

The Profiteer's Bulletin

Against Canadian companies impunity in Colombia

March 2013



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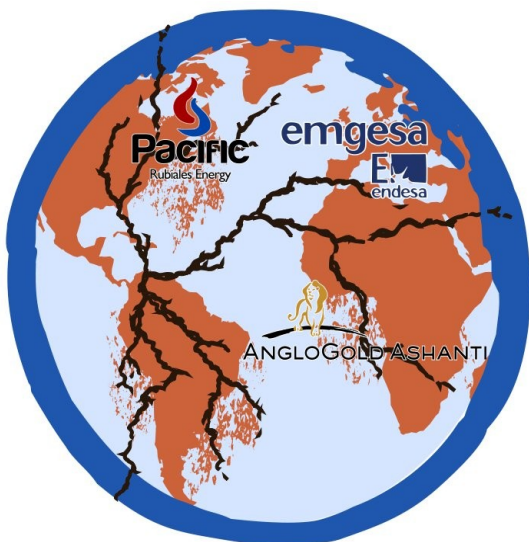
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Pacific Rubiales Energy : Canadian transnational on trial

As part of its Canadian War Profiteers campaign, PASC will take part in the People's Tribunal on foreign companies in Colombia. The people's tribunal is being organised by Colombian civil society groups and will be held during the summer of 2013. Canadian oil company Pacific Rubiales Energy is one of the companies that will be put on trial. Pacific Rubiales employs approximately 14,000 workers on its oil fields in the Puerto Gaítan and Camp Rubiales regions in the Meta department through a network of subcontractors. There is an ongoing conflict between the

workers, the local population, and the company. Pacific Rubiales is accused of trampling workers' rights, using the army to repress popular opposition, issuing various threats to union leaders and unionised personnel, as well as of violating human, social, economic, and environmental rights of indigenous and farming communities in the region.

On December 11th 2012 Milton Riveras Parra, an electrician working with Termotecnica, a company subcontracted by Pacific Rubiales, was assassinated. The day preceding his murder, Mr. Parra had received death threats linked to his activism within the USO petroleum workers' union and the Permanent Workers' Assembly of Puerto Gaítan. As a general rule, companies subcontracted by Pacific Rubiales offer 28-day labour contracts with no guarantee of renewal in order to avoid any responsibility towards the workers. Following Mr. Parra's murder, various Canadian organisations and labour unions contacted the Canadian embassy in Colombia but were simply told that Canada is very concerned by the human rights situation in Colombia and frequently brought it up with the Colombian government.



PROJECT ACCOMPANIMENT AND SOLIDARITY WITH COLOMBIA

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On July 13th 2013, Pacific Rubiales will be put on trial before a people's tribunal in Colombia in order to shed light on the criminal activities of Canadian companies abroad. The people's tribunal also aims to put pressure on the Harper government to end its complacency regarding human rights violations committed by and that benefit Canadian companies. In light of these events, PASC and its allies will be organising a Canadian delegation to attend the hearings.

Recently, a Colombian tribunal ruled against Pacific Rubiales in an arbitration case. The company will have to give 10% of the output from a specific oil field to now-privatized Colombian energy company Ecopetrol for the next 20 months. Pacific Rubiales plans to take the case to a higher court in an attempt to preserve its assets.

SNC-Lavalin in Arauca, still where they shouldn't be

Between the 21st of January and March 2013, thousands of members of various civil society organisations in the department of Arauca have been blockading transnational oil and energy companies that operate throughout the department. In Colombia, such actions are commonly known as a *paro civico* ("civic strike") and the mobilisation in Arauca is the largest such *paro civico* since 2005.

The organisations have also held a "Day of peaceful protest against transnational oil companies and the Colombian state". The *paro civico* has been successful in creating disruptions:

in February, the Colombian Ministry of Mining announced that supply coming through the main pipeline in the region, the Cano Limon Covená, dropped below a million barrels per month (<http://www.lavozdelcinaruco.com/?id=8002>).



Civil society organisations and individuals who are participating in the blockades are demanding that the transnational corporations and the Colombian government fulfil their social, humanitarian, and environmental obligations to the residents of the Arauca department. The blockades aim to stem the movement of both personnel and

equipment belonging to companies such as OXY, Pacific Rubiales and Ecopetrol. Another Canadian company, the Montreal-based engineering firm SNC-Lavalin, is providing consulting services for infrastructure, mining, gas and oil projects, including the Caño Limón Coveñas pipeline targeted

by the *paro civico*. This is the very same SNC-Lavalin that is known for constructing prisons in Libya and pipelines in Iraq during the occupation, as well as supplying munitions to the US military.

Located along the Venezuelan border, the Arauca department is the site of Colombia's largest oil reserves, which has attracted and continues to attract a number of transnational corporations. "Thirty years of drilling and extraction have led to an environmental catastrophe, the pillage of resources, attacks on Indigenous communities, and several social and humanitarian crises," reads a statement from the Movimiento Político de Masas del Centro



de Colombia (Mass Political Movement of Central Colombia).



Repression of the *paro cívico* has been fierce. On February 12th 2013, the residents of the Arauco department began an unlimited general strike. All roads leading into the department as well as major internal roads are blocked by hundreds of farmers,

indigenous people, workers and students who are demanding to open a dialogue with the government and the transnationals in order to find a solution to the social and humanitarian crises that have gripped the region. The government wasted no time in deploying a contingent of approximately 1,000 police officers to break the blockades but, thus far, they have been unsuccessful. Negotiations with the government have now begun, but are moving at a snail's pace...

Talisman Energy, Enbridge, and the OCENSA pipeline in Centro Oriente province

The Canadian oil company Enbridge has the largest oil pipeline grid in the world, which includes the oil pipeline between Canada and the United States. The company is also championing the 1177-km Northern Gateway megaproject in British Columbia, slated to carry Albertan tar sands oil to a deep-water port on the Pacific. The Northern Gateway project has been challenged in no uncertain terms by the region's Native communities since it is projected to run across their land. In addition, Enbridge plans to reverse the flow of oil in certain Eastern Canada pipelines so as to export tar sands oil from Western Canada to the US Eastern Seaboard. It applied to the National Energy Office in October 2012 to reverse the oil flow in the pipeline running from Sarnia to Montreal. Enbridge also wants to increase the volume of oil in the pipeline to 300,000 barrels a day.

Since 1994, Enbridge has owned a quarter interest in the 800-kilometer OCENSA pipeline, one of the largest Canadian investments in Colombia. OCENSA carries 500,000 barrels of oil a day produced by the Canadian company Talisman Energy. Talisman Energy is known in Québec for its involvement in shale gas.

In the October 1998 issue of its newsletter, Amnesty International exposed the ties between OCENSA and political violence in Colombia. In order to protect its facilities, Enbridge hired the British military corporation

Defense Systems Colombia (DSC), which was providing military hardware to Brigade 14 of the Colombian army.

Today, the oil pipeline is flanked by 17 military bases with a total of 1400 soldiers protecting it. In addition to the political violence engendered by the efforts to secure this pipeline, the pipeline installation itself destroyed the livelihoods of at least 350 peasants, who were forced to abandon their contaminated land.

And yet...

In 2012, Enbridge planned to extend the OCENSA pipeline and to begin work on new oil pipeline to send Colombian oil to Asia via the Pacific coast. Canadian oil companies have also received attractive "security" guarantees. During a tour of Canada in 2010, the Colombian national hydrocarbons agency promised Canadian investors to set up a new military battalion to protect foreign companies engaged in resource exploration. Up until then, the Colombian military had not been protecting exploration, only production. What does this increasing militarization of economic activity portend for Colombian communities? The Colombian taxpayer is paying to protect foreign investments so that a handful of companies, some of them Canadian, can salt away enormous profits on the backs of local residents.

(read full article on line)

Paro cafetero: The Coffee Strike Continues...

Following 20 years of falling prices, Colombian coffee producers are facing a crisis of new proportions since a free trade agreement with the U.S. has come into force. As a result, multinational coffee traders make huge profits by driving down prices for producers on one end and reselling the coffee at high prices on the other. Once again, it is the farmers, those who form the first link in this commercial chain, who are crushed by the steamroller of capitalism. After a year and a half of failed negotiations with the Colombian government, coffee farmers have gone on strike to challenge the downward trend of raw coffee prices on the speculative world market. Early march this 12 days strike was violently repressed with

several injured and many more detained.



"It currently costs 70 000 (\$40) to produce 25 pounds of coffee, yet international traders are purchasing it at 49 000 (27\$): would you like a calculator?"

Canadian Businesses in Colombia: War Profiteers

Colombia vies for 1st place as the most dangerous country for union activists and 2nd place in terms of forced displacements of the population. More than 85% of internal refugees and murdered unionists come from regions with mining and petroleum development. Canada, which has signed a free-trade agreement with Colombia, is the primary country of origin for foreign investment in this sector meaning that Colombia's most important petroleum and precious metals reserves are managed through Canadian capital markets. Yet Canada has no system for regulating the activities of its businesses abroad, allowing them to exercise complete impunity as they profit from political violence in this war-torn country.

This bulletin intends to break the silence.

We would like to thank the following unions for their financial support:



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

The members of **Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie** are available on demand to visit workplaces and to participate in group discussions on the impacts of Canadian investments in Colombia, and the situation with unions in Colombia. Don't hesitate to contact us.

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