of the Island of Aserradores which is legally owned by the Garay family. After fencing off as much as he could of Sr. Garay's land during the first few years of this decade, Sr. Membreño made a purchase offer for their land a couple of years ago. The offer was rejected by the Garays as derisory.

The dispute was heightened on September 4<sup>th</sup> this year when the Garay family and their employees were forcibly evicted from their land and property by police and the mayor of the El Viejo municipality, acting at the behest of Sr. Membreño. In the eviction workers' dwellings were destroyed along with corrals, fences and water-drinking facilities, and the Garay's cattle were left wandering loose on the land without water. Armed security guards prevented access to the property.

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, however, the Department of Justice in León ruled in favour of the Garays, and the local authorities that evicted them earlier in the month accompanied them to Aserradores

to evict the employees of the marina who were marking 'their' property and laying new fences.

The Garays expect further attempts by Sr. Membreño to oust and evict them from their land. As Max Garay says, "Sr. Membreño is a millionaire and we are not, and he has paid some corrupted officials who have favoured him instead of the rightful owners."

*We have included this short news article partly because it updates an earlier article, but also because it illustrates the arrogance with which the wealthy from the First World can treat Third World places and people, even the relatively well-off in the Third World [ed].*

## Join the network

If you would like to ensure you always receive a copy of the ENCA newsletter containing news about environmental issues in Central America and opportunities for action then please return the form below.

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ENCA Newsletter 49, December 2009, p.11

## ENCA funding for raised vegetable beds in El Salvador (IPES project)

*The following letter speaks for itself.*

1<sup>st</sup> December 2009

Dear All,

After all the negative news that has been coming out of Central America (illegitimate elections in Honduras, floods in El Salvador), I thought I'd share some good news with you. We saw Karen Inwood (Permaculture Institute of El Salvador) and Peter Bloodworth in Leeds yesterday. They told us that the raised vegetable beds (in Tres de Marzo/Santa Teresa) that ENCA paid for have been a great success. Apparently, the project has made a real difference to the community. One lady has been particularly successful. She has been able to grow a variety of vegetables including a surplus of tomatoes which she sells locally. By the way, the community has not been affected by the floods.

Kerstin  
(Kerstin Hansen, ENCA member)

## Denmark earmarks millions for developing world's environmental protection

The Copenhagen Climate Change Summit's host nation, Denmark, threw the first concrete financial aid figures on the negotiating table on Wednesday that could help countries such as Costa Rica protect their environment.

Pending a firm global deal and promises of fair aid numbers from other developed nations, the Danish government announced it will commit €160 million (roughly \$235 million) between 2010 and 2012 to help developing countries, such as Costa Rica, improve their capacities to fight climate change, according to a news release on the Danish Foreign Affairs Ministry's Web site.

The amount represents a fraction of estimated \$10 billion that developing countries will need between 2010 and 2012, according to European Union representatives, in order to jumpstart emissions mitigation projects.

Costa Rican negotiators headed to Copenhagen this week hoping to secure financial aid for the country and its developing Central American neighbors.

By Mike McDonald, Tico Times Staff

## Electronic copy of the ENCA Newsletter

Readers of ENCA Newsletters may like to consider taking the newsletter in its electronic form which would save ENCA money on postage. Thus far we have not encouraged our readers to drop the hard copy which we post to them because we believe that many individuals and organisations leave the hard copy around on their coffee tables so that others may see it. This has hardly brought about a major rise in the number of our subscribers, but it does make the material that we include in the newsletter available to a wider audience. It is much easier to delete or ignore an electronic copy of a newsletter than it is a hard copy, and we know of several cases of organisations in Central America which deliberately make the hard copy of the ENCA Newsletters available to their visitors and workers.

**Postage costs, however, have prompted us to re-consider this policy, and so we are asking our regular readers, especially those in the USA and Central America, if they would like to consider moving from our postal distribution list to our electronic distribution list. If so, you are asked to contact James Watson, ENCA's keeper-of-the-lists, to let him know your email address – he can be contacted on: [spiritsxxi@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:spiritsxxi@yahoo.co.uk) If you wish to continue receiving the hard copy by post, then we will be pleased to continue sending it by post, so don't feel any pressure to make the change.**

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