

Defending Commons' Land and ICCAs

**January – April
2019**

**In support of our special programme: 'SECURE'
for Indigenous Land Rights Defenders**

**Palawan,
The Philippines**

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Photos

Cover: An indigenous women in the Parque das Tribos, outside of Manaus, in 2017. Raphael Alves/Agence France-Presse – Getty Images ©

3rd page: The names of all (413) defenders killed between January 1st and April 30th 2019 & in the year 2018, according to data from Front Line Defenders.

Web Page: www.coalitionagainstlandgrabbing.org

Introduction by CALG

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Preface

This bulletin serves to inform the public, NGOs, advocacy groups, international institutions and researchers alike, on the serious threats facing the world's indigenous peoples, minorities and rural communities. Land dispossession and increasing deforestation rates were a particular focus of this bulletin. The Coalition Against Land Grabbing (CALG) is a collective of indigenous peoples from Palawan (The Philippines), defending local communities against all forms of land grabbing. We reject food production systems that contribute to climate change and the privatisation of natural resources. CALG's work focuses on the rampant nature of land conflicts taking place, especially, on "territories and areas conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities" (ICCAs) or "territories of life". ICCAs are intrinsically intertwined with people's identities, histories and cultures and should be regarded as a patrimony of all humanity. The connection between communities and their territories is shared amongst all cultures. Conflicts over land and natural resources have now become conflicts for life. Indigenous leaders, activists and advocates continue to pay with their lives for courageously defending community land, and facing the insurmountable challenges of working on the 'frontline'. It is essential to collect detailed information over the crimes committed against Environmental and Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs), not only to raise awareness amongst civil society but to pressure governments, corporations and all those involved in such crimes to act. To fulfill this objective, CALG aims at bringing its own struggle against land grabbing in Palawan (Philippines) within a global perspective, so to compare our own advocacy strategies with those being enacted by other indigenous communities and organizations around the World. Aside from gathering and sharing crucial information with an interested audience, our hope is to build meaningful alliances and collaborate with other indigenous organizations around the globe, especially in the context of international campaigns where solidarity links and joint action might be of relevance. The following introduction summarizes land related issues facing communities in key geographic regions. It begins to discuss climate change before moving on to addressing the impact of markets and businesses on deforestation and environmental abuses. Detailed findings for all the covered regions are available in the overview.



Introduction

As of the 18th of May 2019, carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels were measured at 415 parts per million (ppm), the highest level in the history of human existence¹. To address deforestation, critically and strategically, is vital to contrast climate change² while taking concrete measures to slow down ecological breakdown and species extinction. A recent report by Global Forest Watch and the World Resources Institute (WRI) showed that deforestation alone releases more CO₂ than the entire European Union (EU). In fact, if represented as a country, deforestation would be the third largest emitter of CO₂, behind the USA and China³. These emission trends are only getting worse. The average tropical tree cover loss from the previous three years (2015-2017) produced CO₂ emissions 63% higher than averages from the previous 14 years³.

At the centre of these increased trends in tropical forest deforestation is industrial agriculture, and cash crops for export which, in 2014, accounted for 71% of all deforestation⁴. Deforestation is further exacerbated by the fact that two-thirds of newly deforested agricultural land has been cleared

¹ Dockrill, P. (2019). It's Official: Atmospheric CO₂ Just Exceeded 415 ppm For The First Time in Human History. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencealert.com/it-s-official-atmospheric-co2-just-exceeded-415-ppm-for-first-time-in-human-history>

² Milman, O. (2019). Scientists say halting deforestation 'just as urgent' as reducing emissions. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/04/climate-change-deforestation-global-warming-report>

³ Gibbs, D., Harris, N., & Seymour, F. (2019). By the Numbers: The Value of Tropical Forests in the Climate Change Equation. Retrieved from <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/numbers-value-tropical-forests-climate-change-equation>

illegally⁴. In 2012 the EU imported 6 billion EUR worth of soy, beef, leather and palm oil sourced from illegally deforested tropical lands. The Netherlands, the UK, Germany, and France were the biggest importers of these products⁴. Collectively these four countries are responsible for two-thirds of all the area deforested and destroyed in Southern Countries to produce commodities for the EU⁵. The rate of deforestation continues to rise globally with Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Brazil being the hotspots⁶. For Brazil, it is still too early to address the impact of Bolsonaro's presidency on the country's primary forest. However, his administration has held true to his election promises of rolling back administrative and environmental laws that protected natural parks and indigenous territories. On his second day in office Bolsonaro issued an executive order giving jurisdictional powers over the demarcation of indigenous territories to the Ministry of Agriculture, so endangering indigenous cultures and forests in the process⁷. Deforestation in Brazil spiked 48,8% during the presidential elections (August-October), with the country losing 1674 km² of forest cover in just three months, equivalent to an area larger than São Paulo⁸. Brazil has featured extensively in this edition of the bulletin as NGOs and journalists alike are closely monitoring the regions' legislative and institutional changes taking place under the incumbent president. If Bolsonaro's rhetoric is to be matched by his actions, indigenous peoples, environmentalists, and human rights experts must heighten their efforts to protect Brazil's ecosystems and its unique biocultural diversity.

The events unravelling in Brazil should not go unnoticed especially to those consumers purchasing Brazilian agricultural products. Effectively addressing the supply chains of consumer goods, from producers to manufacturers, is an essential step to prevent illegal deforestation. The legislative instruments put in place to do so are largely insufficient and have not achieved any substantial change. The EU's inability to ratify adequate laws⁹, is further hindered by its failure to monitor and control the import of illegally sourced consumer goods. Despite existing legislation, and the apparent commitment of ministries and institutions whose key mandate is 'environmental protection', the rate of deforestation is rather accelerating¹⁰. Very often, environmental laws continue to exist merely on paper, while government implementation and proper enforcement is generally ineffective and lagging behind schedule. The UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) has released the first global assessment of the *Environmental Rule of Law* highlighting the huge gap that exists between the mandate of the law and its implementation/enforcement. The report states clearly "the laws that have been enacted are lacking in ways that impede effective implementation (for example, by lacking clear standards or the necessary mandates)... [with] considerable progress [being] made toward meeting only 4 of the 90 most important environmental goals and objectives"¹¹. These failures are global, affecting both the 'northern' and 'southern' countries and are tragically the norm rather than the exception. As a result of these institutional failures the "critical ecological thresholds upon which human well-being depend may soon be surpassed"¹¹.

Governments and institutions have failed to regulate destructive consumerism. Businesses have also failed to effectively self-regulate their supply chains while fostering concrete and positive changes. The global North's failure to prevent deforestation caused by its consumer markets has been detailed in the recent *Forest 500 annual report*¹². The Forest 500 Ranking Project, part of [Global](#)

⁴ Lawson, S., Blundell, A., Cabarle, B., Basil, N., Jenkins, M., & Canby, K. (2014). Consumer Goods and Deforestation: An Analysis of the Extent and Nature of Illegality in Forest Conversion for Agriculture and Timber Plantations. *Forest Trends*. Retrieved from https://www.forest-trends.org/wp-content/uploads/imported/for168-consumer-goods-and-deforestation-letter-14-0916-hr-no-crops_web-pdf.pdf

⁵ Lawson, S. (2019). Stolen Goods: The EU's complicity in illegal Tropical Deforestation. FERN. Retrieved from https://www.fern.org/fileadmin/uploads/fern/Documents/Stolen%20Goods_EN_0.pdf

⁶ Weisse, M. & Goldman, D., E. (2018). 2017 Was the Second-Worst Year on Record for Tropical Tree Cover Loss. Retrieved from <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/06/2017-was-second-worst-year-record-tropical-tree-cover-loss>

⁷ These topics are discussed in the Brazil section of this Bulletin.

⁸ Maisonave, F. (2018). Desmatamento na Amazônia explode durante período eleitoral. Retrieved from <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ambiente/2018/11/desmatamento-na-amazonia-explode-durante-periodo-eleitoral.shtml>

⁹ Illegal Deforestation Monitor. (2019). COMMENT: A Roadmap to Failure. Retrieved from www.bad-ag.info/comment-a-roadmap-to-failure/

¹⁰ Seymour, F. (2018). Deforestation Is Accelerating, Despite Mounting Efforts to Protect Tropical Forests. What Are We Doing Wrong? Retrieved from <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/06/deforestation-accelerating-despite-mounting-efforts-protect-tropical-forests>

¹¹ United Nations Environmental Programme. (2019). *Environmental Rule of Law*. Retrieved from https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27279/Environmental_rule_of_law.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹² Rogerson, S. (2019). *Forest 500 annual report 2018 - the countdown to 2020*, Global Canopy: Oxford, UK. Lead author: Sarah Rogerson, contributing authors and reviewers: Helen Bellfield and Helen Burley

Canopy, has monitored and assessed the 500 most influential companies and financial institutions, 350 and 150 respectively, who are involved in deforestation or sourcing products that negatively impact forest ecosystems. The report demonstrates that only half of the 350 companies have made a commitment to achieve net zero-deforestation by 2020, and that, not one of these is on track to eliminating commodity-driven deforestation by their required deadlines. On top of this, of the 228 companies assessed over two years, 70% scored worse in 2018 than they did in 2017¹². It is clear that an implementation gap pervades both the private sector and environmental protection institutions. However, consumers' awareness around these issues is on the rise, thanks to concerted advocacy and campaign efforts. In September 2018, Greenpeace released a report analysing Palm Oil-led deforestation in the supply chains of the world's largest brands by assessing 25 major producers and how they reach markets¹³. In addition to deforestation, the 25 cases included "evidence of exploitation and social conflicts, illegal deforestation, development without permits, plantation development in areas zoned for protection and forest fires linked to land clearance." Greenpeace's report complemented its joint effort with supermarket chain Iceland, which banned oil palm from its own-brand products¹⁴. The move caused a public outcry, inciting critical debates, sparking international awareness, and ultimately proving that consumers do have some power in altering business directives and attitudes towards destructive supply chains, if given an opportunity¹⁵.

The increase in public attention on the issues facing the palm oil industry could be the reason why key downstream companies using palm oil have been more inclined to commit to zero-deforestation than any other sector¹⁶. Though none of such companies are on target to reach their goals, their already weak efforts are further undermined by lack of - commitments at the trader, processor and producer levels. Earthsight's project, the Illegal Deforestation Monitor (IDM), has consistently exposed crimes surrounding deforestation in illegal supply chains. Recently a major oil palm producer, PT Arjuna Utama Sawit (PT AUS), which is linked to Unilever and other 20 snack food producer companies is being sued by the Indonesian Ministry of Environmental and Forestry for deliberately causing forest fires¹⁷. The case regards the illegal destruction of 970 hectares of forest at PT AUS' oil palm concession in central Kalimantan, on the island of Borneo. Amongst other things, PT AUS has been accused of land grabbing the customary lands of eight villages with no compensation¹⁷ being provided. SOCFIN, a member of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), has also been accused of committing various human rights abuses in Liberia¹⁸ and Sierra Leone¹⁹. In this bulletin, as well as in previous editions, CALG has reported many of such cases with particular reference to mining, energy and industrial plantations.

World financial institutions play a central role by bankrolling destructive industries and incentivising governments to alter effective localised strategies. Of the 150 institutions assessed by Forest 500, 97 had no commitments whatsoever for any of the forest-risk commodities they finance, and only nine had a policy for key forest-risk commodities¹². Banks have previously been found to finance illegal deforestation across Africa and Eastern Asia²⁰. A recent report by the independent policy think tank, the Oakland Institute, *The Highest Bidder Takes It All: The World Bank's Scheme to Privatize the Commons*, critically addressed how the World Bank's Enabling the Business of Agriculture (EBA) project, promotes large-scale land acquisitions and the expansion of

¹³ Greenpeace International. (2018). The Final Countdown: Now or never to reform the palm oil industry. Retrieved from <https://www.greenpeace.org/international/publication/18455/the-final-countdown-forests-indonesia-palm-oil/>

¹⁴ Iceland still sells products with palm oil, including own brand products.

Glenday, J. (2019). Iceland wriggles out of self-imposed palm oil ban by removing own brand labels. Retrieved from <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/01/25/iceland-wriggles-out-self-imposed-palm-oil-ban-removing-own-brand-labels>

¹⁵ Bell, L. (2018). Debate ensues over British supermarket chain's decision to ban palm oil. Retrieved from <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/05/debate-ensues-over-british-supermarket-chains-decision-to-ban-palm-oil/>

¹⁶ The Forest 500 annual report found that 42% of downstream companies, in the Palm Oil sector, had such commitments.

¹⁷ Illegal Deforestation Monitor. (2019). Indonesian palm oil company embroiled in lawsuit for burning forest in Kalimantan. Retrieved from www.bad-ag.info/indonesian-palm-oil-company-embroiled-in-lawsuit-for-allegedly-burning-forest-in-kalimantan/

¹⁸ Bread For All. (2019). Rubber group ousts farmers in Liberia – Bread for all. Retrieved from <https://breadforall.ch/rubber-group-ousts-farmers-in-liberia/>

¹⁹ Phoenix, M., Kroff, F., & Eggen, M. (2019). *Land Grabbing for Palm Oil in Sierra Leone Analysis of the SOCFIN Case from a Human Rights Perspective* (p. 8). Brussels: FIAN Belgium. Retrieved from https://www.fian.be/IMG/pdf/fian_b_report_landgrab_in_sl_malen_2019_full.pdf

²⁰ Illegal Deforestation Monitor. (2017). Swiss banks bankrolling illegal deforestation in Africa and East Asia. Retrieved from www.bad-ag.info/swiss-banks-bankrolling-illegal-deforestation-in-africa-and-east-asia/

agribusinesses in the developing world. These pro-business reforms, supported by big donors²¹, recommend that governments formalise private property rights, ease the sale and lease the land for commercial use, systematise the sale of public land by auction to the highest bidder, and improve procedures for expropriation²². The implementation of these provisions were further promoted by scoring countries on how well they implemented the Bank's policy advice, and subsequently using that score to determine the volume of foreign investment and aid money they receive. The Oakland Institute continues to criticise the "myriad [of] flaws detailed in the report", one critical factor being how the report justifies the grabbing of lands with "potential economic value" for private, commercial use to ensure they are put to the "best use." The claim that "low-income countries do not manage public land in an effective manner" is disconcerting, coming from an institute as influential as the World Bank.

Considering the continued failure of environmental laws and neoliberal market capitalism to self-regulate supply chains and perform effective due diligence, the need for alternative community-led conservation and climate change mitigation strategies is essential. The need to strengthen tenure rights and secure land rights for local and indigenous communities is a vital strategy to effectively tackle the issues that the 'global North' has failed to manage. 2018 saw the fourth-highest annual forest loss in the tropics since record keeping began in 2001, with tropical forests losing 12 million hectares of tree cover. 3.5 million ha of which were primary forest, representing an area close to the size of Belgium⁷. *Local Biodiversity Outlooks* provides countless on-the-ground examples of initiatives, led by indigenous peoples and local communities leading to the successful implementation of a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This adds to the growing body of literature that promotes the recognition of lands and indigenous/community-led self-governed territories as the most effective tool for combating deforestation²³, corruption²⁴, and effectively countering climate change^{25,26,27 & 28}.

Last year, 2018, was the deadliest year for land and rights defenders on record. Dublin based advocacy and human rights group Front Line Defenders (FLD) documented the killings of 321 Human Rights Defenders²⁹, an almost 60% increase from the previous year³⁰. Of the 321 killed, the majority (77%) were indigenous peoples, environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) or those working on land. Between the 1st of January, 2019, and the 30th of April, 2019, our investigation registered 65 cases of arbitrary detention and judicial harassment; 92 killings of social leaders, lawyers and EHRDs; 6 friends and family members of land rights defenders being killed; 46 cases of threats and/or beatings against EHRDs; 5 people disappearing; 4 failed assassination attempts; and

²¹ The project is funded by the US and UK governments and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

²² Mousseau, F., & The Oakland Institute. (2019). *The Highest Bidder Takes It All: The World Bank's Scheme to Privatize the Commons*. Oakland, USA. Retrieved from <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/highest-bidder-eng-high-res.pdf>

²³ RAISG (Amazonian Network of Georeferenced Socio-Environmental Information), Gaia Amazonas, Instituto del Bien Común, Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), EcoSciencia, Instituto Socioambiental, Woods Hole Research Center and Coordinator of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon River Basin (COICA) (2017). *Amazonian Indigenous Peoples Territories and Their Forests Related to Climate Change: Analyses and Policy Options*. [online] [edf.org](http://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/indigenous-territories-barrier-to-deforestation.pdf). Available at: <http://www.edf.org/sites/default/files/indigenous-territories-barrier-to-deforestation.pdf>

²⁴ Böhmer, B. (2019). Corruption and illegal deforestation go hand in hand. Retrieved from <https://voices.transparency.org/corruption-and-illegal-deforestation-go-hand-in-hand-988854d931e5>

²⁵ Ding, H., Veit, P., Gray, E., Reyta, K., Altamirano, J. C., Blackman, A. and Hodgdon, B., (2016). *Climate Benefits, Tenure Costs: The Economic Case for Securing Indigenous Land Rights in the Amazon*. World Resources Institute: Washington, DC. Available at <http://www.wri.org/publication/climate-benefitstenure-costs>

²⁶ Stevens, C., R. Winterbottom, J. Springer, and K. Reyta. (2014). "Securing Rights, Combating Climate Change: How Strengthening Community Forest Rights Mitigates Climate Change." Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Accessible at www.wri.org/securing-rights

²⁷ RRI, (2015). *Who Owns the World's Land? A global baseline of formally recognized indigenous and community land rights*. Rights and Resources Initiative, Washington, DC. Available at: <http://rightsandresources.org/en/publication/whoownstheand/#.WbxT-bj97IU>

²⁸ Dooley, K et al. (2018) *Missing Pathways to 1.5°C: The role of the land sector in ambitious climate action*. Climate Land Ambition and Rights Alliance. Available from: [climatelandambitionrightsalliance.org/report](https://www.climatelandambitionrightsalliance.org/report) Improve forest governance faster, say experts - <https://news.globallandscapesforum.org/31949/improve-forest-governance-faster-say-experts/>

²⁹ Front Line Defenders. (2019). *Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2018*. Dublin: Front Line Defenders. Retrieved from https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/global_analysis_2018.pdf

³⁰ Global Witness. (2018). *AT WHAT COST? Irresponsible business and the murder of land and environmental defenders in 2017*. London: Global Witness. Retrieved from <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/at-what-cost/>

2 abductions. Our investigation also registered the massacre of 173 Fulani Pastoralists in Mali, another massacre of 29 Pemon indigenous peoples in Venezuela and 376 individuals displaced by three events in Colombia, the Philippines and the Netherlands. In total, we reported data from 67 nation states. These killings cannot be examined as mere numbers or statistics, they must be analysed within the context of their specific regional and global struggles. These struggles are enacted on various levels and scales such as natural resources' extraction, energy production, access to water, politics, rights recognition, deforestation and climate change, to name a few. It is therefore vital to understand the socio-political environments in which defenders work, to then understand why they are becoming so vulnerable.

CALG continues to produce its bulletins in the hope of contributing to the already existing and growing literature addressing the issues of land grabbing, indigenous and local community rights, as well as environmental destruction. By carefully gathering information from news articles, papers, reports, and assessing legislative changes that, in some way or another, impact tenure rights, indigenous rights and continued environmental degradation, CALG aims at creating an updated, periodic review of contemporary issues. Forests receive less than 3% of climate mitigation funding, yet are capable of providing up to 23% of cost-effective solutions to mitigate climate change before 2030³¹. CALG recognises ICCAs and "territories of life" as essential spaces for enacting effective mitigation strategies and preserving cultures. 2.5 billion people, including 350 million indigenous people, "rely on land, natural resources and ecosystems – forests, rangeland and wetlands - that are held, used or managed collectively"³¹. Protecting these communities is of vital importance for preserving the commons. Indigenous peoples and local communities customarily hold almost 50% of the world's land, however only 10% is legally owned by these groups³¹. Remarkably enough, 24% of carbon stored above ground is found within land being collectively managed by indigenous peoples and local communities; and this corresponds to 1/10th of the total carbon³² above the ground. These reflections suggest that contemporary struggle of EHRDs around the World is pivotal not only to the survival of 'geographically isolated' societies but rather to the future of new generations through the northern and southern hemisphere.



Overview

2018 signals the deadliest year for defenders, thus amplifying all efforts to protect them is now a matter of vital importance. It is paramount that governments, NGOs, local communities, civil society groups and international bodies must continue to protect rights defenders and stand up against the systemic violence threatening their existence. The disproportionate targeting of minority groups and the impunity faced by those who commit such atrocities are matters of serious concern.

This first 2019 edition includes news and updates covering 15 nations in East and Southeast Asia, 4 in South Asia, 2 in Oceania, 14 in Africa, 11 in South America, 7 in Central America and the Caribbean, 2 in North America, 1 in the Middle East, 9 in Europe, in addition to Turkey and the Russian Federation.

East and Southeast Asia

During the first 4 months of 2019, CALG reported 22 killings; 31 cases of arbitrary detention or judicial harassment; 4 disappeared individuals; and 1 major displacement event of 28 families or 168 individuals. The Philippines continues to be the most dangerous country in the region for defenders and indigenous peoples. All of the 22 killings registered in East and Southeast Asia took place in the Philippines; while 11 defenders were arbitrarily detained or faced various forms of judicial

³¹ Veit, P. & Reytar, K. (2017). *By the Numbers: Indigenous and Community Land Rights*. Retrieved from <https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/03/numbers-indigenous-and-community-land-rights>

³² Rights and Resources Initiative, Woods Hole Research Center, & World Resources Institute. (2016). *Toward a Global Baseline of Carbon Storage in Collective Lands: AN UPDATED ANALYSIS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES' CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION*. Retrieved from https://rightsandresources.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Summary-Toward-a-global-baseline-of-carbon-storage-in-collective-lands_november-2016_RRI-WHRC-WRI.pdf

harassment and 3 defenders disappeared. Conflict in the Philippines runs rampant, so much so that our biggest difficulty in the preparation of this section was to differentiate between extrajudicial killings that are directly linked to land grabbing or those that are politically motivated. As usual, during election time, political killings have risen all over the country. Extrajudicial killings and aggressions committed by militaries are causes of great concern, especially when rights defenders and indigenous leaders are labeled as communist rebels, this practice is generally known as 'red-tagging'.

Cambodia continues to detain rural land activists and to expropriate their lands. For this edition, 18 cases of judicial harassment and arbitrary detention were documented. A single case of disappearance was also registered. Land conflicts between rural communities and agro-enterprises have persisted in Cambodia, however some positive changes are unfolding which could bring some justice to rural communities.

China and Vietnam both registered 1 case of land grabbing being associated with associated with judicial harassment.

South Asia

Within South Asia, India continues to be the most dangerous country for rights defenders and rural communities. CALG registered 3 killings; 4 cases of arbitrary detention and 1 disappearance. It is disconcerting how, with regards to rights defenders and rural communities, the Indian Nation State has rolled back protective legislations thus paving the way for mass evictions. The most severe case was the Supreme Court Order to evict more than 1 million tribal peoples from their forestland homes. This has spiked confrontation between rights NGOs, government, conservation NGOs and the Supreme Court in discussing the nearly 2 million land claims rejected under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006. The FRA 2006 paved the way to enable almost 150 million people to have their rights recognised over some 40 million hectares of forest. By and large, communities' claims were rejected on contentious grounds. This troublesome issue has seen violent clashes flaring up between police forces and tribal protesters. In this context, conservation interests and the rights of tribal peoples have often being polarized and portrayed as opposing forces. Other issues being monitored during the first four months of 2019 were land conflicts caused by infrastructural development, such as railways and highways, and the expropriation of lands for bauxite, gold and copper mining. The local NGO, Land 'Conflict Watch', has observed conflicts in 2019 that affected more than 93,000 communities.

Conflicts between conservation NGOs and tribal peoples have also occurred in other regions of Southern Asia. Perhaps the most notable of such conflicts was uncovered by the BuzzFeed News investigation in Nepal, which found that the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) security forces were harassing and torturing tribal peoples in conserved areas. Though this may come as a surprise to some, reports of rights abuses by WWF and affiliated groups and employees have been known for some time. These troubling accounts are not specific to Nepal; last edition CALG included a report by Forest Peoples Programme documenting WWF abuses against the Baka tribal peoples in the Cameroon. Violence perpetrated against tribal people in the name of conservation, have also been widely documented by Survival International.

Oceania

Only two countries feature in this section, Australia and Papua New Guinea. Highlighted in this region is the continuous struggles of Aboriginal peoples against coal mining, restitution and demarcation of customary lands. Aboriginal peoples have gone to the courts to put forward their cases of ancestral ownership, often with success.

Deforestation on Papua New Guinea continues to be an issue, further exacerbated by the seizing of more than 50,000 square kilometres of indigenous land to be converted into large-scale plantations.

Africa

Across Africa CALG reported 5 cases of threats being made; 2 cases of judicial harassment; 1 case of beating and intimidation; and a killing.

The Rainforest Foundation UK uncovered further crimes committed by WWF in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These allegations surround the 'eco-guards' employed by the Salonga National Park, who have reportedly abused local communities in and around the national park boundaries. WWF has been responsible for the park's management since 2015. The park has become increasingly militarised in recent years. RFUK's investigators found evidence of widespread physical and sexual abuse with the most serious incidents in recent years including two cases of gang rape, two extra-judicial killings, and multiple accounts of torture and other forms of mistreatment committed by park guards. The DRC is also exporting large amounts of illegally sourced timber to Vietnam and Europe. Global Witness produced several reports uncovering networks of corruption, within the military, that enabled the trade in illegal timber while simultaneously committing rights abuses in the process.

The abuses committed by oil palm and rubber plantations across much of central and western Africa is of great concern. Several reports analyse the impacts of these agro-industries on local communities, most of which came to the conclusion that communities were worse after agro-industries arrived.

Reforms must take place in Kenya and Uganda to ratify colonial era laws, which persist until today.

South America

South America was the most dangerous region for EHRDs and local communities. In total CALG registered the killings of 50 defenders and social leaders; 29 Pemon indigenous peoples massacred by the Venezuelan army; 19 threats; 5 individuals were beaten; 4 cases of judicial harassment; 2 failed assassination attempts; several communities harassed in Peru; and 28 families (108 individuals) displaced in Colombia in a single event.

Colombia continues to be the most dangerous country in Latin American with 42 registered EHRDs and social leaders killed in the context of land conflicts. Actual figures for social leaders being killed are much higher, LGBTI defenders have been targeted, as well as political leaders and crop substitution advocates, all of which were not included in this bulletin. The biggest threat to indigenous and social leaders are guerrilla and paramilitary groups and a failing peace process that is not supported by the Duque government. Those who commit crimes against indigenous peoples are rarely caught. This is also true for those killed in urban environments. An absence of government action on the peace accord risks plunging the country back into war. Though the FARQ are disbanded, other armed groups have grown widely across the country.

In Brazil conflicts between land invaders and indigenous peoples have increased. One such report claims there are clashes between indigenous and mining companies in 400 areas. Only 6 killings and 1 threat against EHRDs were registered by CALG in this period. However the legislative changes and ministerial reshuffling under the Bolsonaro presidency has weakened indigenous rights structures and emboldened the agricultural industry and land invaders. Some early reports show a 54% increase in deforestation in the Amazon. Almost every new piece of information coming from Brazil is more disconcerting than the previous ones. We can only hope the constitutional court will be able to uphold the Constitution and protect the rights of indigenous peoples across the country.

In Peru, conflicts continue between rural villagers and mining giants. Often such conflicts are marred in corruption within the governmental departments that grant concessions. Illegal deforestation continues to rise across the Peruvian amazon due to gold mining and other illegal activities. Although, the countries independent bodies investigating these important issues have systematically had their autonomy cut, financially and institutionally.

Central America & the Caribbean

In Central America CALG registered 20 killings; 11 cases of harassment and intimidation; 9 cases of judicial harassment and arbitrary detention; 7 cases of threats made; and 1 failed assassination attempt.

Mexico was the most deadly country in Central America for rights defenders with 13 registered EHRDs killed. Indigenous communities are resisting several energy and solar projects in their ancestral territories, while the struggle for access to water remains a central issue for rights activists.

In Panama the Naso indigenous community continually fight for their rights recognitions yet are increasingly coming against more powerful opposition such as hydroelectric power plants, a World Heritage Site and protected forests. Legislative laws limit the ability of local small holders to sell produce in the hope people give up their traditional ways of life and move elsewhere.

Land rights recognition is the biggest issue across all of Central America. Costa Rica saw one of their leading indigenous land defenders, Sergio Rojas, killed. He had survived previous attempts on his life. In Central America 48% of forests are defended by indigenous peoples.

North America

Across Northern America, CALG registered 15 cases of arbitrary detention. Most of these took place in Canada, on Wet'suwet'en land. The biggest conflicts between Canadian First Nations and the Nation State all revolve around Canada's energy needs. Indigenous tribes have fiercely opposed new oil pipelines and hydroelectric dams, yet the Canadian government seems determined to push through with their development goals, without no regard for indigenous rights.

Europe, Turkey & the Russian Federation

In Europe, CALG documented 9 cases of arbitrary detention and a large displacement event of a cultural minority.

Most of the cases of judicial harassment took place in Belarus, where the government is constantly silencing forms of dissent through the repression and harassment of environmental protesters. In the Sami region, indigenous groups have had their rights repeatedly denied by various Scandinavian governments. These groups are also witnessing the alarming increase of high suicide rates. These are grave concerns for CALG, which calls on the governments of Finland, Norway, Sweden & Russia to safeguard the livelihood and culture of the Sami people and enforce their autonomy by respecting their rights to land and self-determination.

The majority of issues documented by CALG, regarding Europe, revolve around the participation and direct engagement of European countries in overseas projects, which are responsible for environmental and human rights abuses. As it has been discussed in the introduction, there is a urgent need for the EU to regulate imports (e.g. palm oil) and become accountable for investments leading to rights abuses and environmental destruction in southern countries

CALG welcomes any positive development in this regard.

Note from CALG

In this bulletin, CALG has not included cases of intimidation, harassment and extra-judicial killings being committed against members of crop substitution organisations, worker unionists, political figures, journalists, prisoners of conscience, scientists, protesters, victims of sexual and gender discrimination, refugees, etc. unless such cases had a direct link to conflicts over land and natural resources. Indeed, the primary scope of our bulletins is to report crimes committed against land rights defenders in the context of new emerging political scenarios or in the presence of perpetuating States' regimes and dictatorships. This, by itself, is already an overwhelming task that would make the inclusion of other injustices beyond the scope of our work. On the other hand, CALG acknowledges and condemns all types of abuses against all categories of rights defenders and social leaders.

Those who would wish to contribute to our growing database, and to the next bulletin issue, can approach our CALG team via email: calgpalawan@gmail.com. All contributions will remain anonymous; a reference or two would be welcome for every event/information shared with us. We appreciate and are happy to note a growing community surrounding the issues of land grabbing (particularly on ICCAs) and the plight of defenders globally. In this respect, CALG wishes to keep track of extrajudicial killings and the victimisation of environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs) worldwide, especially in locations where access to free information is highly constrained. 'Territories of life' and the rights of indigenous peoples to self-determination will always be at the centre of our

mission and mandate. With your help and our own humble effort, we can continue to monitor the situation of EHRDs globally, and add to the work that other well-known organisations are already doing. For those interested in the work of CALG we have included a summary of our 2019 activities at the end of the section featuring the Philippines.

East and Southeast Asia



Between the **16th and 27th of January, 2019**, security guards and soldiers arrested 15 villagers as part of a crackdown on villagers in Yeang commune accused of illegal clearing of state forest land. Fourteen villagers remain in pre-trial detention, including Moeun Mean, and face 5 to 10 years in prison. The land dispute stems from a concession granted in June 2012 by the Environment Ministry to Metrey Pheap Kakse Usahakam Co. Ltd., an agro-industrial company. The 8,520 hectares in the Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary prompted a dispute between Metrey Pheap and over 300 families who claim the right to ownership of farmland in the area ⁽¹⁾.

On the **20/01/2019**, at about 5:30 p.m., soldiers from Battalion 261 of Army Command Intervention Division 2 of the Cambodian armed forces arrested community leader in a local land dispute, Sum Moeun (54), and his son, Moeun Mean (26), in Yeang commune, Chaom Ksan district. Soldiers transferred them to Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary Headquarters, where they were detained overnight. On January 21, only Moeun Mean was taken before the provincial court prosecutor. The wildlife sanctuary headquarters said that Sum Moeun had escaped at around 8 a.m. that morning. Photos of the evening show that Sum Moeun was beaten by the soldiers and hit with the butts of their guns. Sum Moeun's wife has not heard from him since his arrest. He is still missing ⁽¹⁾.

On the **01/04/2019** the Phnom Penh Municipal Court sentenced each of four Boeung Kak land activists to one year in prison and a two millions riel (\$500) fine for "intentional acts of violence". The four women were Nhet Khun, known as Mummy, and her three daughters – Eng Huoy, Eng Srey Heang and Eng Sokha. The case was marred with suspicious events ⁽²⁾.

January

Joint submission prepared by FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) and the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) to the 32nd Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – Human Rights Defenders and civil society space.

Published in January, 2019

(United Nations Rights Review on Human Rights Defenders)

"Since the previous UPR cycle in 2014, the human rights situation in Cambodia has deteriorated significantly, arguably reaching its worst position in two decades. Human rights defenders (HRDs) face increased legal harassment, detention, and physical violence within a context of narrowing civic space. This has been achieved through the enactment of a swathe of harmful legislation specifically designed to curtail and punish the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Please review the report for more detail.
(FIDH, LICADHO & FORUM-ASIA, 2019a)

Joint submission prepared by FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights), the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), and the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) – Land grabbing and related rights violations.

Published in January, 2019

(United Nations Rights Review on Land Grabbing)

"Since Cambodia's previous UPR in 2014, FIDH's member organization in Cambodia, the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), has documented a surge in conflicts following the 2013 general election. In the years 2014–2016, over 30,000 families were documented by LICADHO as being newly affected by land conflicts with state actors or private companies. In 2014 alone, LICADHO documented 10,625 families, or an estimated 49,519 individuals, as being newly affected by land conflicts. This number is more than three

times the number of families documented in 2013 (which stood at 3,475) and nearly twice the number recorded in 2012 (which was 5,672).”

Please review the report for more detail.
(FIDH, LICADHO & FORUM-ASIA, 2019b)

Preah Vihear protesters call for release of villagers
Published on the 30th of January, 2019
(Land Conflict)

“Some 100 villagers from Preah Vihear province on Monday protested at the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, seeking a resolution to their long-running land dispute, as well as the release of 13 villagers who have been detained for alleged land grabbing.”

“Lay Ly Huor, a representative of the protesters, told The Post on Tuesday that the villagers have been locked in a land dispute with a private developer known as Metrei Pheap on the borders of Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey provinces.”
(Kimmarita, 2019a)

February

Preah Vihear land dispute drags on
Published on the 5th of February, 2019
(Land Grabbing/Land Conflict)

“Preah Vihear provincial authorities have requested villagers to stop clearing disputed land and wait for authorities to find a solution according to the “tiger skin formula”, which aims to reduce the impact of economic land concessions (ELCs) on villagers’ farming land.”

“The villagers have been locked in a land dispute with a private developer known as Metrei Pheap on the borders of Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey provinces.”

“[Thirteen villagers were placed in pre-trial detention](#) on January 19 for allegedly clearing state forest and grabbing land owned by Metrei Pheap.”

“This was followed by protests at the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction on January 28, while [a petition was delivered to the cabinet of Prime Minister Hun Sen](#) and two other institutions on Thursday seeking intervention to resolve the dispute and secure the villagers’ release.”

“Provincial governor Un Chanda told The Post on Sunday that authorities and Metrei Pheap are close to agreeing a solution, but that it won’t be resolved while villagers continue to clear and grab land.”

“Chanda claimed that 330 families had grabbed about 1,000ha, part of which belonged to Metrei Pheap, while the rest was within the Kulen Promtep Wildlife Sanctuary, which is under the supervision of the provincial environment department.”

“The families’ representative, Lay Ly Huor, told The Post some people live in Trapaing Prasat commune’s Sre Krasaing village – situated in Oddar Meanchey province’s Trapaing Prasat district – while some live in Yeang commune’s Antil village situated in Preah Vihear province’s Choam Ksan district.”

“He said the families have depended on the crops on this land since 2013 without any ban from village or commune authorities and only in 2018 did soldiers claim that it belonged to Metrei Pheap.”

“Ly Huor said initially the company claimed the land belonged to Metrei Pheap, but then also claimed it was part of the wildlife sanctuary. The villagers are seeking transparent solution, he said, with the return of their land on the understanding that they will not grab any more.” (Kimmarita, 2019b)

Preah Vihear authorities crack down on illegal mining sites
Published on the 18th of February, 2019
(Illegal Mining)

“A Preah Vihear provincial joint force has cracked down on seven illegal mining sites in Romdeng village in Rovieng district’s Romtom commune and shut down five of the locations while preparing to send two cases to court.”

“Provincial Department of Mines and Energy director You Chendayuth said that between February 13 and 16, a joint force, including officials from the National Military Police, the court and other relevant

authorities, raided seven mines on 12.62ha for operating illegally.”

“They found a lot of evidence of mining operations, including stores of explosive powder, mineral and gold mining equipment, labs containing unknown chemical substances, staff facilities and other related items.”

“Authorities have examined sites and made contracts with the mine owners a few times already, obtaining promises to stop the illegal mining, Chendayuth said, but the miners have defied the orders and continued to operate unlicensed, believing they are allowed to because they are only running a family-scale business.”

“The site owners have now been ordered to *temporarily* halt activities.”
(Koemsoeun, 2019)



A Joint force, including officials from the National Military Police, the court and other relevant authorities, has raided seven mines in Preah Vihear Province for operating illegally.
Photo from Koemsoeun, 2019.

March

Commission moves toward suspending Cambodia’s preferential access to the EU Published on the 5th of March, 2019 (Free Trade Agreements)

“On 11 February 2019, the EU started a process that could lead to the [temporary suspension](#) of Cambodia’s preferential access to the EU market under the [Everything But Arms \(EBA\)](#) trade scheme.”

“Since 2011 under the EBA, Cambodia has benefited from duty-free EU access for exports of all products, except arms and ammunition; the EBA aims to support the economic development of least developed countries and their integration into the global trading system. This has led to increased investment in Cambodia’s sugar sector, causing [serious human rights abuses and deforestation](#). In 2017, 40 per cent of Cambodia’s sugar exports went to the EU. To fuel the sugar boom, the government of Cambodia handed companies concessions that overlapped with farmers and community-owned lands and natural resources.”

“Affected communities called on the EU to suspend preferential access for Cambodian sugar, and there have been [numerous reports](#) that sugar concession-holders were forcing thousands of rural people off their land. The European Parliament issued an [urgent resolution](#) in 2012 calling on the Commission to investigate human rights abuses and to suspend EBA preferences on agricultural products from Cambodia in cases where human rights abuses had been identified.”
(FERN, 2019)

Sugar industry body faces new complaint over Thai firm's human rights violations in Cambodia
Published on the 12th of March, 2019
(Displaced for Agriculture)

"Over 700 Cambodian families allegedly displaced in 2008 and 2009 to make way for sugar plantations have recently filed a [complaint](#) in the UK against Bonsucro, the global industry's certification body."

"The families accuse Bonsucro of failing to hold a member company, Thai sugar giant Mitr Phol, accountable for reportedly seizing their land."

"According to the US-based [Inclusive Development International](#) (IDI), the families were left "homeless and destitute" and have endured "more than a decade of impoverishment and related hardships" as a result of Mitr Phol's actions. IDI and two other organisations, Equitable Cambodia and the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), filed the complaint on behalf of the families."

"The complaint, based on allegations of breaches of the [OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#), was filed with the UK National Contact Point, a government body that handles human rights grievances against British multinational enterprises. Bonsucro is headquartered in the UK."

"IDI, which has supported the affected families for several years, [claims](#) that Bonsucro has "spectacularly" failed in its obligation to provide grievance mechanisms for people harmed by its members' activities and has instead rewarded Mitr Phol with public recognitions of the company's "continuous improvement" in sustainability and human rights."

"Mitr Phol is the world's fifth [largest](#) sugar producer and, until recently, one of the [top three](#) suppliers to Coca Cola. Its customers, past and present, also [include](#) PepsiCo, Mars, Nestlé and Corbion."
(IDM, 2019)

Cambodia returns land taken from indigenous people in 'unprecedented' move
Published on the 27th of March, 2019
(Reconciliation of Indigenous Land)

"Cambodia has returned land taken a decade ago from indigenous communities for a Vietnamese company's rubber plantation, a sign that foreign investors are facing greater scrutiny over rights violations, analysts said on Wednesday."

"The governor of the northeastern province of Ratanakiri on Tuesday asked the agriculture ministry to take out 64 areas from the land concessions, including forests, wetlands and burial grounds that belonged to a dozen indigenous communities."

"Since the early 2000s, Cambodia has awarded large swathes of land as concessions to foreign companies for mines, power plants and farms, to spur economic growth and alleviate poverty."

"Such deals, which covered more than a tenth of the country's surface area by 2012, have displaced more than 770,000 people, human rights lawyers say."

(Chandran, 2019)

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China

On the **29/01/2019** Liu Feiyue, founder of the Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch (Minsheng GuanCha - 民生观察网) which has documented cases of forced eviction, secret detention and other instances of human rights violations from all over the country, guilty of "inciting subversion of state power". He was sentenced to 5 years in prison and approximately 1 million yuan (~130,000 Euro) of his assets were seized by the court. Over recent years he has been repeatedly harassed, detained and subjected to periods of house arrest because of this work ⁽¹⁾.

April

Hong Kong urged to call time on 'archaic' indigenous land policy

Published on the 11th of April, 2019

(Gender & Indigenous Rights)

“Hong Kong must end a discriminatory land policy that favors indigenous men, land rights campaigners said on Thursday, after a top court upheld a minor law that has long been criticized for exacerbating the city’s chronic housing shortage.”

“The government’s small house policy, introduced in 1972 to improve living conditions of indigenous inhabitants in Hong Kong’s rural New Territories, allows male residents to build a three-storey home without paying a hefty land fee.”

“Land rights activists had sought a judicial review of the policy and argued that it was unconstitutional because it discriminated against indigenous women and non-indigenous people.”

“But earlier this week, the Hong Kong High Court ruled that the entitlement - known as Ding rights - is a “traditional” right that cannot be challenged on grounds of discrimination or being unlawful.”

“The law is not an “automatic entitlement” however, and will now only apply for homes built on private land, it added.”

For interviews with advocacy group member and further discussion on this matter, please refer to the cited article.

(Chandran, 2019)

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January

A Highway Megaproject Tears at the Heart of New Guinea's Rainforest
Published on the 17th of January, 2019
(Deforestation, Economic Development & Indigenous Rights)



The Indonesian military clears trees for a segment of the Trans-Papua Highway in northern Papua.

[Daniel Beltrá / Greenpeace](#)

“The Indonesian government is building a 2,700-mile road network on the island of New Guinea, opening up some of the world’s last great tropical rainforests to development and threatening unique indigenous cultures. Can international pressure force Indonesia to scale back this megaproject?”

“In political terms, New Guinea is deeply schizophrenic. Its eastern half comprises the nation of Papua New Guinea — a loosely governed state where indigenous groups have well-established legal rights to their traditional lands. Indonesian-ruled Papua is another story. Since assuming control in the 1960s, Indonesia’s Jakarta-based government has pursued two goals: exploiting Papua’s resources while consolidating top-down control. Both objectives have been advanced by vast logging, mining, oil palm, and agri-industrial projects that have flattened tens of millions of acres of forest — often while running roughshod over the land claims of its indigenous peoples.”

“Today, these unique rainforests are being carved up by a massive, ill-advised, and exceptionally risky road-building scheme. The Trans -Papua Highway will sprawl like a massive spiderweb over much

of the Indonesian-ruled, western half of New Guinea, known as Papua or West Papua. Totalling 2,700 miles in length, this highway network will penetrate deeply into densely forested or remote mountainous regions to increase access to minerals, fossil fuels, timber, and land for agri-business ventures, including vast palm oil plantations. Many road segments will traverse precariously steep, virgin terrain. Recent [analyses](#) conducted by [William Laurance's] research team suggest major new hotspots of deforestation will be created by the roads, along with sharp increases in forest fragmentation, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse-gas emissions."

"The construction of this extensive road system spells the beginning of the end for expansive wild areas in Papua."

"But as bad as Indonesia's exploitation of Papua's priceless forests has been to date, the Trans-Papua Highway is bringing a whole new level of destruction, essentially tearing the heart out of a damaged but not yet decimated tropical paradise. Among the worst impacts of the Trans-Papua Highway will be three major new deforestation hotspots"

For more detail on this project please read the rest of the cited article.

(Laurance, 2019)

With its \$3.85b mine takeover, Indonesia inherits a \$13b pollution problem

Published on the 14th of January, 2019

(Mining Pollution)



Panoramic view of the Grasberg gold and copper mine in Indonesian Papua on the island of New Guinea.

Image by [Richard Jones/Flickr](#).

"When the Indonesian government took a controlling stake in the operator of one of the world's richest gold mines at the end of 2018, proponents hailed the move as a historic step toward national and economic resource sovereignty."

"The breathless media coverage of the transaction, which saw the government take a 51 percent stake in PT Freeport Indonesia (PTFI), previously majority-owned by Arizona-based Freeport-McMoRan, framed it as the "return" of a prized asset — the Grasberg gold and copper mine — to the Indonesian public after decades of foreign control."

"But little was said about the long legacy of toxic pollution from the mine, or how exactly the new arrangement, at a cost of \$3.85 billion to Indonesia, would finally bring real benefits to the indigenous people on whose land the mine sits, and who remain among the most impoverished communities in Indonesia."

"Under the terms of the acquisition, a 41.2 percent stake in PTFI goes to state-owned smelting company PT Indonesia Asahan Aluminium, better known as Inalum. A 10 percent stake is held by the government of Papua province, where Grasberg is located. That latter stake, in turn, is managed 60:40 between an Inalum-controlled company and a province-owned firm. Freeport remains the operator of the mine."

"But along with ownership in one of the most coveted mines on Earth, Inalum and the Papua government have also inherited a pollution problem stemming from the mining waste, or tailings, churned out by PTFI over decades."

“That fallout could amount to some \$13 billion — the estimated cost of environmental damages wrought by PTFI, according to a review by state auditors. Following a subsequent audit, which identified a wide range of irregularities in the company’s operations and contract, the government imposed sanctions on PTFI. The findings included indications of reckless mining and the disposal of mining waste into rivers, forests and the sea.”

(Gokkon, 2019)

High-risk infrastructure projects pose imminent threats to forests in Indonesian Borneo

Published on the 15th of January, 2019

(Forest Threats)

Abstract

“Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan) sustains ~37 million hectares of native tropical forest. Numerous large-scale infrastructure projects aimed at promoting land-development activities are planned or ongoing in the region. However, little is known of the potential impacts of this new infrastructure on Bornean forests or biodiversity. We found that planned and ongoing road and rail-line developments will have many detrimental ecological impacts, including fragmenting large expanses of intact forest. Assuming conservatively that new road and rail projects will influence only a 1 km buffer on either side, landscape connectivity across the region will decline sharply (from 89% to 55%) if all imminently planned projects proceed. This will have particularly large impacts on wide-ranging, rare species such as rhinoceros, orangutans, and elephants. Planned developments will impact 42 protected areas, undermining Indonesian efforts to achieve key targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity. New infrastructure will accelerate expansion in intact or frontier regions of legal and illegal logging and land colonization as well as illicit mining and wildlife poaching. The net environmental, social, financial, and economic risks of several imminent projects—such as parallel border roads in West, East, and North Kalimantan, new Trans-Kalimantan road developments in Central Kalimantan and North Kalimantan, and freeways and rail lines in East Kalimantan—could markedly outstrip their overall benefits. Such projects should be reconsidered in light of rigorous cost-benefit frameworks.”

Please refer to the citation for the full paper.

(Alamgir et al., 2019)

February

'Ill-advised' Papua highway imperils indigenous rights, rainforests

Published on the 4th of February, 2019

(West Papua Highway)

“A highway under construction in Indonesia’s Papua province is hurting the environment and stoking conflict by threatening indigenous land rights, analysts and activists said.”

“The Trans Papua highway is part of Indonesian President Joko Widodo’s plan to develop the impoverished eastern province, and open up access to its abundant natural resources.”

“But the 4,000 kilometres (2,485 miles) of highway that will link hubs of agriculture, mining, and oil and gas, will encroach indigenous land and destroy tropical rainforests including Lorentz National Park, a World Heritage site, activists said.” (Chandran, 2019).

Indonesian Government may be pinning false hopes on IUCN oil palm report

Published on the 12th of February, 2019

(IUCN & Oil Palm in Indonesia)

“In a [controversial press statement](#), the Indonesian Government has misrepresented an IUCN report to justify its own agenda to plant more palm oil and cast doubt as to the validity of claims of the palm oil critics. The [report](#) was issued in English in June 2018 but was launched in Indonesia on 5th February 2019.”

“It is unfortunate for everyone that the Indonesian Government is manipulating the findings of our study to obscure the scientific basis of global concerns about oil palm expansion,... The IUCN report – focused on the direct impacts of oil palm plantations on biodiversity – presents a detailed summary of the available evidence, and points to major problems with the way oil palm has expanded at the

expense of the environment. As FPP has separately reported, this is at a [huge cost to local communities and indigenous peoples](#)", said Author Marcus Colchester, Senior Policy Advisor with Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), and a member of the IUCN Task Force that drafted the report.

He continued to say that, "[t]he Indonesian Government seized on one set of facts in the report which is that, as oil palm is a very efficient crop in terms of oil yield per hectare, replacing palm oil with edible oils from other more extensive crops would have impacts that should also be taken into account." (Colchester, 2019)



The Trans-Papua Highway will open up vast areas of previously untouched forest for palm oil plantations, such as this one in eastern Papua. Ulet Ifansasti / Greenpeace

Family of North Sumatra Deputy Governor implicated in illegal conversion of protected forests into oil palm plantations

Published on the 13th of February, 2019

(Palm Oil, Deforestation & Corruption)

"The North Sumatra Regional Police has named Musa Idishah, better known as Dodi Shah, as a [suspect](#) in a case of illegal deforestation of protected areas for oil palm cultivation."

"Dodi Shah is the younger brother of Musa Rajekshah, Deputy Governor of North Sumatra, an Indonesian province in Sumatra island."

"Dodi is the head of PT Anugerah Langkat Makmur (PT ALAM), the company accused of illegally [converting](#) up to 500 hectares of protected forests in North Sumatra into oil palm plantations."

"At the end of January, Dodi was taken for questioning by the police after [ignoring](#) two summons to present himself. He has not yet been arrested, as the North Sumatra police does not consider him to be a flight risk."

"Police have seized [computers](#), financial reports, internal memos and other [documents](#) from PT ALAM's offices and carried out a search of Dodi's residence in Medan, North Sumatra's capital city. Fire arms and ammunition, for which Dodi [claims](#) to have permits, have also been seized."

"PT ALAM's plantations in question are [located](#) in Sei Lapan, West Brandan and Besitang, all districts of Langkat Regency, North Sumatra."

"Dodi could be [charged](#) under laws 18/2013 (Prevention and Eradication of Forest Destruction), 39/2014 (Plantations) and 32/2009 (Environmental Protection and Management). If convicted, he could

face up to eight years in [prison](#)."

"Dodi's father, Anif Shah, is a well-known businessman in North Sumatra. The family is said to [control](#) over 30,000 ha of oil palm plantations in the provinces of North Sumatra and Riau."
(IDM, 2019a)

Indonesian anti-corruption body denounces deforestation license for oil palm giant found guilty of wrongdoing

Published on the 18th of February, 2019

(Corruption and the Agro-Industry)

"Indonesia's anti-corruption body has [asked](#) the country's Ministry of Environment and Forestry to review its decision to authorise the conversion of 10,000 hectares of forest in Buol district, Central Sulawesi, into oil palm plantations."

"According to the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the ministry's [decision](#) is "not acceptable" because the permit behind this concession has been obtained illegally."

"The KPK official was referring to the corruption scandal that led to the convictions in 2013 of the then Regent of Buol, Amran Batalipu, and the businesswoman Siti Hartati Tjakra Murdaya, whose family owns the oil palm giant Hardaya Plantations Group."

"That year, Siti Hartati Murdaya was found guilty of [paying](#) three billion rupiah (\$312,000 USD) in bribes to Amran Batalipu to obtain plantation permits in Buol for her companies PT Citra Cakra Murdaya and PT Hardaya Inti Plantations."

"As a result, Amran Batalipu was [sentenced](#) to seven and a half years in prison, while Siti Hartati Tjakra Murdaya received a prison sentence of two years and eight months."

"Civil society has also criticised the ministry's decision. The Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi), a conservation NGO, has [expressed](#) frustration at the authorisation for rewarding a company found guilty of breaking the law."

Please refer to the cited article for ore information on this issue.

(IDM, 2019b)

Tackling Bad Ag in Indonesia demands increased transparency, say NGOs, as yet another attempt to obtain information is ignored

Published on the 25th of February, 2019

(Opaque Business in Agriculture)

"More than a year after a request for information was submitted, the Aceh Agriculture and Plantation Office (Distanbun) still has not [released](#) data about a plantation concession in the province, ignoring a court decision and raising questions about its motives. The case follows similar behaviour by the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning, which continues to defy a Supreme Court order for more transparency in plantation concessions."

"In January 2018 the Aceh Orangutan Forum (FORA), a conservation organisation, submitted a request for information with Distanbun about a right-to-cultivate permit – known as HGU – in the province."

"The Agriculture and Plantation Office is the governmental body responsible for issuing licenses for plantations in Aceh, a province in the Island of Sumatra."

"After failing to receive a response, in March FORA asked the Aceh Information Commission, a public transparency body, to intervene. In October the Commission ordered Distanbun to release the information."

"Still without a response, in January 2019 FORA approached the Banda Aceh Administrative Court. In early February the court decided that Distanbun must obey the Commission's order, which has legal force."

"However, in late February FORA said that the Office still refused to release the requested information. The organisation has allegedly reported the agency to the police over the violation of Law 14 of 2008 concerning access to public information."

"The Aceh Transparency Society (MaTA), an anti-corruption NGO, has [said](#) that Distanbun has no reason to continue to withhold the information following the Aceh Information Commission's order, and that HGU data must be made available to the public. MaTA coordinator Alfian has told [Mongabay Indonesia](#) that the Agriculture and Plantation Office's behaviour raises suspicions about what they are trying to hide."

(IDM, 2019c)

March

Indonesian palm oil Company embroiled in lawsuit for burning forest in Kalimantan **Published on the 7th of March, 2019** **(Palm Oil and Deforestation)**

“A palm oil company in Central Kalimantan is being sued by the Indonesian government for allegedly causing illegal forest fires. PT Arjuna Utama Sawit, a Musim Mas supplier, has also been connected to land conflicts and the illegal clearing of peatland.”

“The Indonesian Ministry of Environment and Forestry has launched a [lawsuit](#) against oil palm company PT Arjuna Utama Sawit (PT AUS) for allegedly causing [illegal](#) forest fires at its plantation concession in Central Kalimantan, a forest-rich province on the island of Borneo, in 2015.”

“The company is being held responsible for the destruction of 970 hectares of forest at its oil palm concession, which covers 16,600 ha, in the Kamipang Subdistrict, Katingan Regency. The Ministry is seeking compensation of 497.15 billion Indonesian Rupiah (34.8 million USD), nearly half of which (243.30 billion Indonesian Rupiah – 17 million USD) is meant for forest recovery.”

“The Ministry has asked the Palangkaraya District Court to penalise the company for failing to reforest the area in question and instead planting oil palm trees. The Ministry also wants PT AUS to remove the planted trees from the burned area to make way for reforestation and pay a fine for each palm tree planted.”

“The Anti-Smoke Movement (GAAs) has [welcomed](#) the lawsuit as a “lesson” for “companies holding permits to be more responsible” as well as a “deterrent for environmental destroyers in Central Kalimantan.”

(IDM, 2019d)



Fires engulf a palm oil plantation in Rokan Hilir district, Riau, Indonesia.
Image by Zamzami/Mongabay Indonesia (Jong, 2019).

Indonesia deploys 600 crack soldiers to guard Trans-Papua highway **Published on the 7th of March, 2019** **(West Papuan Violence)**

“Six hundred crack Indonesian soldiers are being deployed this week to provide security for the construction of the Trans-Papua highway.”

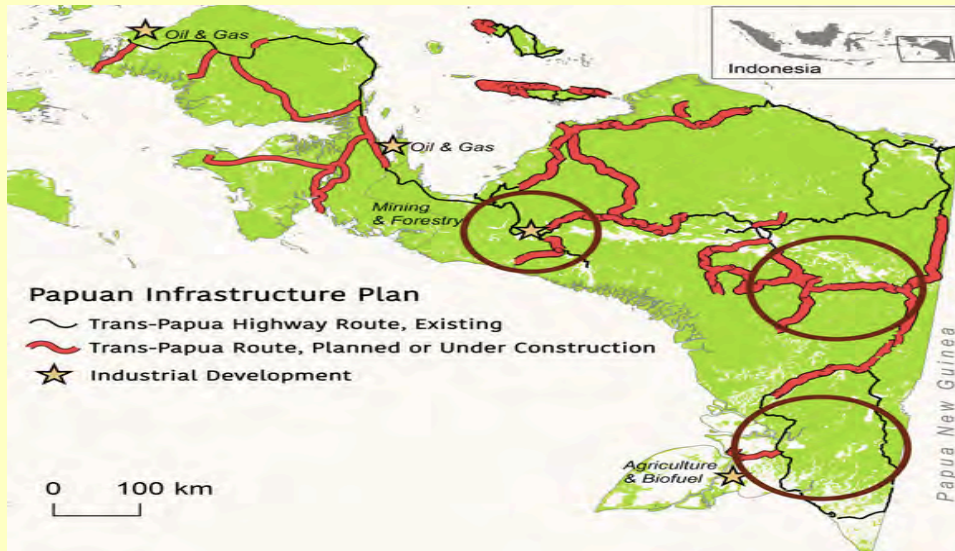
“Work on the highway was temporarily halted after an attack on construction workers by ‘irresponsible rogue elements’.”

“Last December, 16 construction workers were [shot and killed at the Trans Papua highway in Nduga](#)

following in an attack by the West Papua National Liberation Army (TBNPB) led by Egianus Kogoya.”

“Indonesian authorities described all Papuan pro-independence groups struggling for their indigenous homeland’s freedom as ‘separatists’.”

(PMC Editor, 2019a)



The areas circled are projected to experience intense deforestation when the Trans-Papua Highway is completed (Laurance, 2019).

Humanitarian concerns grow as violent conflict worsens in West Papua

Published on the 13th of March, 2019

(West Papuan Violence)

“As the numbers of casualties and displaced people in Papua’s Highlands pile up, prospects for an end to armed conflict in the Indonesian-ruled region appear dim.”

“Humanitarian concern is growing for villagers who have been displaced by [conflict in the Highlands](#) between Indonesia’s military and the West Papua Liberation Army.”

“But even elected Papuan leaders in government pushing for a de-escalation of military operations risk a reprimand or threat of prosecution from Indonesia’s military.”

“In the latest bout of clashes last week, Indonesia’s military says between 50 and 70 Liberation Army fighters descended on soldiers guarding the construction of a bridge in Nduga’s Yigi district.

“Indonesia’s military said [three members died](#) before the military was able to drive the rebels back. It also claimed that between seven and ten Liberation Army fighters were killed.”

“According to the Liberation Army, the violence on Thursday was sparked when Indonesian soldiers interrogated a local villager and then set fire to five houses.”

“Indonesian military and police operations intensified in the remote Highlands regency of Nduga in December after the Liberation Army massacred at least [16 road construction workers](#).”

“The Indonesian government’s major Trans-Papua Road project was already controversial among Papuan Highlands communities without the involvement of military engineers on the job adding to mistrust among Papuans.”

“However, as military operations to pursue the Liberation Army’s guerilla fighters ramped up, thousands of Nduga villagers caught in the middle of hostilities fled to the bush or neighbouring regencies such as Jayawijaya.”

(PMC Editor, 2019b)

Palm oil’s complex land conflicts

Published on the 13th of March, 2019

(Land Conflicts and Palm Oil)



Deforestation for oil palm in the Tanah Merah project, Indonesia.
Courtesy of Ulet Ifansasti/Greenpeace

“In an ideal world, palm oil production would cause no deforestation, and have a transparent and fair supply chain. In reality, the impacts of the sector have been the cause of ethical concerns worldwide.”

“Palm oil is Indonesia’s most important commodity. In 2017 it produced [37.8 million tonnes of crude palm oil \(CPO\) and exported over 80 percent](#) of it, with a value of \$31.8 billion. Not only is Indonesia the world’s biggest palm oil producer, it is its biggest exporter too.”

“The strong market demand of palm oil has led to a vast expansion of plantations. Currently smallholders make up around [forty percent](#) of the production market, and [around a third of these](#) don’t have the right land tenure permits. In some cases, the smallholders have moved into state owned forest areas. In many cases, the occupancy creates conflict.”

“In 2017, the Directorate General of Plantation of the Ministry of Agriculture found that of the [2.5 million hectares](#) of oil palm plantations on state owned forests, 70 percent of these were controlled by smallholders.”

“To get to the bottom of why palm oil plantations continue to encroach into state forest areas, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) organized a workshop in collaboration with Center for Research and Development on Social, Economics, Policy and Climate Change (P3SEPKI): *‘Linking science to policy: the role of research in the effort to accelerate solution of tenurial problems in oil palm plantation in forest areas.’*”

Please refer to the cited article for more on the conflicts caused by Palm Oil in Indonesia.
(Shahab & Lyons, 2019)

In Indonesia, a company intimidates, evicts and plants oil palm without permits
Published on the 26th of March, 2019
(Oil Palm & Eviction)



Rahim on the land he once farmed, before the company forced him out.
Image by Ian Morse for Mongabay.

“One day in March last year, Rahim was shocked and furious to find an excavator rolling through his rice field, turning the bright green grains into piles of mud. The 51-year-old farmer took photos of the incursion and demanded to know why his family’s livelihood was being uprooted.”

“Rahim had been farming the land for 15 years, but the workers on the scene said he was trespassing on land that belonged to a company. No company held a license to operate there, much less evict residents, but Rahim didn’t know that. Now he was being told that rows of oil palm trees would be planted where his rice was growing.”

“Like countless other farmers across Indonesia, Rahim doesn’t have a deed to the land he says his family has occupied for generations. That leaves him with scant legal defense to claims laid on it by the state or private companies.”

“But that doesn’t explain why PTPN XIV felt empowered to demolish farms and cattle ranches, because it too lacks the permits required to operate in Maroangin. Nonetheless, the firm has gone ahead and planted 8 square kilometers (3 square miles) of oil palms on land formerly occupied by corn farms, rice paddies and pastures.”

“Several months after President Joko Widodo [ordered](#) a freeze on the issuance of permits for palm plantations, PTPN XIV has started an entirely new business without any of the approvals required by law, eased along as a state-owned company. It has made a travesty of the permit process, operating outside the law, according to government officials and other observers.”

“The case provides an example of how malleable the rules can be in Indonesia for powerful interests with an eye on community lands, even as Widodo strives to bring the nation’s chaotic land-tenure situation under control. Indonesia, home to thousands of islands spread across one-eighth of the earth’s circumference, is rife with competing claims over who has the rights to land and resources.”

“Last December, the Indonesian government reached an important milestone in addressing this problem when it [published](#) the first version of a long-awaited, unified map of land-use claims and internal borders. But much data is still missing from the map, including maps of indigenous territories and company concessions.”

Refer to the cited article for the continuation of the story.
(Morse, 2019)

**Press Release: Unsustainable Sime Darby, Buyers and Financiers Must Stop Their Business Relations
Published on the 27th of March, 2019
(Oil Palm, RSPO & Crimes against Indigenous Peoples)**

“Dayak Hibun indigenous peoples from Kerunang hamlet and Entapang hamlet, Bonti Sub-district, Sanggau District, West Kalimantan express their deep objection with regards to the sale of PT Mitra Austral Sejahtera (PT MAS) by Sime Darby Plantation, a Malaysian corporate entity.”

“PT MAS, a subsidiary of Sime Darby plantation has broken promises and abused Indonesian rules and regulations, international laws, RSPO voluntary international best practice standards, and OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises.”

“Sime Darby Plantation looted Dayak Hibun indigenous peoples’ land in Kerunang hamlet and Entapang hamlet by converting indigenous peoples land for PT MAS oil palm plantation concession area (HGU). PT MAS broke the initial promises of socialisation in 1995 that the company only borrowed community land to establish oil palm plantation for only 25-year. However, without information and consent of the community, PT MAS made community land as a business right (HGU).”

Please follow the link in the citation for the full press release.
(Colchester, FPP & TUK Indonesia, 2019).

**How land grabbers weaponise indigenous ritual against Papuans: *An interview with anthropologist Sophie Chao*
Published on the 28th of March, 2019
(Deforestation and Indigenous Rights)**

“Sophie Chao is a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Sydney, whose work focuses on the impacts of agribusiness on the peoples and environments of the Asia-Pacific and Melanesia. She spent a year, for her PhD, living with and studying the Marind-Anim people of Merauke, a district in the southern lowlands of Indonesia’s Papua province that has been heavily targeted for plantation development. Prior to this she worked for the Forest Peoples Programme, a UK-based non-profit, pressing private companies and governments to respect international human rights principles in plantation developments.”

“The relationship between indigenous peoples, the state and plantation companies in Papua, and Merauke in particular, is fraught. The government has earmarked the district to produce sugar, timber and palm oil. Indigenous Papuans are heavily dependent on the forest that is being destroyed to be replaced by these crops. Many express a desire for “development,” but are losing their sources of food and clean water, without any improvements to their lives. Chao’s research has investigated the underlying cause of this conflict, and the ways in which Papuans experience a rapidly changing world.”

“In November 2018, The Gecko Project and Mongabay published [“The secret deal to destroy paradise,”](#) an investigative article exposing the murky story behind a vast palm oil plantation project in Boven Digoel district, to the immediate north of Merauke. Papuans whose land has been annexed by



Road through a landscape denuded of forest in Merauke, 2012.
By Nanang Sujana, (The Gecko Project, 2019).

this project are just beginning to feel the impacts as large-scale deforestation begins. We spoke to Chao for a deeper insight into the complex tensions between the culture and worldview of people indigenous to southern Papua and the industrial agriculture that is being imposed upon them.”

This report by the Gecko Project, like all their work, is a critical discussion around deforestation, indigenous rights and where these two dynamics intersect.

This report discusses;

2. Industrial-scale agriculture poses considerable risk to the indigenous peoples of Papua, whose culture and livelihoods are closely linked to the region’s extensive rainforest.

3. Last November, Mongabay and The Gecko Project published an investigative article exposing the dealings underpinning a mega-plantation project in Papua, as part of our series [Indonesia for Sale](#). Anthropologist Sophie Chao has studied the often fraught relationship between Papuans and plantation firms, and the mechanisms through which indigenous people are compelled to give up their land.

For more on this please refer to the cited article

(The Gecko Project, 2019)

April

Palm oil, logging firms the usual suspects as Indonesia fires flare anew

Published on the 15th of April, 2019

(Palm Oil, Logging & Oil cause fires)

“Oil palm and logging companies in Indonesia have come into public glare once again as another season of forest fires flares up in Sumatra.”

“Hotspots have been detected in [12 concessions](#) in Sumatra’s Riau province, a perennial tinderbox where huge swaths of the land have been carved up for palm estates and logging areas. Nine of those concessions belong to palm oil companies, two to oil and gas operators, and one to a logging company, according to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.”

“A separate survey by the NGO Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI) has found 58 hotspots in palm concessions and 88 in logging concessions.”

“Many of these concessions contain areas of peat swamp, which are typically drained ahead of planting, leaving behind a highly combustible layer of mulch that releases huge amounts of carbon dioxide when burned.”

Please refer to the full article for more on this matter.

(Jong, 2019)

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On the **06/01/2019** Phonesawai became the fourth villager released from prison where he has been held since 2017. In July 2017, 15 residents of the Yeub village, in Sekong's Thateng district, were detained by police for obstructing workers and cutting down trees on land granted by the government to a Vietnamese rubber company. They were protesting the loss of this land as a result of the concession. Three other villagers have been release with one reporting to have died in custody last year. The remaining 10 are still being detained. It is reported that the prisoners have been subjected to various forms of torture ⁽¹⁾.

March

Chinese Banana Plantations in Lao District Leave Locals With Little Land to Farm Published on the 5th of March, 2019 (Plantations & Land Grabbing)

“Concessions of land made by the government of Laos to Chinese banana farms are leaving villagers in one northern district without enough land of their own to feed their families, sources in the communist Southeast Asian country say.”

“But the land available for farming has shrunk every year, and local farmers now have limited land on which to grow rice,” RFA’s source said.

“In Beng, the government has set a target for this year of 12,760 hectares for the cultivation of rice, and state authorities have fixed irrigation systems for three big projects and in five different areas. And though local farmers normally need at 12,156 hectares to feed their families, only 3,593 hectares are really available.”

“Most of the [district’s] land is still held by concessions,” he said.

“Concerns over chemical run-off from the heavily polluting Chinese plantations led in January 2017 to government orders forbidding new Chinese farms from being formed in the country’s northern provinces, but many still operate under contracts valid for several more years.”

“As Chinese plantations encroached on district land over the years, some villagers sought work on the farms but left after being sickened by pesticides, while others left to find work in other provinces but returned to grow vegetables on plots of land too small to grow rice, sources said in earlier reports.”

“Chemical run-off from foreign-owned farms has meanwhile polluted many of the country’s water sources, killing fish and other animals and leaving water from local rivers and streams unfit to drink, sources say.”

“Chemicals released into a river by a Chinese-owned banana farm near the Lao capital Vientiane killed over 300 kg of fish in November 2018, prompting warnings by authorities to local villagers not to bathe or fish in the polluted stream.”

(Khotpanya & Finney, 2019)

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January

In a first, Malaysia sues state government for infringing land rights of indigenous people Published on the 18th of January, 2019 (Litigation Against Rights Abusers)

“The Malaysian government said on Friday it would sue the local government of Kelantan state for failing to uphold the land rights of its indigenous people, a move that activists said was unprecedented and that could lead to more protection measures.”

“Orang Asli, meaning “original people”, is the term used for Malaysia’s indigenous people, who make up about 14 percent of the population. They have been pitted against logging and palm oil companies keen to tap the forested areas in which they live.”

“Logging companies, which have cleared vast forest areas in Kelantan for durian and rubber plantations, had deprived the Temiar Orang Asli of their ancestral land and resources, the office of the attorney general said in a statement on Friday.”

“State authorities did not consult the community before granting the licenses, nor offer them compensation, it said.

“Rapid deforestation and commercial development have resulted in widespread encroachment into the native territories of the Orang Asli,” Attorney General Tommy Thomas said in the statement.

“Commercial development and the pursuit of profit must not come at the expense of the Temiar Orang Asli and their inherent right, as citizens of this country, to the land and resources which they have traditionally owned and used,” he said.

“The suit, filed in the high court of Kelantan’s state capital Kota Bharu, seeks the legal recognition of the Temiar Orang Asli’s land rights, and injunctions to restrain private firms from encroaching on and destroying their land.”

“The suit names the state government of Kelantan - which lies in the north-east of mainland Malaysia - as well as the state director of land, the forestry department and five private entities as defendants.”
(Chandran, 2019)

Orang Asli are equals: Waytha Published on the 20th of January, 2019 (Orans Asli)

“The Orang Asli community in Peninsular Malaysia are equal in the eyes of the law and their ancestors were the original and the first inhabitants of the nation, said Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Senator P. Waytha Moorthy”.

“He said the Malaysian superior courts had recognised and repeatedly reaffirmed their customary land rights due to, among other factors, the special position of the Orang Asli under Article 8(5)(c) of the Federal Constitution.”

““The Federal government further owes its fiduciary duty to protect these indigenous communities where it is provided that the welfare of the aborigines people is within the responsibilities and powers of the Federal Government and distinct from the State Governments (Ninth Schedule, Federal List No. 16 – FC).”

“These pre-existing customary rights enjoyed by the Orang Asli as the first peoples of Peninsular Malaysia continue to exist and cannot be removed by claiming that their lands belong to a (particular) state land, creation of reserves or, for that matter, the granting of any leases or licences to third parties under the pretext of being owned by the state government,” he said in a statement here today.”

“He said customary rights in itself was a form of unwritten law and thus it is unreasonable to assume that a custom has no force of law merely because it is not codified by the state.”

“The statement was issued in response to the PAS-led government in Kelantan claiming that all Orang Asli land in Kelantan belonged to the state government.”
(The Sun Daily, 2019)

March

These indigenous Malaysians are in the fight of their lives

Published on the 30th of March, 2019

(Indigenous Protest Against Deforestation)

“The Temiar people of northern Malaysia are blockading logging trucks, fighting to maintain their traditional way of life and protect the rainforest.”

For more on this issue, and a video, please refer to the cited article.

(Blakkarly, 2019)



Some limited logging has continued since the blockade Course: SBS News

April

Our Problems Lie Closer To Home Than Europe, Say Smallholders In Sarawak

Published on the 18th of April, 2019

(Palm Oil & Land Grabbing)

“In March, the European Union officially approved a measure to phase out biofuels, including palm oil by the year 2030, intended to curb the use of crops that cause deforestation in transportation fuels.”

“Malaysia’s Minister of Primary Industries Teresa Kok [reflected the industry’s response](#) at the time by saying that Europe’s actions were both “*discriminatory*” and “*designed to hurt the livelihoods of millions of small farmers*” in Malaysia.”

“In Sarawak however, we visited smallholders in Serian who told us a very different story. They told us that land grabbing by the bigger plantation companies was the single biggest threat to their livelihoods.”

“We spoke to Iban smallholders in Melikin, Serian who are currently embroiled in a land dispute with two plantation companies, United Teamtrade Sdn Bhd and Memaju Jaya Sdn Bhd.”

“The Iban land in Melikin was first alienated to the companies in 2010. Communities challenged the encroachment of their lands in court and lost, but appealed to the Court of Appeal of which the decision is set for later this month.”

“It’s a case that has been covered by Sarawak Report since 2012 and is emblematic of the struggles facing Sarawak’s indigenous communities.”

“We have previously exposed how the companies are [politically connected](#) and highlighted how

community members who stood up to them were [arrested](#) and faced aggression and [violent](#) repercussion at the hands of armed gangsters.”

"As so often is the case in Sarawak, it was the community who were treated as the criminals, not the plantation companies or the gangsters who terrorised the landowners.”

If this is a topic of interest for you, or your research, please refer to the Sarawak Report webpage and articles on deforestation and land grabbing taking place on Sarawak.
(Sarawak Report, 2019)

**First, indigenous people want their NCR land
Published on the 23rd of April, 2019
(Indigenous Rights in Malaysia: a Critical Review)**

“At the 2019 National Orang Asli Convention at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre, the prime minister recommended enhancing education and ecotourism as a way of contributing to the economic development of the Orang Asli community. He said the ecotourism sector will create job opportunities and encourage the youth in the community to become entrepreneurs by making handicraft items as well as manufacturing forest-based products.”

“Education is definitely all-important and so is the motivation to make creative handicrafts. What was missing from the PM’s speech was the central problem all indigenous peoples face in West and East Malaysia, namely, the loss of their Native Customary Right (NCR) land to logging and (oil palm and now, durian) plantation interests as well as state governments’ so-called ‘development’.”

"The indigenous peoples’ NCR lands are protected under the Land Codes of each of the states. Nevertheless, these rights are constantly violated by the government and private companies through land-grabbing or illegal encroachment. These barbaric actions continue to displace the rightful indigenous stewards of the land from their access to traditional hunting and cultivation areas and too often, from their ancestral burial grounds as in the Bakun Dam and Sungai Selangor dam projects.”

"Communities affected have filed suits against companies and the state governments for the encroachment of their native lands but they face serious obstacles as a result of controversial Federal Court judgments. A new Pakatan Harapan government that is prepared to restore the NCR lands to the indigenous peoples of Malaysia would ensure that our laws recognise two land categories that the indigenous peoples consider to be part of their NCR land, namely, *Pemakai Menoa* (territorial domain) and *Pulau Galau* (communal forest reserve).”

“In 2016, the Federal Court ruled that native customs have no force of law to allow indigenous peoples to own communal land and jungles next to their cultivated farmlands and cited that the Sarawak Land Code, for example, only recognised cultivated land called *temuda* as NCR land.”

“The indigenous peoples in Sarawak are further threatened by the state government’s proposal to construct 12 hydroelectric mega-dams by 2020 and an estimated 51 dams by 2037. The disastrous effects of such mega-dams such as the Batang Ai and Bakun dams on the rainforests and displaced indigenous peoples are already plain to see.”

Please refer to the cited article for more on this pressing issue facing the Orang Asli and other indigenous peoples across Malaysia.
(Soong, 2019)

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April

Rangeland restoration: a new priority for the next decade
Published on the 9th of April, 2019
(Community-Based Sustainable Management)

“For Mongolians, the word “rangeland” (*belcheer*) also means “homeland” (*nutag*). Rangelands are not only a source of feed for livestock but also a symbol of the value that herders and locals attach to their homeland... the health of Mongolian rangelands is at a crossroads. About 57 per cent of them degraded, and of these, 13 per cent have “passed the threshold of recovery”, said Enkh-Amgalan Tseelei, an expert on community-centered sustainable rangeland management in Mongolia, at last month’s United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya.”

“Tserenbat Namsrai, Minister of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia, stressed the importance of community-based sustainable management and the role of pasture user groups, of which Mongolia has 1,450. A draft “Rangeland Law” to ensure legal entitlement of herder communities to their traditional rangelands and empower them as users and protectors of rangelands is due to go before the Mongolian parliament soon.”

“A new [UN] [resolution](#) on rangelands and pastoralism was adopted in March 2019. For the first time it calls for the restoration of rangelands on a par with the restoration of other ecosystems, such as forests.”

The United Nations with GRID-Arendal have released a report: [A case of benign neglect: Knowledge gaps about sustainability in pastoralism and rangelands](#). A direct link has been made available here:

https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27530/GAP_Summary_EN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

(Bensada, 2019)



Mongolian rangelands. Photo by UN Environment

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January

Salween Peace Park to Keep Lands in Local Hands **Published on the 7th of January, 2019** **(Conservation and Indigenous Land Rights)**

“Representatives of the Salween Peace Park have said there is no vacant land in Karen State and that all land and its natural resources are managed and belong to Karen indigenous communities.”

“The Salween Peace Park Steering Committee has officially announced plans to establish a 5,485-square kilometer park covering the basin of the Salween River, a river sometimes called by its Burmese name, Thanlwin. The park is to be located in the Papun (known locally as Mutraw) area which is home to the Karen National Liberation Army’s (KNLA’s) Brigade No. 5. The region has seen much armed conflict between KNLA and Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army) troops over the Tatmadaw’s attempts to build a road through it for military use. The Myanmar government also have eyes set on the area with plans to build a hydroelectric dam on the Salween River.”

“The name to be given to the park, Salween Peace Park was announced on Dec. 18, just days after the government’s announcement of amendments made to the Vacant Land Law. The amended law is seen as a threat to many ethnic groups in Myanmar who tend to deal with land ownership through their own customary laws.”

“Karen customary land laws are defunct under the amended law which requires landowners to register with the government. Land which is not registered may be given to anyone who applies for the rights to work on the land. According to local rights groups, this issue may give rise to further armed conflict in the area between Karen groups and the Tatmadaw.”
(Weng, 2019)



A group of ethnic Karen and Karenni gathers in Khesorter Forest in Papun District (Mutraw District), Karen State, to learn and share how they protect their forests from destruction in November 2016. / KESAN

Global Witness response to Myanmar Reuters journalists appeal verdict **Published on the 11th of January, 2019** **(Harassment)**

“Global Witness condemns today’s decisions by Myanmar’s Yangon high court to reject the appeal of two Reuters journalists. The court has upheld the [guilty verdict and lengthy prison sentence](#) handed

down to Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo last year for allegedly violating the Official Secrets Act while investigating an army massacre of Rohingya in Rakhine State.”
(Marcuson & Donowitz, 2019)

Myanmar’s Indigenous Population Faces Displacement From Environmentalist Group
Published on the 18th of January, 2019
(NGOs Displacing Indigenous Peoples)

“Tanintharyi locals are facing displacement as their land has been taken and closed off for wildlife preservation efforts. This incident follows an already established trend of foreign entities curtailing Indigenous rights for the sake of inaccessible and often misinformed environmentalism. U.K. conservation group, Fauna and Flora International (FFI), is implementing the “ridge to reef” project as part of the United Nations Development Programme. It has received 21 million dollars (USD) in funding. That money will contribute to protecting 800,000 acres of the Tanintharyi region that houses precious wildlife: Asian elephants, tigers, and sun bears. While this project will ban poaching, logging, and palm oil harvesting, it will simultaneously be detrimental to Indigenous livelihoods. Thus, Tanintharyi natives, who already face the threat of displacement from the ongoing civil war, are protesting their right to live on and access the land that has historically been considered theirs.”

“As per Myanmar’s *Protection of Wildlife and Conservation of Natural Areas Law* (1994), this conservation project will designate Tanintharyi natives’ land as a protected area. As a result, all destructive corporate affairs will be prohibited in the region. However, growing crops, using fallen trees to build homes, and foraging and hunting for food within the area will also be banned. Villagers are rightfully concerned as Tanintharyi’s forests are the only source of basic necessities for many. Their Myint, a Tanintharyi native, said that his family’s main source of income is harvesting areca nuts in their land, which will become illegal under this project.”
(Lopez, 2019)

February

‘We Cannot Grow Plants on Disposable Stones’: Indigenous Rights Group Forms in Jade-Rich Hpakant
Published on the 20th of February, 2019
(New Indigenous Rights Group)

“Ethnic Kachin people in Hpakant, Kachin State, formed a leadership body on Monday —known as the [Mungnawk Hkawng Uru Indigenous Peoples (Mubgnawk Hkawng Uru Rudi Ruhpang Hpung: MUR)]—tasked with protecting local rights and land.”

“After complaints of lost natural resources, depleted forests, and collapsing mountains in the area, chairperson Hkum Seng Naw said that the initiative was founded “to get our rights back.”
(Kachinnews, 2019)

After decades of conflict, land deadline looms for Myanmar villagers
Published on the 26th of February, 2019
(Oil Palm, Land Reform & Conflict)

“Naw Pa Eh was just a child when fighting broke out between ethnic Karen and the Myanmar army in her village of Kye Zu Daw in the country’s south.”

“Her father was among those killed as she and other villagers fled in 1992.”

“Villagers were able to return only after a ceasefire was signed in 2012. By then, their village was gone, the land taken for the Tanintharyi Nature Reserve and a palm oil plantation that sprawled across about 610 acres (250 hectares).”

“So the villagers rebuilt their wooden homes in a clearing a short distance away. Now, they are battling to regain the land they once farmed and lived on.”

“After nearly seven decades of conflict, the Karen National Union (KNU), the oldest ethnic armed group, signed a ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar government in 2012, which allowed Naw Pa Eh and other Karen refugees to return home.”

“Ethnic groups continue to fight in other areas even after a national ceasefire deal in 2015, and nearly 100,000 refugees remain in camps across the border in Thailand, according to the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR).”

“As refugees began to trickle back, many found their land had been taken for parks, for military use or classified as Vacant, Fallow and Virgin (VfV) land, and leased to palm oil concessions and rubber plantations.”

“Following an amendment last year to the 2012 Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law, authorities said anyone seeking to use such land must obtain a permit by March 11.”

“Otherwise they could be sued by the legal user of the land for trespass, with a fine of up to 500,000 kyats (\$328) or two years in jail - or both.”

“In Kye Zu Daw, villagers who tried to farm a narrow strip of land have been sued three times under the terms of the 2012 law by the palm oil plantation, said village leader Chit Win Htoo.”

“Just nine villagers had so far received a VfV permit to grow betel nut and cashews on about 50 acres of land, he said.”

“Land governance in Myanmar is regulated by more than 70 laws, some dating back to the British colonial era.”

“Meanwhile, decades of ethnic conflict and military rule have forced hundreds of thousands of people off their land and led to evictions and confiscations, according to a Human Right Watch report in 2018.”

“Disputes over land have flared since the easing of political and economic restrictions began in 2011.”

“The reforms led to a rush of foreign investment and greater demand for land for industrial use in a country where about 70 percent of the population is reliant on agriculture.”

“Officially, all land belongs to the state, which grants permission to occupy or use land via a land-use certificate - but few farmers have those, particularly in ethnic areas where customary tenure is the norm.”

“The VfV law aimed to clarify land claims and reduce landlessness. It covers almost a third of Myanmar, mostly in states with large ethnic populations.”

“The KNU, which recognises customary tenure in the areas that it administers, including the Tanintharyi region, has called for scrapping the VfV law, which it says forces people to give up their rights and limits their land use to 30 years.”

“About 70 percent of people in the Tanintharyi region had either not registered their land, or lacked formal documents to do so, said Sa Ayar Win of the Myeik Lawyer Network, which provides pro bono services to villagers caught in land disputes.”

Please refer to the work of Rina Chandran for more on this pertinent issue.

(Chandran, 2019)

Recognize our customary tenure and rights: Nagas to Myanmar govt

Published on the 27th of February, 2019

(Land Rights Recognition)

“Indigenous Naga communities in Myanmar have called upon the Government of Myanmar to recognize ‘the customary tenure system and respect their rights to own, use and govern over the lands, territories and resources’ of the Naga Village Republic’.”

“The Nagas have occupied them ‘since time immemorial,’ declared the communities at the launch of the advocacy campaign for the ‘recognition of Naga territories and land and forest management rights’.”

“The report, titled ‘Land and Forest Governance in the Naga Village Republic’ by Resource Rights for the Indigenous People (RRtIP), was first launched in Layshi and later in Yangon on February 27.”

(Morung Express News, 2019)

March

One giant land grab

Published on the 12th of March, 2019

(Land Grabbing)

“For millions of smallholder farmers in Myanmar, a deadline has passed.”

“By March 11, the land that they live and depend on had to be registered with the government in exchange for a permit. This is because the government considers their land, which may have been farmed and conserved for generations by a single community, to be vacant, fallow or virgin, unless proven otherwise.”

“In other words, in the eyes of revenue-conscious administrators, this land is going to waste, and

should be made available for commercial exploitation. Since Myanmar badly needs investment to catch up with its regional peers, and is rich only in land and natural resources, everything must be done to unlock these assets.”

“This appears to be the motive behind the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Law, enacted in 2012 but amended in September to insert harsher penalties for those “trespassing” on land designated in this way, and for companies who fail to make concessions granted under the law productive.”

“A government notice issued in October announced a six-month deadline from the passing of the amendments for all occupants of land considered vacant, virgin or fallow to go to their nearest land records office and supply detailed information about their land claim. Those who failed to do so would be considered trespassers, liable to be evicted, fined or imprisoned for up to two years.”

For more on this serious issue please refer to the article and other accompanying information.
(Frontier, 2019)

April

Nowhere to go: Myanmar farmers under siege from land law
Published on the 3rd of April, 2019
(Legalising Dispossession)



The law puts farmers at risk, mostly in territories that are home to ethnic minorities
[File: Gemunu Amarasinghe/AP Photo]

“Han Win Naung is besieged on his own land.”

“Last September, local administrators in Myanmar's southern Tanintharyi region put up a sign at the edge of his 5.7-hectare farm that read ‘Under Management Ownership - Do Not Trespass’.”

“He was eventually informed that the administrators were challenging his claim to the land and had filed charges against him under a controversial law that could see him jailed for three years.”

“Han Win Naung is accused of violating the Vacant, Fallow and Virgin (VfV) Lands Management Law which requires anyone living on land categorised as ‘vacant, fallow, and virgin’ to apply for a permit to continue using it for the next 30 years.”

“Now Han Win Naung's farm is in disrepair. Because of the lawsuit, he has been unable to tend to the mango, banana and cashew trees that have sustained his family since his father set up the farm 28 years ago.”

Han Win Naung's story is one of many dispossessions taking place under the VFV lands Management Laws. What can be done must be done to prevent this systemic violence from continuing further.
(Goldberg, 2019)

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Japan

March

Rights groups blame Japan gov't over bill on Ainu ethnic minority
Published on the 1st of March, 2019
(Indigenous Rights in Legislation)

"Some rights groups criticized the Japanese government Friday over a recent bill recognizing the Ainu people for the first time as "an indigenous group," saying that despite the wording, it treats them as a tourist attraction and does not do enough to reverse the historical discrimination they have suffered."

"Calling the bill "deplorable," some representatives of the ethnic minority, with roots in the northernmost main island of Hokkaido, said the group's voices and rights have been ignored."

"The bill, which the government approved on Feb. 15, says its objective is to "realize a society which will respect the pride of the Ainu," who also live in parts of Russia near Hokkaido."

"There has been no apology...The bill refers to the Ainu as indigenous people but they are empty words," said Yuji Shimizu, chairman of the Ainu Kotan no Kai at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, demanding its "immediate withdrawal and resubmission."

"The government is seeking to enact the legislation during the ongoing 150-day parliamentary session, which will end in late June if not extended."

"There is no content in any of the articles mentioning indigenous rights, in other words the right to self-determination, the right to land, etc.,' Shimizu said, noting the government had stripped the Ainu of their entitlements and resources starting in the late 19th century."

"Beginning with the government's assimilationist policy in the Meiji Era (1868-1912), the ethnic minority has suffered discrimination, spilling over into income and educational disparities. The Ainu have also struggled to maintain their culture and language."

"Government policy has been so detrimental that their actual number is difficult to ascertain. A 2017

Hokkaido survey lists the Ainu population as slightly more than 13,000, but some estimates put it as high as 250,000.”

“A 1997 law replaced the almost century-old assimilationist law and acknowledged for the first time the existence of an ethnic minority in Japan, but it did not call the Ainu an indigenous group.”

For more on this issue, please refer to the rest of the article
(Tamura, 2019)

April

Law enacted to recognize ethnic Ainu minority as indigenous people
Published on the 19th of April, 2019
(Indigenous Rights)

“Japan enacted on Friday legislation aimed at protecting and promoting the culture of the Ainu, an ethnic minority in northern Japan, with financial assistance, stipulating for the first time they are an “indigenous” people.”

“The law requires the central and local governments to promote Ainu culture and industry, including tourism, in order to correct long-standing socioeconomic disparities faced by the group. But some Ainu have criticized the legislation, saying it will not do enough to reverse historical discrimination.”

“Although the law was enacted amid a rise of global awareness about promoting and protecting minority rights, it does not stipulate rights to self-determination and education for the Ainu despite both rights being acknowledged in the 2007 U.N. declaration on the rights of indigenous people.”
(Kyodo News, 2019)

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The Philippines

January

On the **08/01/2019** a farmer was gunned down in Brgy. Mabunga, San Francisco, Quezon. Albert Espenas (39) was manning his store when assailants shot him, after the latter feigned to buy goods at the victim's store. The killing of Espenas was used by the 85th Infantry Battalion to justify their militarization in San Francisco, Quezon. As of this writing, soldiers remain encamped in the area ^(1.).

On the **14/01/2019**, six Kalinga farmers in San Mariano, Isabela were illegally arrested by elements of the 17th IBPA. The victims were identified as Espido Tamang, Jojo Tamang, Rodel Infiel, Arjay Zipagan, Tuting Ampa, and Porong Ampa. According to witnesses and Robert Turino, Brgy. Captain of Brgy. Paminan, the victims were strafed, illegally arrested, and brought to the military camp in Rogus, Cauyan City. The military alleged that the farmers were hiding grenades in their nets and baskets; this was vehemently disputed by the community. Due to the immediate and coordinated response of local officials, human rights organizations, and members of the community, the victims were eventually released from the military's camp on the afternoon of January 16, 2019 ^(1.).

On the **24/01/2019** Lumad farmers Emel Tejero and Randel Gallego went missing after military troops indiscriminately fired at them while on their way home to Km. 16, Brgy. Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur. They were with four other farmers when elements of the 36th IBPA mercilessly fired at them – four were able to escape, while Tejero and Gallego went missing. On the **30/01/2019** the two were found dead and brought to Sitio Neptune, Brgy. Diatagon, Lianga. The military claimed that they were NPA members but they were mere farmers going home from hauling abaca fiber from their farms ^(2.).

Philippines 'extremely dangerous' for rights workers — report Published on the 14th of January, 2019 (HRDs)

“The working environment in the country has been especially challenging for defenders of land, indigenous peoples' and environmental rights, a report by Dublin-based human rights organization Front Line Defenders said.”

“At least 39 rights advocates were killed in the Philippines last year, Front Line Defenders, which focuses on human rights workers at risk, said in its Global Analysis 2018, which was released earlier this month.”

“At least 60 human rights advocates were killed in the Philippines in 2017, according to an earlier report of Front Line Defenders.”

“In December, responding to a call by a UN special rapporteur for the government to end attacks on rights defenders, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo claimed that ‘organizations presenting themselves as so-called human rights defenders never had it so good under the Duterte administration’.”
(Cabico, 2019)



In this September 25, 2018 photo, members of local rights group Karapatan condemn the killing of human rights defender Mariam Uy Acob (Cabico, 2019).

Public referendum to give minority muslim control over land and resources.

Published on the 21st of January, 2019

(Vote for Autonomy)

On the **28/01/2019**, Datu Jomorito Goaynon, Lumad leader and chairperson of Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization, went missing, according to an urgent alert from the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas – Northern Mindanao Region (KMP-NMR). Goaynon was with Ireneo Udarbe, chairperson of KMP-NMR. The two have been unreachable since the morning of January 28^(3.).

On the **29/01/2019** Serio Atay (35), member of the farmers' group Magbabaul affiliated with the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP), was shot dead in San Roque village, Rizal town, in Zamboanga del Norte^(4.).

On the **30/01/2019** four members of the Misamis Oriental Farmers Association (MOFA) were abducted by elements of the military and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) in Patag, Cagayan de Oro. MOFA members Gerry Basahon, Gerard Basahon, Marivic Colita, and Mylene Colita were taken after the military and the CIDG barged into their office at around 6:30, without any warrant of arrest. They were charged with trumped-up cases of illegal possession of firearms and explosives^(2.).

On the **30/01/2019** at 2:30am Randy Felix Malayao (49) was asleep on a bus in Aritao, Nueva Vizcaya, when a gunman walked onboard and shot him. Randy was a high profile member of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) and a peace consultant^(5.).

On the **13/02/2019** human rights defender and journalist Maria Ressa was arrested by officers from the National Bureau of Investigation on charges of cyber libel carrying up to 12 years' imprisonment. She was released the following day after posting a bail of 100,000 PHP (1,690 EUR). Maria Ressa is the CEO and co-founder of Rappler, the leading independent online news network in the Philippines. Prior to starting Rappler in 2012, Maria Ressa was the CNN's regional bureau chief first in Manila, and then in Jakarta. She was rearrest on the **29/03/2019** on



Archive Photo: A Filipino Muslim woman, with the word "peace" on her mouth, takes part in a rally held by the Anak Mindanao (Children of Mindanao) Party List group outside the Israeli embassy in Taguig, Metro Manila, July 15, 2014. REUTERS/Erik De Castro

"Nearly three million minority Muslims in southern Philippines voted on Monday in a referendum on autonomy, a move that is aimed at ending decades of deadly conflict and granting them greater control over their land and natural resources."

"Residents in Mindanao region are being asked if they back a plan by separatists and the government to create a self-administered area known as Bangsamoro, or "nation of Moros", the name Spanish colonialists gave to the area's Muslim inhabitants."

"A clear "yes" vote is widely expected, which would grant executive, legislature and fiscal powers to the region."

"This is a very significant vote that will lead to a participatory government that will ensure everyone is heard, and no one is left out," said Rufa Cagoco-Guam, a conflicts specialist at the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation.

"It recognises Bangsamoro people as a people with a distinct historical and cultural identity, and respects their right to their ancestral domain and resources, and their right to govern themselves," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation."

"Mindanao, the Philippines' second-biggest island, has mineral deposits worth about \$300 billion, or 40 percent of the country's reserves, according to government estimates."

"It also has among the highest rates of poverty after decades of separatist conflict, which has killed about 120,000 people and forced more than two million from their homes, according to human rights activists."

"Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has backed the new region, saying it will bring peace and wealth in Mindanao, his home island."

"The results of Monday's vote are due to be declared later this week."

(Chandran, 2019)

Court stops golf project in Baguio

Published on the 22nd of January, 2019

(Golf & Violation of the Indigenous Ancestral Lands)

yet another set of charges which many deem as politically motivated cases by the Duterte administration (6. & 7.).

On the **15/03/2019** Lumad student Jerome Pangadas (15) was shot in the head and killed by member of the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU), Eroy Balentin (8.).

On the **18/03/2019** Larry Suganob (42) was shot and killed by 'motorcycle-riding perpetrators'. Larry was active in the farmers' local struggle against land grabbing of Ayalas (9.).

Dodicto Minosa was last seen on the **22/03/2019** after leaving his home to go to his farm. The previous day two men alleged to be military intelligence officers came around their house to look for him and his son. When Minosa did not come home in the evening, his family went to his farm hut to look for him on March 23, only to find the place ransacked. They filed a missing person report on the **24/03/2019** (10.).

On the **30/03/2019** 14 farmers in Negros Oriental were victims of extrajudicial killings following police and military operations in Canlaon City, Manjuyod, and Sta. Catalina. Relatives of the victims have stepped forward to assert that those killed were all farmers and residents in the area. Karapatan Negros has identified the eight victims killed in Canlaon City as Ismael Avelino (53), Edgardo Avelino (59), Melchor Pañares (67), Mario Pañares (46), Rogelio Ricomuno (52), Ricky Ricomuno (28), Gonzalo Rosales (47), Genes Palmares (54), Franklen Lariosa and Anoj Enojo Rapada were also reportedly killed. In Manjuyod, among those killed were Velentin Acabal and Sonny Palagtiw. In Manjuyod, the fatalities were identified as Steve Arapoc and Manulo Martin. Since March 29, these areas were reportedly militarized by elements of the 94th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army (11.).

"A local court here issued a temporary environment protection order (TEPO) against Sta. Lucia Realty and Development Inc. (SLRDI) to cease excavation works in areas covered by its Pinewoods Golf Course and Country Club within the border of this city and Tuba, Benguet."

"Judge Maria Ligaya Itliong-Rivera of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 5 said the court noted that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) report showed that SLRDI had no permit to cut pine trees in the golf course project site but only a mayor's clearance to cut 35 Benguet pine trees. It said the clearance was not equivalent to a permit."

"It appears from the submissions of the petitioners, heirs of Tunged, that respondents, Sta. Lucia Realty and Development Inc., is in the process of undertaking a project known as pinewoods Golf Course and Country Club. While it was issued an environmental compliance certificate, it allegedly violated some conditions thereof. The project also violated provisions of Presidential Decree 1586 or the "Philippine Environment Impact Assessment" statement and Presidential Decree 705 or the Forestry Reform Code of the Philippines," the order stated.

"The petitioners, who are heirs of the property owner Tunged (one name only), contended that their ancestor was the owner of a large track of land straddling the border of Baguio City and Tuba, Benguet. He inherited the property originally consisting of 195 hectares from his parents, Yaris and Sabot."

"The petitioners claimed that Tunged's possession of the land was investigated and verified by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) on Aug. 30, 2013 on their petition for the identification, delineation and recognition of their ancestral claim and issuance of certificate of ancestral land title (CALT)."

"But their right of ownership over the land and all other rights recognized by Republic Act 8371 or the 'Indigenous Peoples Rights Act' (IPRA), were violated when SLRDI summarily bulldozed their property causing the destruction of small and fully grown trees and sayote (choyote) plantations in about five hectares of the land."

(See, 2019)

'Landslide vote' for wider

Muslim self-rule in Philippines' south

Published on the 25th of January, 2019

(Vote for Autonomy)

"Voters have decisively approved an expanded Muslim-led region in the Philippines' south, which is hoped will bring a measure of peace after decades of fighting has killed thousands and mired the area in poverty."

"The results, announced on Friday, will begin the process of the Catholic-majority nation's largest rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), laying down its weapons and assuming political power."

On the **31/03/2019** 28 Lumad families, composed of 168 individuals from Sitios Decoy and Panukmoan, Brgy. Diatagon, Lianga, Surigao del Sur were forced to evacuate following aerial bombings and strafing in their fields. The victims took refuge in Km. 9, Brgy. Diatagon. Residents reported that around 9am, they heard two loud blasts from cannon artillery in the aforementioned areas of Brgy. Diatagon. The explosion was due to military operations by the 401st Brigade of the AFP. At around noon, residents also stated that two helicopters aerielly bombarded and strafed farm areas in said indigenous communities ^(10.).

On the **07/04/2019** Data Kaylo Bontolan, a Manobo tribal chieftain and participant in the indigenous people's Lakbayan to Manila, was reportedly killed by elements of the 3rd IB of the AFP Eastern Mindanao Command during its military operations in Kitaotao. Datu Kaylo was in the area visiting the communities and delving into the current situation of his fellow Manobos who had been forced to evacuate from their communities in Talaingod, a village that has gained prominence for its people's resistance against logging and mining in the Pantaron Range ^(12.).

On the **22/04/2019** rights advocate Bernrdino 'Toto' Patigas (72) was shot at and killed, while on his way home, by two men on a motorcycle. Patigas, a strong advocate against the Marcos regime, began the Northern Negros Alliance of Human Rights Advocacy (NNAHRA). Four hours after he was ambushed, eight leaders of progressive groups in Negros Occidental received death threats. Patigas' death comes a year after his picture, and those of 62 others, were displayed on the walls in Moises Padilla town ^(13.).

"Voters, who were expected to back the so-called Bangsamoro (which means Moro nation) region, delivered a convincing result of about 1.7 million in favour and some 254,600 against, according to official results from the Philippines elections commission."

"At least 120,000 people have been killed in the rebellion that began in the 1970s and aimed to push the government to grant independence to a Muslim minority concentrated on the southern island of Mindanao."

"The new Bangsamoro region will replace and expand on the current autonomous government, which has struggled to govern effectively due to limited powers and has been hamstrung by alleged corruption."

"Among the areas covered by the new region is the [city of Marawi](#), which was occupied for six months by armed groups that pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant ([ISIL](#), also known as ISIS) group."

"The Muslim-majority [island province of Sulu](#) voted against the new proposal, but it was overwhelmed by votes from other provinces. Basilan province's capital city of Isabel a also rejected the new region, even as the rest of Basilan approved it."

"A handful of smaller areas, which were not included in Monday's referendum due to administrative delays, are set to vote on February 6 on whether to join."

"Rebels and the government in Manila hope a new, peaceful Bangsamoro will finally draw the investment needed to pull the region out of the brutal poverty that makes it a hotspot for violence. (Al Jazeera, 2019)

February

Killings, arrests as military 'flush out' Mindanao environmental defenders

**Published on the 11th of February, 2019
(Targeting Indigenous Peoples)**

"The massive human rights violations committed against indigenous peoples or Lumads and peasants are designed to silence the opposition to the continuing operations of large-scale mining and plantations in Northern Mindanao and the rest of Caraga Region."

"This was the assessment made by the environmental group Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment or Kalikasan PNE."

Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment (Kalikasan PNE) coordinator Leon Dulce "...points out that these Lumad and peasant leaders are the environmental defenders that continue to stand and oppose the large-scale mining and plantation operations in areas of Mindanao."

"At present, these environmental defenders are protecting around 243,163 ha of forest and agricultural lands within their ancestral domains and farmlands against the encroachment of these extractive and destructive projects in Northern Mindanao and Caraga Region, he said." (Cagula, 2019)



An international non-government organisation, The Global Witness, has reported that 48 individuals were killed in the country last year, a majority related to agribusiness. Image: Philstar

In the Philippines, activists increasingly face a “living hell”
Published on the 15th of February, 2019
(Red Tagging & Arbitrary Detentions)

“On 29 January, over 24 hours after Datu Jomorito Guaynon and Ireneo Udarbe were reported missing in downtown Cagayan de Oro, local police in northern Mindanao announced that the two activists had been arrested.”

“Udarbe and Guaynon are both regional leaders organising Lumads (a catch-all Visayan term for Mindanao’s indigenous peoples) against resource extraction and military encroachment on ancestral lands. However, authorities have accused the pair of leading militant groups and serving as recruiters for the New People’s Army (NPA), an armed communist group considered a terrorist organisation by the Philippine government.”

“This is not a first for Guaynon, a regional chair of the Lumad group Kalumbay. Guaynon told me last year he and his contemporaries were recurrent victims of “red tagging,” or the false branding of activists as communist insurgents. Although he sharply denies any personal association with the NPA, such a label can be fatal in the Philippines. President Rodrigo Duterte has [offered bounties](#) to civilians, including Lumads, to kill suspected NPA members on sight and has urged troops to [shoot female rebels](#) ‘in the vagina’.”

“The practice of “red tagging” – which has ensnared [journalists](#), [labour groups](#), and [politicians](#) throughout the Philippines – has been condemned by international rights groups and in a [statement](#) by UN special rapporteurs Cecilia Jimenez-Damary and Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, in which they slammed the “unfounded” nature of the links between Lumads and militants. Shortly after the statement was published, Tauli-Corpuz was [forced to flee the country](#) after being included by Duterte on a list of suspected terrorists with links to communist rebels.”

“For Lumad activists such as Guaynon, existence has become a living hell. He and his contemporaries have long opposed private development on the fertile farmlands of northern Mindanao, much of which is claimed by Lumads as “ancestral domain” under the country’s robust yet inconsistently implemented [Indigenous Peoples Rights Act](#).” (Aspinwall, 2019)



Activists burn portraits of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (Photo: Ted Aljibe via Getty)

March

FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL FACT-FINDING AND SOLIDARITY MISSION IN NEGROS ORIENTAL, PHILIPPINES April 4-8, 2019

Published on the 13th of March, 2019

(Human Rights Review)

“On March 15, 2019, Karapatan and Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP) filed complaints with the Joint Monitoring Committee of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines with regard to the red-tagging and terrorist-labelling of said organizations. The filing was also done a day prior to the 21st year of the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL). CARHRIHL was an agreement entered into between the government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) on March 16, 1998 in the Hague, Netherlands.”

“Karapatan has been sending complaints to the GRP Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) with regard to human rights violations perpetrated by past and present governments. The core provision of the agreement is to guarantee the protection of human rights to all Filipinos. The JMC was established in February 2014 to ensure the full implementation of the agreement.”

“At least 47 human rights workers of Karapatan have already been killed since 2001, making us conscious and sentient of how vicious and vindictive governments can be against organizations who work to expose the deteriorating human rights situation in the country”, said Karapatan Deputy Secretary General, Roneo Clamor. (Karapatan, 2019)

‘It is open season right now’: Martial law intensifies in the Philippines

Published on the 14th of March, 2019

(Harassment & Palm Oil)

“Residents of villages in Mindanao say soldiers have forcibly entered their homes, harassed them, and wrongfully arrested them – for the sake of palm oil.”

“It has been over six years since [Joseph Paborada’s] brother Gilbert, the [indigenous organization Pangalasag] former leader, was [shot to death](#) in Cagayan de Oro city by two men aboard a motorcycle—but the atmosphere of fear and apprehension in the village of Bagoceboc, Opol, Misamis Oriental has not dissipated. Joseph believes his brother was murdered for his opposition to a palm oil plantation owned by A Brown Company.”

“The agricultural arm of the corporation, A Brown Energy and Resources Development Inc. (ABERDI), began clearing the land in 2010/2011 under its subsidiary Nakeen Corporation. According to [research](#) by the Kalumbay Regional Lumad Organization, this was done without first obtaining the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous communities in the area. Pangalasag members say the

company's armed guards [barred residents](#) from accessing their own farms.”
For more on this please refer to the cited article.
(Miller, 2019)



Oil palm fields in the Bagoceboc/Tingalan area, Misamis Oriental.
Photo by Brad Miller for Mongabay.

The Philippines' China Dam Controversy: The Kaliwa Dam Project, a centerpiece of the BRI in the Philippines, faces steep opposition from indigenous peoples.
Published not he 27th of March, 2019
(Hydro & Indigenous Rights)

“Millions of people in Metro Manila were left without water last week, raising pressure on indigenous communities in the mountains above the Philippines capital as the government seeks to tap their terrain for supply.”

“Residents were forced to queue at fire hydrants, and businesses reliant on water, not least laundrettes, closed or suspended operations.”

“Public ire is being leveled at Manila Water, the private concessionary contracted in 1997 to manage water and wastewater services to the eastern area of Metro Manila on a 25-year lease.”

“Civil society groups have accused the company, which is majority owned by venerable Philippines conglomerate Ayala Corp., and invested by the United Kingdom's United Utilities and Japan's Mitsubishi Corp., of putting profits before its public service obligations.”

The [“Kaliwa Dam Project](#), [has] been mooted as a solution to Metro Manila's water requirements... The project in its entirety comprises three dams that together will add 2,400 million liters per day (MLD) to the existing 4,000 MLD supply that serves the 20 million or so people in Manila and its surrounding regions. According to the [Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System] MWSS, the initial phase is slated to begin with a 60-meter concrete dam at Kaliwa, which straddles the boundary of Rizal and Quezon provinces to the east of Manila, as well as a 25-kilometer conveyance tunnel, and two water treatment plants.”

“If built, the Kaliwa dam would bring an additional 600 MLD per day onstream, in the process securing Manila's water supply for the next 10 to 15 years”.

“Various nongovernmental organizations oppose Kaliwa on grounds it will lead to environmental destruction and the displacement of indigenous peoples in more than 230 hectares of the REINA National Park, Wildlife Sanctuary, and Game Preserve, a mountainous area of dipterocarp forests.”

“The land is owned by the Dumagats and Remontados indigenous peoples under a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title. Their communities have fire-fallow farmed the region for generations, or “time immemorial” as specified by the Indigenous People’s Rights Act of 1997, which supposedly guarantees their land rights.”

“A Japanese International Cooperation Agency EIA conducted for the project in the early 2000s identified rare species of flora and fauna in the area, including several species of rattan, a valuable palm used in the manufacture of furniture and balls used in the kick volleyball game Sepak takraw. White-winged flying fox, slender-tailed cloud rat, civet cats, wild boar, and the Philippine eagle and Philippine deer are among the threatened wildlife species in the area.”

For more on this issue, please refer to the cited article.

(Green, 2019)

April

Filipino activist and indigenous peoples advocate receives 2019 Gwangju Human Rights Award

Published on the 16th of April, 2019

(Rights Defender)

“Joanna Carino, a 67-year-old democracy and human rights activist from the Philippines who has dedicated herself to battling dictatorship and fighting to protect the human rights of indigenous peoples, was selected to receive the 2019 Gwangju Human Rights Award.”

Joanna Carino as a founder of the Cordillera People’s Alliance (CPA) in the Philippines and director of the Luzon chapter of the group SELDA (Samahan ng mga Ex-Detainees Laban sa Detensyon at Aresto).

(Dae-ha, 2019)

CALG ACTIONS AND PLANS FOR 2019

In 2019, as in previous years, CALG will invest its energies and resources on 10 key actions: **1)** submission of Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) applications; **2)** training courses to capacitate IP community facilitators on existing laws and policies; **3)** implementation of Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development Protection Plans (ADSDPPs) in targeted municipalities; **4)** mitigation of community conflicts being fostered by companies/corporations; **5)** training of indigenous people to enhance their capacities to guard and monitor ancestral domains; **6)** filing cases against companies/corporations so to bring their illegalities to the attention of the concerned government agencies; **7)** building awareness amongst municipal government staff on the impact of oil palm plantations so to encourage them to push their own moratoria against oil palms expansion; **8)** fostering bridges of communication and dialogues between indigenous peoples’ representatives and concerned politicians; **9)** empowering young indigenous community members and involve them in advocacy works, so to foster their knowledge on how to counter agribusiness corporations and extractive industries; **10)** assisting Indigenous Environmental and Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) and their families.

CADT (CERTIFICATES OF ANCESTRAL DOMAIN TITLES)

CADT processes being initiated by CALG amongst several indigenous communities are now well advanced; this means that most bureaucratic requirements and paper work leading to the final survey of ancestral domains are nearly accomplished. On other cases, we still have a long way to go, especially with reference to those communities that joined our activities towards the latter part of the 2018 project cycle. After initial submission of CADT claims to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), CALG we’ll need to assist these communities with the preparation of their Work and Financial Plans (WFPs) and Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plans (ADSDPPs). These are the essential steps leading towards the demarcation and official recognition of communities’ ancestral domains.

Our ultimate objective is quite ambitious: complete much of the preparatory work needed for ancestral land recognition for the largest possible number of communities in Palawan. Through the support of our international partners such as Rainforest Fund, Rainforest Rescue and Cultural Survival,

we are now moving towards the final stage of CADT processes for the indigenous Pala'wan communities of Calumpang and Quinlogan (Municipality of Quezon) and for the Batak/Tagbanua communities of Puerto Princesa Municipality. CADT applications are also being processed for the indigenous communities of Marangas, Inogbong, Bolalacao, Malihod, Buno Buno (Municipality of Bataraza), as well as for those of Panitian, Isumbo, Abo Abo (Municipality of Española). Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development Protection Plans (ADSDPPs) will be further facilitated for the communities of Malatgao, Panitian Alfonso XIII, Tabon, Pinaglabanan and Kalatagbak (Municipality of Quezon). The same applies to the Pala'wan communities of Candawaga, Culasian, Ransang (Municipality of Rizal). In the latter location, CALG is still carrying out a harsh legal battle aiming at the total cancellation of two major agribusiness companies (GPPAC and Lion Earth).

There are other pending tasks, which CALG had hoped to accomplish in 2018 but we failed to do so due to funds' shortage. In this respect, within the current year, CALG intends to complete the 'segregation' process for the Barangays of Bagong Bayan, Simpocan, St Nino and Napsan (West Coast of Puerto Princesa). 'Segregation', in this particular case, refers to the exclusion from the allocated ancestral domain of those locations that have been privatized before the issuance of CADT certificates and, therefore, can no longer be included into the CADT area of the local Tagbanua tribe. 'Segregation' will be carried out in close coordination with NCIP officials and through the professional assistance of a geodic engineer.

CALG is also lobbying for the recognition of selected ICCAs (Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories) in Palawan. As of now, an ICCA law has not yet been approved in the Philippines. However, ICCAs can still be registered with the ICCA Registry of the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) [see <http://www.iccaregistry.org/>]. Such registration can add value to the applying communities in a variety of ways, such as providing them a 'Global Billboard' announcing the traditional rules and policies that govern the ICCA. This, in turn, provides an early warning system to the communities in order to inform prospective investors and corporations of the existence and status of their ICCA.

CALG is now working for the recognition and registration of the Tanabag Batak ICCA (<https://www.iccaconsortium.org/index.php/2018/04/10/the-tanabag-batak-icca-on-palawan-island/>).

COMMUNITY-BASED REFORESTATION



Mangroves Planting in Sarong (Municipality of Bataraza) Photo: CALG

Mangroves are highly protected under Philippine law. Nevertheless, related legislation is poorly implemented and the few available coast guards lack of the necessary equipment (such as speed-

boats) to successfully monitor the remaining mangrove sanctuaries. Garbage dumping, occasional cutting of trees, soil erosion, and encroachment of human settlers are common threats to mangrove forest. In some areas, mangrove trees are also used for charcoal making. This illegal use of mangroves is now increasing due to the destruction of other precious resource by oil palm companies on which communities depended for their survival. Many communities, in fact, have already lost access to coastal and upland forests and are now increasing pressure on the remaining mangroves. Illegal fishing by migrants (with dynamite and cyanide) is also taking place at the fringes of mangroves, further depleting communities' fish-stock. In recent years, the situation has further deteriorated in Southern Palawan where large expanses of mangroves have been de-barked, with the bark (rich in tannin) being illegally sold in Sabah (Eastern Malaysia) for the leather industry.

Presently, CALG is carrying out a survey on the most affected mangrove areas in southern Palawan through the use of geotagging and PGIS (Participatory Geographic Information Systems) technologies. In selected locations, CALG 'community-based reforestation' is now playing an important role in countering on-going land grabbing. For instance, the reforestation of damaged mangrove forest in the Municipality of Bataraza, has already brought government authorities on our side and has encouraged the local staff of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to intensify their pressure on illegal charcoal producers. On other cases, we have also discovered that reforestation projects might represent a deterrent for companies (e.g. mining firms) to pursue their operations. Once indigenous people can prove that their area is subject to reforestation in collaboration with DENR, it becomes more difficult for companies to secure tenement claims over that particular area. This is the reason why community-based reforestation will continue to feature amongst the activities to be implemented by CALG in the year 2019.

Our final target for mangroves' replanting in Sarong consists of a total area of 16 hectares and, as of now, four of these have already been reforested. Concurrently, mangrove reforestation will also be carried in Carampuro (Municipality of Quezon).

COUNTERING AGRIBUSINESS AND OTHER CORPORATIONS

In 2019, our main strategies to counter accelerated land grabbing will include: **a)** filing as many CADT applications as we can and thus, give indigenous communities a ready-to-use tool to counter on-going land grabbing; **b)** filing cases against companies and individuals involved in land grabbing; **c)** extending training to local communities for guarding their land and protecting their resources. Compared to our previous 2018 project, it is likely that, in 2019, advocacy against mining will play a more role in our agenda. In fact, there is now a resurgence of mining applications for chromite, nickel, as well as of quarrying operations in karst formations. Special assistance will be extended to six Pala'wan communities being threatened by the extractive activities of Pyramid Hills Cement Company, in the Municipality of Quezon and Española. Such activities have already affected the Pala'wan of Dumuduway, in the neighbouring municipality of Espanola. Community affidavits against mining companies have now been submitted by CALG to the concerned national authorities in Manila, and actions are being taken for halting exploration activities.

In 2019, we will continue to lobby for the approval of oil palm moratoria in different municipalities. As of now, we have already succeeded in having two of such moratoria being approved by the Municipalities of Rizal and Quezon respectively (<https://www.coalitionagainstlandgrabbing.org/news-and-events>).

CONFLICTS' MITIGATION

In several areas, companies and corporations - through the bribery of tribal leaders and other malicious practices - have succeeded in splitting communities apart, breaking their social cohesion. This is why, in 2019, CALG will continue to play a negotiating role in the attempt of reducing communities' internal tensions while uniting them under the common objective of saving their ancestral domain. This role of 'peace-keeping' between opposite factions is, indeed, of critical importance. On the other hand, a small organization like ours can hardly compete with powerful companies, which - instead - can mobilize huge financial resources for achieving their aims. Often harmed personnel are being hired by such companies to implement a regime of terror amongst the targeted indigenous communities.

This, in turn, has the effect of demoralizing the morale of local leaders and indigenous representatives. The fear of being killed or harassed is not of secondary importance, especially for people who have families and live in remote locations.

This is why, CALG assistance to Community Environmental and Human Rights Defenders (CEHRDs) will continue throughout 2019. Specifically, through our 'SECURE' programme we'll try to prevent impending harm to 'defenders' by facilitating their rapid escape (moving from high risk locations to safe places) while assisting them in fulfilling immediate needs (e.g. food and medical costs).

PARALEGAL TRAINING

In 2019, CALG will also continue to extend paralegal assistance and to strengthen the capacities of so called 'ancestral domain guards'. Ancestral Domain Guards (ADGs) need to receive basic monthly honoraria in order to become fully operative and to carry out their duties. In this respect, we are trying to allocate more funds towards this purpose, especially in the form of basic incentives for ADGs children and wives.

SMALL-SCALE LIVELIHOOD



CALG support for community-based livelihood in the year 2019 will mainly focus on three major activities: **a)** distribution of local varieties of rice and other crops during planting time; **b)** construction of potable water facilities and other community infrastructures; **c)** processing of licenses and permits for the collection, sale and transportation of NTFPs [mainly rattan and resin of *almaciga* (*Agathis philippinensis*). Recently, we have successfully facilitated the processing of *almaciga* licenses for two Batak communities located in Langogan (Municipality of Puerto Princesa) and Nanabo (Municipality of Roxas).

Rice harvesting after seeds distribution by CALG
(Municipality of Brooke's Point) Photo: CALG

***For more information on CALG work, please visit our website:**
www.coalitionagainstlandgrabbing.org

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Singapore

March

Rubber industry aims to halt land grabbing and deforestation

Published in the 21st of March, 2019

(Sustainable Rubber)

“The Global Platform on Sustainable Natural Rubber (GPSNR), launched today at the World Rubber Summit in Singapore, is the first global multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at addressing environmental and human rights abuses driven by the rubber industry.”

“Platform members include major brand tyre companies and car manufacturers, rubber producers and processors and international NGOs. The last decade has seen the rubber industry balloon, but with producer countries running out of land for rubber production, rubber plantation companies have expanded onto new land with disastrous effect.”

“In South East Asia, large-scale rubber plantations have been one of the main drivers of land grabs and deforestation - a new industry reality that [Global Witness exposed](#).”

(Iqbal & Hines, 2019)

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Taiwan

January

Taiwan’s indigenous people remind Xi Jinping that it has “never belonged to China”

Published on the 9th of January, 2019

(Indigenous Rights)

“With much of the world’s attention on Taiwan colored by its decades-long enmity with China, it can be easy to forget that centuries of history preceded the arrival of ethnic Chinese on the island.”

“In response to a [recent speech by Xi Jinping](#) in which he warned he would not rule out military means to force the unification of Taiwan with China, the island’s [indigenous people](#) issued an open letter addressed to the Chinese president to challenge Beijing’s claims.”

“[T]he letter asserts that the various indigenous tribes of Taiwan, which have inhabited the land for 6,000 years, do not belong to the “so-called ‘Chinese nation,’” a reference to the oft-used rhetoric by Beijing that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and that it is a “[historical conclusion](#)” that Taiwan and China should be one country.”

““We do not share the monoculturalism, unification, and hegemony promoted by you, Mr. Xi,” the letter asserts. “It is by far not a path to greatness.” It also noted the violations of human rights going on in parts of China such as Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong, and derided Xi’s offer of a “One Country, Two Systems” model for unification on those grounds.”

“The authors of the letter, representatives of two dozen of Taiwan’s indigenous tribes, also criticized the modern state of Taiwan as one that was built upon their “motherland” and said they have “have never given up [their] rightful claim to the sovereignty of Taiwan,” but acknowledged that since the election of president Tsai Ing-wen in 2016 the country has started recognizing the ethnic and cultural diversity of Taiwan.”

(Steger, 2019)

February

Indigenous peoples' rights recognised in a joint declaration by Asian ecotourism bodies
Published on the 8th of February, 2019
(Rights Recognition)



Members of the indigenous Amis tribe participating in the yearly harvest festival in Kaohsiung, Taiwan (TTG Asia, 2019).

“The Asian Ecotourism Network (AEN) and Taiwan Ecotourism Association (TEA) have signed a joint declaration outlining the judicious management of indigenous peoples while reaping benefits for the ecotourism industry and communities alike.”

“The two organisations came together to carve out a set of sustainability principles on which mountain ecotourism can be built. This was at the end of AEN members’ five-day visit to central Taiwan, where the last three days were spent on inspecting indigenous villages and tourism offerings in the popular Alishan mountains.”

(TTG Asia, 2019)

Taiwan’s indigenous are still seeking justice on the democratic side of the Taiwan Strait

Published on the 13th of February, 2019

(Indigenous Peoples & Geopolitics)

“In a widely dissected [January 2 speech](#), Chinese President Xi Jinping reasserted China’s unwavering claim of sovereignty over the island and his commitment to potentially using force to pursue it. Reaction from all sides was swift: Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen 蔡英文 (Cài Yīngwén) forcefully [rejected](#) Xi’s offer of unification in a speech later that day, leading the New York Times [to say](#) that the people of Taiwan had rallied around their leader, while a South China Morning Post op-ed [claimed](#) China had “opened the door to war” with Taiwan.”

“But there was one group whose official response was the subject of far less dissection by the mainstream press: Taiwan’s indigenous, those who can claim thousands of years of history on the island long before the first foreign settlers showed up in the 17th century.”

“[T]he truth is far more complex, especially to activists such as Panai Kusui, a singer and indigenous leader born to parents of the Puyuma and Amis tribes. “If you take out ‘Dear Xi Jinping’ and replace it with ‘Dear the Tsai administration,’ the letter would work just as well,” she said.”

Distribution of Indigenous Peoples



Source: Council of Indigenous Peoples

“Taiwan’s indigenous, or 原住民 (yuán zhù mǐn, original inhabitants), are seeking comprehensive transitional justice after centuries of exploitation at the hands of various colonizers, including the Han Chinese settlers whom they predate. In 2016, Tsai Ing-wen became the first Taiwanese leader to officially apologize to the island’s indigenous population, acknowledging that past governments had failed to implement the Indigenous Peoples’ Basic Law, passed in 2005 to grant a wide range of rights to indigenous residents, and promised progress during her administration.”

“This progress has come slower than once hoped for a population that remains poorer and less educated than citizens of Han Chinese ethnicity. The letter to Xi Jinping notes this, saying: “We are not content with the current state of Taiwan, the sovereign state that was built upon our motherland.”

For a more in-depth look into the complex dynamics of Indigenous peoples in Taiwan, please refer to the cited article, which discusses the politics - between indigenous peoples, nation state and China - in detail. (Aspinwall, 2019)

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Thailand

January

Thai parks’ protectors must recognise ethnic group’s rights, experts say - The Nation | #AsiaNewsNetwork
Published on the 10th of January, 2019
(Partial Justice)

“Kittisak Prokati, a law lecturer at Thammasat University, said the Constitution recognises the communal rights of all indigenous groups in Thailand. Forcibly evicting the Karen from their land in the village of Ban Bangkloibon violated that right, he said.”

“The court ruled last year that the DNP acted unlawfully in burning down Karen homes in Ban Bangkloibon and forcing them off their ancestral land inside the national park. It found that DNP officials failed to follow proper legal procedure and acted excessively harshly.”

“Kittisak lamented that the verdict failed to acknowledge or order the preservation of the communal rights of the Karen.

“Chaiwat Limlikhit-aksorn, then head of the national park, led officials in May 2011 in “Operation Tenasserim” to forcefully drive the Karen from the rainforest. It labelled the Karen, who had lived in the

park for centuries, as “illegal migrant forest encroachers from Myanmar”.”

“Ninety-eight houses in Ban Bangkloibon were burned down, along with personal belongings they held, and the community was moved downhill to Ban Pongluek.”

“No compensation was offered, an oversight that the Supreme Administrative Court ordered corrected, Kittisak noted, but the court made no comment on rights violations and there was no direction to rectify them.”

(Rujivanarom, 2019)

February

Rising Public Concern Over Vacant Land Law Amendment Goes Unaddressed

Published on the 21st of February, 2019

(FPIC and Law Amendments)

“The six-month window for the registration of vacant, fallow and virgin land for the use of agribusiness in accordance with the newly amended Vacant, Fallow and Virgin (VfV) Land Management Law will come to a close on March 11.”

“One month after the amended law was passed by the Union Parliament last September, the government began efforts in raising awareness about the law, using state-run media to urge the public to register land despite a lack of information on specific bylaws.”

“The law gave rise to public outcry from those who condemned it as unfair and a threat to land rights of the ethnic minority groups who practice traditional customary tenure and who fear losing their lands which they own without legal statutory tenure.”

“Last week, the Chin Land Affairs Network (CLAN), with members from all nine townships of Chin State, urged for the law to be revoked, saying it would ignite conflict in the area.”

“Mang Za Khup, CLAN’s spokesperson, said Chin people are the original owners of lands in Chin



An ethnic Kayan woman on her farm in Demoso Township, Kayah State in June 2017. / The Irrawaddy

State and this must not be changed without explicit consent from the indigenous Chin people. He told The Irrawaddy on Thursday that Chin people have lived and worked on freehold lands in the state for thousands of years and that the 2012 Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law and its 2018 amendment would cause them to lose their freehold land rights.”

(Nyein, 2019)

March

Forests cannot grow on state violence Published on the 16th of March, 2019 (Forest Rights and Draconian Laws)

“Millions of forest dwellers will soon be subjected to more severe state repression than Thai Muslims in the deep South under the suffocating emergency law.”

“Under the new National Park Bill, forest officials can summon people for questioning, enter any households without court orders, and have the authority to destroy any dwellings deemed illegal without having to go through court procedures.”

“Destroying people's houses at will? Even the emergency law now in force in the restive Deep South does not empower the military to do that.”

“In short, the new law will make each national park a militarised state within a state. Even if the country moves on to democratic rule (fingers crossed), national park authorities still can exercise their dictatorial power with forest dwellers because it has now become law.”

“Despite protests from grassroots land rights movements, the controversial law was rushed through the junta-appointed National Legislative Assembly (NLA) early this month for one simple reason: the election is around the corner and such a dictatorial law is blatantly open to abuse of power. It would never see the light of day under elected governments.”

“The forest dwellers' concerns are valid. The present draconian forest laws are already causing them immense suffering because they consider everyone as illegal forest encroachers who must be evicted or sent to jail, robbing them of their human rights and land security.”

“The new law is much worse.”

(Ekachai, 2019)

April

Heritage site or home? Indigenous Thais fight for right to forest Published on the 16th of April, 2019 (UNESCO & Karen Peoples)

“Hundreds of indigenous Karen people in Thailand face evictions from a national park that authorities wish to turn into a World Heritage Site, joining millions in a similarly precarious situation as authorities worldwide push tough conservation laws.”

“The Kaeng Krachan is Thailand's biggest national park, sprawled over more than 2,900 square kilometres (1,120 square miles) on the border with neighbouring Myanmar.”

“Renowned for its diverse wildlife, it is also home to about 30 communities of ethnic Karen people, who have traditionally lived and farmed there - and is on a tentative list of world heritage sites.”

“The United Nations' cultural agency (UNESCO) had referred the submission back to the Thai government in 2016, asking it to address "rights and livelihood concerns" of the Karen communities, and get their support for the nomination.”

“The Thai government plans to respond later this year, according to campaigners.”

“The communities have not been consulted or reassured on their access to the forest,.. The communities are not opposed to the heritage status,.. They are just asking that they not be evicted, and that their land rights are secure - because if the park gets heritage status without that, there will be a great many more evictions.” said Kittisak Rattanakrajangsri of advocacy group Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact.

(Chandran, 2019)

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March

China's Cultural Revolution Might Soon Reappear in Tibet
Published on the 5th of March, 2019
(Tibetan Repression)



Young Tibetan Buddhist novice monks stand in the grasslands of their nomadic camp on the Tibetan Plateau in Madou County, Qinghai Province, China on July 24, 2015. (Kevin Frayer/Getty Images)

“Recently, The Print used [satellite images](#) to prove that at least three “re-education camps” are currently under construction in Tibet. The author of the survey, Vinayak Bha, is a colonel retired from the Indian military intelligence unit and is a well-known satellite image research expert. He has repeatedly revealed Chinese military deployment dynamics through satellite photos. This time, he revealed construction done by Chinese authorities in Tibet. The so-called “temple” of Tibetan Buddhism is actually a concentration camp that is surrounded by high walls and guard towers and has the same structural design as a prison. Observers warned that China may soon start mass detention of Tibetans following

the model of concentration camps for Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang.”

“Since 2009, ethnic minority groups in Xinjiang have been interned and allegedly tortured by the Chinese government. If the Chinese regime starts another disastrous campaign of repression in Tibet, similar to what happened during the notorious 10-year Cultural Revolution, Tibet’s unique cultural heritage may undergo another catastrophe.”

For more on this historic issue, please refer to the cited article.
(Yan, 2019)

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Timor-East

April

Timor-Leste: UN expert on rights of indigenous peoples to visit
Published on the 4th of April, 2019
(Special Rapporteur)

“The official visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur to Timor-Leste scheduled from 8 to 16 April. Next week, Ms Tauli-Corpuz will examine several aspects of affecting indigenous peoples’ lives. During one-week-long trip, the UN expert will check the customary justice systems, community land issues, education, conservation and climate change adaptation as well as mitigation measures.”

“She added that the impacts of climate change are also in the schedule while her staying in Timor-Leste that faced such a serious problem as ocean degradation.”
(Simpson, 2019)

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Vietnam

On the **27/3/2019** Vietnamese environmental defender, Cao Vinh Thinh, was abducted and harassed by the Vietnamese police. Her phone and laptop were confiscated⁽¹⁾.

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South Asia



Bangladesh

March

Indigenous and Dalit Peoples of Bangladesh: Challenges and Way Forward for Inclusion in Rights and Services

Published on the 10th of March, 2019

(Indigenous Rights and Constitutional Failings)

“A situation of inequality, discrimination, exclusion, and deprivation prevails in Bangladesh, in their diverse forms, which impacts on a significant portion of population due to their historical identities and marginalised positions in society. This has remained as a bewildering scenario, although the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees some concrete directives to establish social and economic justice in every spheres of society. The directives provide that all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law (Article 27); state shall endeavour to ensure equality of opportunity to all citizens (Article 19.1); state shall adopt effective measures to remove social and economic inequality and to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens, and of opportunities (Article 19.2); state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 28.1).”

“This study reveals that there are various forms of discriminatory elements in the laws and practices of basic rights and public services, which are resulting in exclusion or at best limited access to rights and entitlements of the Indigenous and Dalit peoples due to their identity. Deprivation of rights and exclusion of basic public service provisions often taken place through instances of denial of services, harassment, unauthorized payments, exclusion from development schemes and access to natural resources, bias in mediation of disputes, etc. The study findings suggest that if some transformative initiatives including affirmative actions are not taken along with effective measures to address the identified challenges are enforced; reproduction of their poverty, exclusion and marginalisation will be inevitable. Thus, the main aspiration of SDGs i.e., to ‘Leave No One Behind’ will remain a far cry. TIB is hereby recommending a number of measure to be able to prevent that eventuality.”

Transparency International Bangladesh has produced an in-depth report regarding the rights, lack of rights, constitutional failings and more in this report. In these two paragraphs little of this complex dynamic can be expressed. If interested in this topic, please refer to the cited report.

(Transparency International Bangladesh, 2019)

Arsonists destroy homes of indigenous people in Bangladesh

Published on the 27th of March, 2019

(Attack)

“Dozens of poor and landless people, mostly from the ethnic minority Pahan community, have been left without shelter by an arson attack on their homes in northern Bangladesh.”

“A gang of thugs allegedly led by a local politician from the ruling [Awami League](#) party were behind the arson attack in the early hours of March 26 that stemmed from a long-running land dispute in the Bostabor area of Dhamurhat in Naogaon district.”

“About 110 people from 37 families including 23 Pahan Hindus and some Bengali Muslims were made homeless by the attack.”

“The gang, armed with sharp weapons, beat up residents and set fire to houses after pouring inflammable fuel on them, according to activists and a police official.”

(Uttom, 2019)



An indigenous Pahan woman sits dumbfounded in the remains of her home after it was attacked by arsonists in the Naogaon district of Bangladesh on March 26. The attack left 37 families homeless. (Uttom, 2019)

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On the **04/02/2019** Anthony Debbarma of the Borok Peoples' Human Rights Organization (BPHRO), along with two other human rights defenders, Jagadish Debbarma and Aghore Debbarma, were charged with sedition for organising a peaceful public rally in Khumulwng, a town in West Tripura, on 30 January 2019 ⁽¹⁾.

On the **05/2/2019** Right To Information activist Vinayak Shirsat went missing, only to be found dead a week later (12th) in suspicious circumstances. Vinayak had been raising his voice against illegal constructions in Vadgaon-Dhayari and surrounding areas, forcing developers to stop their work ⁽²⁾.

On the **15/02/2019** environmental activist, RS Mugilan, held a press conference and released a video documentary alleging that IG and DIG-rank police officials orchestrated the firing against anti-Sterlite protesters in Thoothukudi in collusion with the Sterlite Copper management. He claims the police had escalated the situation at the Vedanta's Tamil Nadu copper smelter in May (2018), which led to the deaths of 13 protesters and many more others injured. Shortly after the conference he was reported missing and is still missing ⁽³⁾.

On the **06/03/2019** indigenous tribal activist from the Kalahandi District of Odisha, Lingaraj Azad, was arbitrarily arrested. He is a strong opponent of a bauxite mine in Niyamgiri area of Kalahandi and Rayagada districts in Odisha, where Dongria Kondh (indigenous tribal community) are to be displaced forcibly from the thirty villages due to bauxite mining. Lingaraj is a fierce fighter for the rights of the adivasis. He is the National Vice-President of Samajwadi Jan Parishad and National Convener of National Alliance of Peoples Movement (NAPM) under which he has successfully led the peoples' movement and fought the valiant struggle against Vedanta Corporation ⁽⁴⁾.

On the **21/3/2019** Poipynhun Majaw (38) was found dead due to a blunt force trauma to his head. It is suspected that Majaw was killed because his investigation into the dealings between the heads of the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council (JHADC) and cement companies was about to reach fruition. The aforementioned cement companies are allegedly mining limestone without permission as the JHADC turns a blind eye ⁽⁵⁾.

On the **25/03/2019** Shabbar Zaidy, a vocal supporter of the 'Save Karbala Jor Bagh Land Movement', was shot in the head just a day after he presided over the 'Save Waqf Conference'. Guardians of the waqf land see this as no coincidence. He had received previous threats ⁽⁶⁾.



January

Citizenship Bill Violates UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples Published on the 5th of January, 2019 (UNDRIP)

“The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) formed to study the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, adopted a report on Thursday, January 3, without amending any part of the Bill. The Winter Session of Parliament is set to end on January 8, and there is speculation that the Bill will be tabled on Monday, a day before the last day.”

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi... told the gathering that the Citizenship Bill was intended to atone for the sins of the Partition. Assamese social groups expressed their displeasure and accused the Prime Minister of being on the side of the Bangladeshis. This accusation may not be entirely off the mark, as there are reports that Congress members of Parliament from Assam sought to exclude Bangladesh from the countries whose non-Muslims would be treated as ‘persecuted minorities’.

“While it is clear that the Bill violates the secular character of the Indian Constitution, a lesser known violation is that India is violating an international commitment, i.e. the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Article 3 confers the right to self-determination on indigenous people.”

For more on how the Citizenship Bill violates the UNDRIP and potentially damages land claims from tribal and indigenous peoples in India, please refer to the cited article.
(Eyben, 2019)

Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir Vs Forest Department Last updated on the 11th of January, 2019 (Dispossession)

“Barely three months after the People's Democratic Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) formed the coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir in 2014, the state's forest department started an anti-encroachment drive in Rajori, Kathua and Poonch districts in Jammu province, asking the nomadic Gujjar families to vacate land under their possession. The government alleged that the Gujjar tribe had encroached upon 13,000ha of forestland and claimed that the land belonged to the forest department. But hundreds of Gujjar families say they have been living in the forests since 1947 and that no government has ever asked them to vacate the land.”

“The Gujjars are nomadic graziers of the Himalayas who practise migratory livestock rearing. They stay in the high mountains throughout the year and come down to the plains during winters. The community follows Islam. They are now

demanding the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, in the state. The law recognises the traditional rights of forest dwellers over forestland and its resources. The Gujjars have accused the state governments of implementing the "most irrelevant" central Acts in Jammu and Kashmir while using the alibi of Article 370 for not implementing the FRA."

"On January 14, 2019, the BJP's Jammu and Kashmir unit [requested](#) the state's Governor to order an enquiry to identify those who misused the Roshni Act to acquire hundreds of kanals (one kanal is equal to 0.125 acres) of state land. The Act, which was passed in 2001, enables the transfer of ownership rights of state land to its occupants, subject to a cost as determined by the government. The Gujjars, who are unhappy with the state's decision to repeal the Act, allege that their applications to acquire land are still pending, 'while the rich and the influential have managed to grab benefits'." (LCW, 2019a)

**ED registers money-laundering case against Akhilesh Yadav, others in connection with illegal mining
Published on the 18th of January, 2019
(Corruption)**

"Enforcement Directorate has registered a money laundering case against former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and others in connection with alleged illegal mining in the state."

"The development comes days after the CBI registered a case on January 2nd against 11 people, including public servants and others, under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act." (DD News, 2019)

**Baghmara Gold Mines of Sonakhan
Last updated on the 23th of January, 2019
(Gold Mining & FPIC)**

Number of People Affected: 2,803

"In the first-ever auction of a gold mine in the country, Baghmara Gold Mines in Sonakhan village in Chhattisgarh was put up for sale in 2016 following multiple surveys. The mine is located in the Kasdol block in Balodabazaar district and has 2,700kg of gold reserve. Vedanta Resources, which won the auction, is expected to begin mining in the next two years. However, as per news [reports](#), the mine was auctioned without taking the consent of the 24 neighbouring villages, including Sonakhan. The residents are worried about the negative impact that the mining activity can have on forests, water and land and, eventually, on their livelihood, as per another [report](#)."

"However, the villagers themselves stand divided as many non-tribal residents are looking forward to the job [opportunities](#) that the project will generate."

"The tribals in Sonakhan have now decided to apply for community rights titles under the Forest Rights Act, 2006, as the land is crucial for their livelihood."

"According to a Reuters [report](#), they approached the relevant state authorities to express their concerns, but the officials found their grievances "misplaced and premature"."

"On January 20, 2019, the chief minister of Chhattisgarh decided to review the permission [granted](#) to Vedanta for mining." (LCW, 2019b)

**Villagers Displaced from Melghat Tiger Reserve Demand Return of their Land
Last updated on the 24th of January, 2019
(Eviction from the Melghat Tiger Reserve)**

Number of People Affected: 200

"In 2015, the Maharashtra forest department commenced operations to evict people living in the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR) in the state. Settlements were spread across 300ha of land in the villages of Dhakna, Sawrya, Bhandum, Borikheda, Gadgabhandum, Dabhiya, Dolar and Gadgamalur. Those who could submit evidence of their land holding were allotted land and allowed to stay while those who could not prove their land ownership were evicted with the help of Special Protection Forces called from

Pench and Tadoba reserves.”

“The tribals residing in the area accused the forest department of not letting them cultivate on their agricultural land. The revenue department asked the local *talathi* (one who maintains the revenue record of the village) to investigate. But large-scale discrepancy crept in. Forest dwellers who had occupied land prior to 2005 were not allotted land while some who settled after 2005 received land for cultivation.”

“On January 14, 2019, around 500 tribals who had been rehabilitated to Akola district in Maharashtra returned to MTR and occupied the meadows in Kelpani village. They demanded that the forest department return their land. Violence broke out when the police and forest department officials approached the villagers asking them to vacate. At least 65 policemen and forest guards were [injured](#) when the villagers attacked them with stones, sticks and chilli powder.”
(LCW, 2019c)

Himachal Pradesh High Court Refuses to Stay Land Transfer for Kashang Project Last updated on the 31st of January, 2019 (Hydroelectric Dam, Right to Water & Forest Rights)

Number of People Affected: 4,800

“The Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (HPPCL) has proposed a 243-MW Integrated Kashang Hydroelectric Project on the Kashang and Kerang streams in Morang tehsil in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. The project will be funded by the Asian Development Bank as part of the Himachal Pradesh Clean Energy Programme.”

“Kinnaur is a Schedule V area under the Indian Constitution, with a high percentage of tribal population. Local communities have challenged environmental and forest clearances to the project in the National Green Tribunal (NGT). When residents of Pangi village challenged land acquisition for the project in court, HPPCL arrived at an out-of-court settlement with the affected people by increasing the compensation rate... This was the first time any project developer had paid compensation for diversion of forestland in Himachal Pradesh.”

“Residents of Lippa and Rarang villages have opposed the second and third stages of the project. They are demanding scrapping of the diversion of water of the Kerang stream through a link tunnel to the Kashang stream... About 80 per cent people in Lippa village own agricultural land and apple orchards in the area. Without the natural springs whose water will be diverted for the project, the local communities will not be able to cultivate in the cold desert area.”

“On January 7, 2019, the Himachal Pradesh High Court [refused](#) to stay land transfer for the project, stating that the petition has been sponsored by private hydro project proponents.”
(LCW, 2019d)

February

Government To Grant Stage 1 Clearance to Coal Mining in Hasdeo Arand Last updated on the 11th of February, 2019 (Forest Rights & Coal)

Number of People Affected: 1,395

“Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited, a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises Limited, was [allotted](#) 841.538 ha of forestland at the Parsa Open Cast Mine, which falls in the largest stretch of very dense forest in Central India known as Hasdeo Arand. There are 18 coal blocks in Hasdeo Arand, of which three have already commenced mining operations.”

“In 2010, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) identified Hasdeo Arand as a ‘no-go’ region or ‘mining-prohibited’ zone. However, in 2011, the MoEFCC granted Stage-1 forest clearance to three coal blocks, reportedly under pressure from other ministries. In March 2012, the MoEFCC granted Stage-2 clearance to the project, which was challenged in the National Green Tribunal (NGT).”

“In January 2015, 20 Village Assemblies passed resolutions opposing the auction of coal mines in the Hasdeo-Arand region. They did so under the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006. In January 2016, the Chhattisgarh government cancelled the community forest rights of the tribals of Ghatbarra village in the region, arguing that the tribals were using community forest rights to oppose coal mining.”

“This was a first in the country.”

“In 2016, another meeting was held where a few villagers from each village were invited and offered drinks and money to sign some papers. The residents allege that some were even threatened, while those who had expressed their disapproval earlier were not allowed to voice their opinion.”

“In a meeting on January 15, 2019, the FAC stated that it had decided to grant in-principal approval (stage-1 clearance) to coal mining in Hasdeo Arand on the condition that the state must confirm the presence or absence of very dense forest in the area.”

Alok Shukla, convener of the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan [says](#), “The process of settling forest rights among the tribal population living here has not been completed. It seems the government is in a hurry to clear mining projects before the general election.”

(LCW, 2019e)

Village Residents Allege Forceful Relocation from Tadoba Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra

Last updated on the 14th of February, 2019

(Villagers Protesting Tiger Conservation)

Number of People Affected: 4,627

“In 2007 in the Tadoba Andhari wildlife sanctuary in Maharashtra, 625.82 sq. km. was notified as Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH) under the Wildlife Protection Act, 2006. The notification of the CTH created an “involute” space where tribals were not supposed to live. The new notified area comprised six villages--Botezari, Kolsa, Jamni, Ramdegi, Rantalodhi and Palasgaon--whose residents were, henceforth, not allowed to access the forest to graze their cattle on the land they had once considered their own.”

“In 2007, the residents of Botezari village were entirely relocated; 200 families of Ramdegi were moved out in mid-2013, and 222 families of Jamni village were relocated in March 2014. The villagers allege that the forest department had set the Rantalodhi village on fire to forcefully relocate the residents. These communities are now fighting for the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, as they are not allowed to collect forest produce, such as bamboo. The village residents claim that no one had cared to build a road earlier to connect the villages but now a new fancy road has been built for the purpose of tourism.”

“The forest department argues that the villagers should have filed their claim to forest rights earlier as the FRA cannot be applied to the area now, which has to follow the new CTH guidelines.”

“On February 13, 2019, tribals [staged](#) a protest for being denied entry into the forest to worship their patron deity, Tadoba Dev.”

(LCW, 2019f)

Farmers Protest Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train Project, Oppose Cutting of Trees, Low Compensation

Last updated on the 19th of February, 2019

(Bullet Train)

Number of People Affected: 5,000

“The ambitious Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project, which will connect the two cities with a high-speed rail line, has met many hurdles. On April 8, 2018, farmers and activists in Gujarat and Maharashtra held a joint meeting in Surat to oppose the project, which is being implemented by National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL).”

“According to Jayesh Patel, president of Khedut Samaj (Gujarat), a farmers’ representative body, 192 villages in Gujarat and around 120 villages in Maharashtra will be affected by the bullet train project. The villages in which the land is to be acquired for the project include Telod, Ochhan, Mesrad, Mangrol, Kambola, Bodka, Handod, Khanda, Manpur, Pingalwada, Untiya, Medhad, Itola, Dasrath, Ajod, Padamla and Sankarda. Farmers in these villages are afraid of losing their livelihoods and not getting fair rates of compensation as the land acquisition laws in Gujarat were changed in 2016.”

“In December 2018, a three-member team led by Katsuo Matsumoto, chief representative of the Japan International Cooperative Agency (JICA), which will provide the units for the bullet train, met environmental activists and farmers in Surat, Navsari, Valsad and Bharuch whose lands will have to be acquired for the project. Matsumoto reportedly told the farmers and activists that he would present the issues of the farmers, in terms of compensation, social and economic impact, rehabilitation and



Credit: Thangaraj Kumaravel/Flickr CC BY 2.0 (Sethi, 2019)

resettlement and environmental concerns, before the top authorities of the JICA.”

“Meanwhile, protests continue. On February 6, 2019, farmers from 29 villages in Navsari held a protest rally against the bullet train project. Around 2,000 protesters submitted a memorandum in the Navsari Collector’s office. They highlighted 14 concerns, including cutting of around two lakh trees and low compensation offered for the loss of farmland.”

(LCW, 2019g)

**SC Orders Forced Eviction of More Than 1 Million Tribals, Forest-Dwellers
Published on the 20th of February, 2019
(Eviction of Forest Tribals)**

“The Supreme Court has ordered the forced eviction of more than 1,000,000 tribal and other forest-dwelling households from forestlands across 16 states after the government failed to defend a law protecting their rights.”

“The final country-wide numbers of forced evictions are likely to rise substantially as other states are forced to comply with the court orders. The court’s orders came in a case filed by wildlife groups questioning the validity of the Forest Rights Act. The petitioners had also demanded that all those whose claims over traditional forestlands are rejected under the law should be evicted by state governments as a consequence.”

“The Union government failed to present its lawyers in defence of the law on February 13, leading a three-judge bench of Arun Mishra, Navin Sinha and Indira Banerjee to pass orders giving states till July 27 to evict tribals whose claims had been rejected and submit a report on it to the Supreme Court. The written order was released on February 20.”

“The court said that the state governments would ‘ensure that where the rejection orders have been passed, eviction will be carried out on or before the next date of hearing. In case the eviction is not carried out, as aforesaid, the matter would be viewed seriously by this court.’ The next date of hearing is set for July 27 – the effective date by when states would have to evict tribals to comply with the court orders.”

“The total number of rejected claims from 16 states that have reported rejection rates so far to the apex court add up to 1,127,446 tribal and other forest-dwelling households shows an analysis of the court order. Several other states that have not provided details to court have been asked to do so. Once they follow suit these numbers are likely to swell.”

**For more on this pertinent issue, please refer to the cited article by Nitin Sethi.
(Sethi, 2019)**

Tribals, Dalits call for Bharat Bandh on March 5
Published on the 25th of February, 2019
(Indigenous Stand for Rights Recognition)

“Tribals across several states have called for a Bharat Bandh on March 5 to protest against a recent Supreme Court order that paved way for "mass-scale evictions" of tribal and forest-dwelling families from their traditional areas of inhabitation.”

“Angry at the BJP-led central government’s failure to defend the populace’s rights in the apex court, tribals will demand that the government brings forth an Ordinance immediately to protect their rights, as stated in the Forest Rights Act.”

(Chatterjee, 2019)

Govt plea sees India's top court halt eviction of millions of forest-dwellers
Published on the 28th of February, 2019
(Forest Rights Act)



A mahout guides his elephant to demolish huts which forest officials claimed were illegally built at the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary in Guwahati, India August 25, 2017. REUTERS/Anuwar Hazarika

“India's Supreme Court on Thursday stayed its earlier ruling that had ordered the forced evictions of millions of indigenous people whose land claims were rejected, after the central government said states needed more time to examine claims.”

“Earlier this month the Supreme Court issued an order to remove forest-dwellers in 21 states where nearly 2 million land claims, each potentially representing a household, were rejected under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006.”

“The FRA, passed by the Congress government, which is now the main opposition party, aimed to improve the lives of impoverished tribes by recognising their right to inhabit and live off forests where their ancestors had settled.”

“Under the law, at least 150 million people could have their rights recognised to about 40 million hectares of forest land.”

“But more than half of the claims were rejected, often on flimsy grounds with no reason given, activists said.”

“Following the earlier order, protests had flared in several states, with indigenous groups threatening nationwide rallies.”

“India's 104 million tribal people - also known as Adivasis, or "original inhabitants" - make up less than 10 percent of the population.”

“Yet they accounted for 40 percent of people forced from their homes between 1951 and 1990, according to New Delhi-based think-tank the Centre for Policy Research.”

“A growing population and increasing demand for industrial projects are placing greater stress on land in India. Resource-rich tribal areas are particularly under pressure.”

“The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, over the last five years, introduced laws that activists say diluted earlier legislation meant to protect the rights of farmers and indigenous people over land and natural resources.”

(Chandran, 2019)

March

Millions of forest-dwelling indigenous peoples are facing eviction in India

Published on the 6th of March, 2019

(Conflict between Indigenous Land Rights & Conservation)

“A verdict from India’s Supreme Court has ordered 20 state governments to evict more than a million families living on forest land before the 27th of July. These families live in and around 500 wildlife sanctuaries and 90 national parks; but many live there sustainably and have protected the forests long before these areas were declared parks and sanctuaries.”

“On the 13th of February 2019, India’s Supreme Court ordered the eviction of over 7 million indigenous and tribal peoples from their forests, making them squatters on their own ancestral lands. The decision was based on an appeal from several conservation organisations, who claimed that these peoples were the reason for deforestation and dwindling wildlife populations. However, this argument flies against overwhelming evidence that Indigenous Peoples and local communities have been achieving better, more sustainable, and more cost-effective conservation outcomes for centuries.”

Please read more about this important issues, and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs’ (IWGIA) other work, at their website.

(IWGIA, 2019)

Farmers Oppose Limestone Mining on Fertile Land in Gujarat's Bhavnagar District

Last updated on the 6th of March, 2019

(Limestone Mining)

Number of People Affected: 70,000

“On January 2, 2019, a protest against limestone mining by 2,000 people in Mahuva tehsil in Bhavnagar district turned violent as the dissenting residents clashed with the police and pelted stones, injuring four policemen. Many farmers were also injured as the police lobbed teargas shells to control the crowd.”

“This is the eighth protest in the past seven months. On December 26, 2018, around 1,000 farmers in 11 villages of Talaja and Mahuva tehsils protested to force UltraTech Cement Limited to suspend its limestone mining operations in their villages. They claim that limestone mining is a threat to their agriculture and livelihood. The 11 villages comprise 70,000-80,000 people.”

“In February 2019, residents of six villages in Bhavnagar observed a two-day shutdown to protest against limestone mining in their district. They claim that mining is causing the groundwater to turn saline, making their agricultural lands infertile. The Gujarat High Court has directed a magistrate's court in Bhavnagar to register an FIR against policemen who cracked down on peacefully protesting farmers.”

“Ultratech received clearance for mining from the state government in January 2018, despite protests from several villagers. The company had acquired 1,714ha of land in the district between 1999 and 2001 for mining limestone and supplying it to its cement plant in Rajula tehsil in neighbouring Amreli district. Of this, around 1,640ha was private agricultural land, while the remaining was government wasteland.”

“The company has also been trying to start mining from its 193ha Bambhor-Talli lease area in Talaja tehsil but has faced resistance from farmers here as well as they claim the land is fertile agricultural land.”

“During the grant of clearance, the company was ordered to rehabilitate 147 families and provide a

house to each family, bearing a total expenditure of Rs.12.25 crore or as per the norms of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, whichever is higher. The affected people allege that Ultratech has so far not offered any rehabilitation or compensation to them.”
(LCW, 2019h)

Rajasthan Panchayat Claims Encroachment on Government Land Affecting Development Work
Last updated on the 6th of March, 2019
(Land Conflict Watch Report)

Number of People Affected: 96

“Kotkasim panchayat in Rajasthan’s Alwar district has alleged that nearly 20 families have encroached upon more than 3.03 hectares of government land in Khatikan Mohalla on the bank of the Sabi River. According to the panchayat, the families started settling on the land nearly 30 years ago.”

“Over the years, the sarpanches (heads of village panchayat) kept on changing, and some favoured the families. They even issued land allotment letters to some of the families, providing them legal titles to the land.”

“In 1994, the Rajasthan Rural Development and Panchayati Raj department challenged the land allotment. The department conducted an investigation and after hearing all the parties involved, it ordered the cancellation of the residential allotment on the government land. The families, however, continued to live there, and no incidence of violence was reported in the following years.”

“On March 6, 2019, Sarpanch Mahaveer Acharya decided to remove the ‘illegal’ settlements. A team of the panchayat reached the area with bulldozers but were met with protests by the people living there. Facing immense pressure from the families to retreat, the panchayat officials returned without demolishing the settlements.”

(LCW, 2019i)

Modi’s Bullet Train Dreams Are Hitting Rural Roadblocks
Published on the 17th of March, 2019
(Land Rights and Development)



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2nd R) and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe (R) shake hands in front of a shinkansen train during their inspection at a bullet train manufacturing plant in Kobe, Hyogo prefecture on November 12, 2016.(JIJI PRESS/AFP/Getty Images)

“One morning in May [2018], Rajiv Gouda woke to find a large white circle stamped on the lane

behind his home, in the village of Vanai on India's west coast. It was a sign of impending change. [Several weeks later] officials... told him that his land was on the path of India's first bullet train, a pet project of Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

"The \$17 billion project, funded by a soft loan from Japan, is intended to halve travel time between Mumbai, in the state of Maharashtra, and Ahmedabad, the capital of neighboring Gujarat, Modi's home state. More importantly, it will be India's first high-speed rail line, an important step forward for a country often criticized for poor infrastructure."

"Yet Gouda, a member of the indigenous tribal communities known as *adivasis*, doesn't want to shift from the only home he knows. And, despite the generous inducements, he isn't the only one."

"The 315-mile route will consume 1,400 hectares of land, affecting almost 300 villages and 5,000 families. Opposition to the project is high in some of these villages, especially in the Dahanu area, where residents have chased away surveyors, stalled public consultations, and organized rallies. They oppose displacement, criticize the opaqueness of the process, and even question the need for the train. 'It's not only about the amount of land,' said Brian Lobo of the Kashtakari Sanghatna, a tribal rights group in Dahanu. 'There are larger issues here'."

"In Gujarat, some of the farmers who have sued over the land acquisition are focused on better compensation for their land. But in Dahanu, the train is not opposed by wealthy orchard owners but by tribal communities with fragmented farms and a history of political mobilization. Where urban bureaucrats see land as real estate or a transport corridor, these communities see a place and a source of permanent sustenance."

For more on this topic please refer to the cited article.

(Chandrashekhar, 2019)

Premise of SC ruling on forest dwellers wrong: UN Special Rapporteur

Published on the 20th of March, 2019

(Tribal lands and Conservation Conflict)

"The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Victoria Tauli-Corpuz has come out in support of forest dwellers of India. She criticised the exclusionary form of conservation that the petitioning wildlife conservation societies in the Supreme Court advocate."

"Some national wildlife conservation groups along with former forest department bureaucrats had brought a petition to the Supreme Court seeking to invalidate the Act, claiming this was necessary to protect wildlife and forests."

"On [February 20](#), the Supreme Court ordered the time-bound eviction of 1.1 million families whose claims under the Forest Rights Act had been rejected by the authorities. The ruling could affect at least 11 lakh people directly, and persuade tens of millions more not to apply for their rights under the Act."

"The basic premise of this ruling, which treats tribal people as illegal residents of the forest, is wrong — indigenous peoples are the owners of their lands and forests," she said in a statement released on March 19, 2019. "This is a phenomenon seen around the world. Indigenous people and local communities are treated as squatters when in fact the lands belong to them, and they have protected and stewarded their holdings for generations," she added.

"UN Special Rapporteurs are people working on behalf of the UN within the scope of "special procedure" mechanisms and have a specific country or thematic mandate from the United Nations Human Rights Council."

"Although the [Supreme Court has put a temporary stay](#) on the evictions, millions of peoples' lives have been thrown into limbo by the court decision."

"Earlier in February, around 30 conservationists across the country had issued a joint statement against the order."

(Kukreti, 2019)

Adani Power Plant in Godda, Jharkhand, Approved

Last updated on the 25th of March, 2019

(Adani Thermal Power Plant)

Number of People Affected: 4,320

"Adani Power Limited is set to acquire around 425ha of land in Jharkhand's Godda district to set up a 2x800 MW thermal power plant. The idea materialised in June 2015, after Prime Minister Narendra

Modi's first visit to Bangladesh. The implementation agreement was prepared in 2017.”

“As of March 2019, the company has received a formal approval for 222.68ha and an in-principal approval for 202.32ha of land. Coal for the project will be imported from Australia, while the power generated in the plant will be exported to Bangladesh. “

“A public hearing on March 5, 2017, was held to discuss the environmental impact of the project on Motia and adjoining villages in the district. Around 3,800 people from the affected villages attended the meeting, which turned violent after villagers complaint that they were unhappy with the compensation offered by Adani.”

“In the same month, the Jharkhand Vikas Morcha (JVM) staged a protest in Motia village to support the demands of the local people. According to JVM chief Babulal Marandi, the Adani project will spread pollution and disease in Godda while Bangladeshis will reap its benefits.”

“In February 2019, the government [approved](#) the project,”
(LCW, 2019j)

April

Farmers Protest Against the Proposed Chennai - Salem Highway Project

Last updated on the e 11th of April, 2019

(The Chennai-Salem Greenfield Highway & Dispossession)

“On April 8, 2019, the Madras High Court stalled land acquisition proceedings for the Chennai-Salem Expressway project and ordered that all land records and communications issued to landowners be revoked within two weeks.”

“The Chennai-Salem Greenfield Highway is a 277-km-long, eight-lane expressway proposed under the Bharatmala scheme, at an investment of Rs. 10,000 crore. Bharatmala is a Central government initiative to improve road connectivity and infrastructure in India, besides improving the country's manufacturing capacity.”

“The project has been met with opposition from the farming communities from whom land is to be acquired. According to a [news report](#), around 853 families from five districts in the state are expected to be affected by the land acquisition. The farmers claim that the project threatens their livelihoods and that the compensation offered by the government is “inadequate”. They also claim that the project is to be implemented under the National Highways Act, 1956, which requires public hearing and Social Impact Assessment, a necessity under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (LARR) Act of 2013 (LARR, 2013), but is being [surpassed](#) by the authorities.”

(LCW, 2019k)

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WWF'S SECRET WAR

A BuzzFeed News Investigation



March

WWF Funds Guards Who Have Tortured And Killed People
Published on the 4th of March, 2019
(NGOs & Torture of Indigenous Peoples)
Part 1 of 3

"[I]nside Nepal's renowned Chitwan National Park, in a small clearing shaded by sala trees, sits a jail. Hira Chaudhary went there one summer night with boiled green maize and chicken for her husband, Shikharam, a farmer who had been locked up for two days."

"Shikharam was in too much pain to swallow. He crawled toward Hira, his thin body covered in bruises, and told her through sobs that forest rangers were torturing him. "They beat him mercilessly and put saltwater in his nose and mouth," Hira later told police."

"The rangers believed that Shikharam helped his son bury a rhinoceros horn in his backyard. They couldn't find the horn, but they threw Shikharam in their jail anyway, [court documents filed by the prosecution show](#)."

"Nine days later, he was dead."

"An autopsy showed seven broken ribs and "blue marks and bruises" all over his body. Seven eyewitnesses corroborated his wife's account of nonstop beatings. Three park officials, including the chief warden, were [arrested](#) and charged with murder."

"This was a sensitive moment for one of the globe's most prominent charities. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) had long helped fund and equip Chitwan's forest rangers, who [patrol](#) the area in jeeps, boats, and on elephant backs alongside soldiers from the park's in-house army battalion. Now WWF's partners in the war against poaching stood accused of torturing a man to death."

"WWF's staff on the ground in Nepal leaped into action — not to demand justice, but to lobby for the charges to disappear. When the Nepalese government dropped the case months later, the charity [declared it a victory](#) in the fight against poaching. Then WWF Nepal continued to work closely with the rangers and fund the park as if nothing had happened."

"As for the rangers who were charged in connection with Shikharam's death, WWF Nepal later hired one of them to work for the charity. It handed a second a special anti-poaching award. By then he had written a tell-all memoir that described one of his favorite interrogation techniques: waterboarding."

"Shikharam's alleged murder in 2006 was no isolated incident: It was part of a pattern that persists to this day. In national parks across Asia and Africa, the beloved nonprofit with the cuddly panda logo funds, equips, and works directly with paramilitary forces that have been accused of beating, torturing,

sexually assaulting, and murdering scores of people. As recently as 2017, forest rangers at a WWF-funded park in Cameroon tortured an 11-year-old boy in front of his parents, the family told BuzzFeed News.”

This is a large 3 part investigative report that warrants the full attention of the reader. Please refer to the full article cited for more information.

(Baker & Warren, 2019a)

A Leaked Report Shows WWF Was Warned Years Ago Of “Frightening” Abuses

Published on the 5th of March, 2019

(NGOs & Torture of Indigenous Peoples)

Part 2 of 3

“WWF responded [to the above report] by announcing an “independent review” of the evidence. “We see it as our urgent responsibility to get to the bottom of the allegations BuzzFeed has made, and we recognize the importance of such scrutiny,” the charity said in a statement.”

“But this is not the first time WWF has launched an independent investigation of this kind. The charity commissioned a report in 2015, obtained by BuzzFeed News, which implicated WWF in violence against indigenous people in Cameroon.”

“Indigenous peoples and local communities bordering protected areas are victims of human rights abuses and violations by eco-guards,” the report found — noting the perpetrators were backed by “considerable technical, logistical and financial support” from WWF. But those findings were never made public, and WWF’s director general, Marco Lambertini, went on to dismiss concerns about the treatment of indigenous people as “matters for the government of Cameroon,” while the charity continued backing the park and its guards.”

“When asked about the 2015 findings by BuzzFeed News, WWF said that its new investigation would examine the way reports of abuse are handled by executives in Switzerland. “All allegations will be subject to our independent review, which will look at specific allegations, and governance,” a spokesperson said in a statement.”

“The explosive 2015 report was prepared by an indigenous expert hired by WWF to review its operations in Cameroon, who found staff there were “gravely concerned” about the abuses they were witnessing.”

“According to the report, WWF Cameroon was participating in “coercive” nighttime raids of villages in which eco-guards employed by the government and backed by the charity “violate[d] the rights of communities” by looting houses and beating their occupants. The report found that the perpetrators went unpunished even when there was “evidence and testimony from the victims.”

“[A] forest ministry official told [American Fulbright researcher, Sarah Strader, after she witnessed] the beating [of a man near Lobéké] was a normal part of the fight against poaching. ‘We torture them when they don’t want to tell the truth,’ the official said, according to Strader’s diary.”

This is a large 3 part investigative report that warrants the full attention of the reader. Please refer to the full article cited for more.

(Baker & Warren, 2019b)

A Leaked Report Shows WWF Was Warned Years Ago Of “Frightening” Abuses

Published on the 8th of March, 2019

(NGOs & Torture of Indigenous Peoples)

Part 3 of 3

“The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) told its European Union funders that indigenous people were “favorable” to a new national park despite an internal report highlighting fears of “repression” by forest rangers, BuzzFeed News can reveal.”

“The EU agreed to send WWF 1 million euros for the proposed new park in an area of the Republic of Congo, known as [Messok Dja](#), on the basis that it would seek the consent of indigenous people.”

“But omitted from a copy of a WWF [filing to the EU](#) in 2018, obtained by BuzzFeed News under Freedom of Information laws, were passages of a consultant’s confidential report that found some locals vehemently opposed the park.”

“Other sections of that report were copy-pasted into the EU filing — but the document does not contain sections discussing how some villagers were worried the park would drive them off their ancestral land, prevent them gathering food for their families, and subject them to mistreatment by forest

rangers, known locally as ‘eco-guards’.”

“Villagers near Messok Dja specifically cited the possible presence of eco-guards as a reason why they opposed the new park. “They associate this initiative with the rise in repression from eco-guards,” the consultant’s report said... [T]his was not noted in the EU filing, which said that locals were on board with the planned development.”

“Messok Dja is a dense rainforest in the northwestern Republic of the Congo. It is home to a large elephant population, as well as gorillas, crowned eagles, and endangered pangolins. WWF has been lobbying the government to turn it into a protected area for years, [arguing that](#) it is ‘highly threatened by intense elephant poaching and ivory trafficking’.”

“But when governments create national parks, indigenous communities often lose access to land they have long relied on for food and shelter. According to the WWF consultant’s report, turning Messok Dja into a national park would affect about 8,000 people and nearly 50 communities — including 17 villages that are in part inhabited by the indigenous Baka people.”

“The right of indigenous people to grant or deny “free, prior, and informed consent” to any project that affects their lands is [officially recognized by the United Nations](#). WWF says seeking such consent is in line with its own [indigenous rights policy](#) as well as its belief that people and conservation are ‘[two sides of the same coin](#)’.”

This is a large 3 part investigative report that warrants the full attention of the reader. Please refer to the full article cited for more.

(Baker & Warren, 2019c)



Evaristo Sa / AFP / Getty Images

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Tajikistan

On the **11/01/2019** sentenced Khayrullo Mirsaidov to eight months in prison for his “unauthorised” departure from Tajikistan to Georgia in October 2018. The sentence replaces a two-year “public utility work” sentence that had previously been handed down by the Court on 22 August 2018. On the same day, the human rights defender was ordered to pay a fine of 80,000 Tajik somoni (around €7,300), which has since been paid in full. Khayrullo Mirsaidov had been an independent journalist and political analyst for the 17 years prior to his detention in December 2017. He has reported for Deutsche Welle, Asia-Plus, and the Fergana media outlets, among others. Khayrullo Mirsaidov has often written about human rights issues, ecological problems, and respect for ethnic minorities ⁽¹⁾.

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Oceania



Australia

January

Human rights and environmental activists targeted in Victoria Police raids Published on the 20th of January, 2019 (Police Harassment)

“Several activists involved in the protests against the International Mining And Resources Conference (IMARC) 2018 last October had their homes raided and searched by Victoria Police on Friday January 18. They were arrested, detained and interrogated and had phones, computers and other belongings seized.”

“The Latin American Solidarity Network (LASNET), Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance (WAR), Brisbane Aboriginal Sovereign Embassy (BASE), Voices of the 3%, Melbourne Rainforest Action Group (MRAG) and other groups strongly denounce the harassment, surveillance and criminalisation of dissent and protest at the hands of Victoria Police, the Australian government and the multinational companies they serve.”

“This is not an isolated event. These arrests are happening in the context of other social and environmental activists having been raided and harassed in recent weeks and months by Victoria Police.”

“This is just another example in Victoria Police's long history of human rights violations against Indigenous peoples, migrants, women, LGBT people, working people and anyone who challenges the racist, capitalist and patriarchal system that the Australian police uphold and protect.”

(Green Left Weekly, 2019)

Dirty deeds: how to stop Australian miners abroad being linked to death and destruction Published on the 22nd of January, 2019 (Australian Mining & Rights Abuses)

“Australian companies dominate African mining. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade counts [175 ASX-listed companies](#) operating in 35 African countries. Professional services company PwC reckons there are [more than 200](#), and that ‘a golden age of Australia-Africa relations has begun’.”

“But Australian miners also arguably stand implicated in both human rights and environmental abuses in pursuit of Africa’s mineral wealth.”

“The [Human Rights Law Centre](#) has documented serious human rights abuses in the overseas operations of a number of prominent Australian companies. The [International Consortium of Investigative Journalists](#) has linked Australian mining operations to deaths, destruction and displacement across Africa.”

“Right now the spotlight is on a bitter dispute between local people in the Xolobeni region on the east coast of South Africa and an Australian-created mining company that wants to excavate a strip of coastal land, 22 km long and 1.5 km wide, for titanium.”

“The Xolobeni mine is about 200 km south of Durban in South Africa’s Eastern Cape province.”

“The proposed mine area is 22 km long and 1.5 km wide.”

“The mining company, Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources, was until [2016](#) a subsidiary of Australian company Mineral Commodities Limited. The local community’s fight against Transworld goes back more than a decade. Last week a “consultation” meeting ended with police [firing stun grenades](#).”

“In November the mine’s opponents won an important legal battle when the High Court of South Africa (Gauteng Division, Pretoria) [ruled](#) the local community needed to give free and informed consent to the project.”

“The ruling was based on a specific South African law. But the right of Indigenous peoples to give free, prior and informed consent to projects affecting their lands is also recognised by the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).”

For more on this topic, please refer to the cited article. (Dehm, 2019)

Adani coal mine should be suspended, UN says, until all traditional owners support the project

Published on the 24th of January, 2018

(Adani Coal Mine & the UN)



A UN committee raises concerns the Qld coal project may violate Indigenous rights.
(ABC News)

“A UN committee raised concerns that the Queensland coal project may violate Indigenous rights under an international convention against racial discrimination if it goes ahead, giving Australia until April to formally respond.”

“Meanwhile, a public interest legal fund backed by former corruption fighter Tony Fitzgerald has stepped in with financial backing for a federal court challenge to Adani by its opponents within the Wangan and Jagalingou (W&J) people.”

“The Grata Fund, which boasts the former federal court judge as a patron, agreed to pay a court-ordered \$50,000 bond so W&J representatives can appeal a court ruling upholding a contentious land

access deal secured by the miner.”

“The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination last month wrote to Australia's UN ambassador to raise concerns that consultation on Adani's Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) ‘might not have been conducted in good faith’.”

“Federal Resources Minister Matt Canavan said the UN should ‘respect the Australian legal system’ instead of trying to direct Australia on matters it ‘clearly does not understand’.”

For more on this ongoing issue refer to the detailed article cited.

(Robertson, 2019)



Julie Tongs spoke out in June 2018 about her anger over the ACT government's plans for Boomanulla Oval. Credit: Jamila Toderas.

Boomanulla Oval is Aboriginal land and we want it back

Published on the 25th of January, 2019

(National Holiday / Remembrance of Colonisation)

“On January 26, 2019 Australia will celebrate the 231st anniversary of the arrival of the first European settlers in Australia. Australia Day, frequently and increasingly referred to by Aboriginal peoples as invasion day, has become a source of bitter division within Australia.”

“Many Aboriginal peoples, and their supporters, think it incongruous and unacceptable that the day on which the dispossession of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia commenced, their sovereignty was overridden and their lands occupied without approval or compensation should be celebrated as Australia’s national day.”

“I would ask non-Aboriginal Australians to put themselves in the shoes of Aboriginal Australians and reflect on the enduring impact those first and subsequent acts of dispossession have had on our first peoples, whether it be on our culture, the quality of our lives or our place in our own country, in order to understand and respond positively to calls for a reconsideration of the timing and purpose of Australia Day.”

“At the heart of Aboriginal opposition to the celebration of Australia Day is that there has been no formal acknowledgement or recognition, through say a treaty or some other formal mechanism, of the

sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples over Australia or of the long and continuing history of abuse of our human rights and rights as first Australians. Without such recognition there cannot and will not be reconciliation.”

For more on this topic please refer to the cited article.

(Tongs, 2019)

Shenhua coalmine planning works 'could desecrate Indigenous sacred sites'

Published on the 26th of January, 2019 (Coal)

“A quiet change to Shenhua’s [New South Wales](#) planning conditions for its open-cut Watermark coalmine could desecrate sites of Indigenous cultural significance before the federal environment minister decides whether they should be protected.”

“Gamilaraay man and native title applicant for the Gomeroi people, Raymond Weatherall, has warned successive failures to protect sacred places on the development site in the Liverpool Plains in north-west NSW, could lead to direct conflict between the Gomeroi, the state government and the Chinese state-owned company Shenhua.”

“He is one of the approximately 190 Gomeroi applying to the federal government for permanent protection of their sacred sites under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Heritage Protection Act (ATSHP) with the support of the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.”

“Just before Christmas last year, the NSW planning department approved Shenhua’s request to change the consent conditions, allowing “pre-construction works” to start on the site, even though a mining lease has yet to be granted.”

“The NSW “modification”, signed off by a senior bureaucrat David Kitto under delegation from the minister, changed the usual definition of “commencement” to allow pre-construction works to include “geotechnical drilling or excavation, minor clearing and minor access roads”.”

For more on this issue please review the cited article.

(Chan, 2019)



A sign protesting coal in the Liverpool Plains in north-west NSW. Approximately 190 Gomeroi people have asked the government to protect the Indigenous sacred sites they say could be at risk by pre-construction work at Shenhua’s Watermark coalmine. Photograph: Jeremy Buckingham

Aboriginal voices are missing from the Murray-Darling Basin crisis
Published on the 30th of January, 2019
(Aboriginal Inclusion)

“The Murray-Darling crisis has led to drinking water shortages, drying rivers, and fish kills in the Darling, Macintyre and Murrumbidgee Rivers. This has been the catalyst for recommendations for a [Royal Commission](#) and creation of *two* independent scientific expert panels.”

“The federal Labor party has sought advice from an independent panel through the [Australian Academy of Science](#), while the Coalition government has asked former Bureau of Meteorology chief Rob Vertessy to convene a [second panel](#). Crucially, the first panel contains no Indigenous representatives, and there is little indication that the second panel will either.”

“Water for Aboriginal people is an important part of survival in the driest inhabited landscape on Earth. Protecting water is both a cultural obligation and a necessary practice in the sustainability of everyday life.”

“The Aboriginal peoples’ worldview sees water as inseparably connected to the land and sky, bound by traditional lore and customs in a system of sustainable management that ensures healthy water for future generations.”

“Without ongoing connection between these aspects, there is no culture or survival. For a people in a dry landscape, traditional knowledge of finding, re-finding and protecting water sites was integral to survival. Today this knowledge may well serve a broader vision of sustainability for all Australia.”
(Moggridge & Thompson, 2019)

February

‘No Means No’: the story of a 9-year Indigenous struggle against Adani mining
Published on the 11th of February, 2019
(Asani)

“In 2004, a group of W&J [Wangan & Jagalingou] family members registered their ancestral claim to a large area of land in the Galilee Basin in central Queensland under Australia’s Native Title Act (1993). The Act gives traditional owners legal claim over their native lands, enabling them to negotiate on matters of mining and development in the native country. The registered W&J land holds the sacred Doongmabulla springs, a place of dreaming, [described](#) as an ‘oasis in a dry land fed by abundant freshwater emerging from deep within the earth’. According to W&J folklore, their dreaming totem, the *Mundunjudra* or Rainbow Serpent, emerged from these springs to travel and give shape to the land, rivers and waterholes of the dry Australian continent.”

“The W&J registered their land claim half a decade before the Australian government got serious about its ambition to open up the Galilee Basin, the continent’s largest reservoir of coal. Roughly 400 kilometres inland from the Great Barrier Reef, the region covers an area as large as the United Kingdom, and holds thrice as much coal as has ever been mined in Australia. The International Energy Agency offers some perspective on the scale of the Galilee’s coal deposit: if all of the Basin’s coal were to be loaded onto a single train, it would stretch to a length of 2.5 million kilometres, or six and a half times the distance to the moon.”

“Adani embarked on its ambitious Australian mission when the resource boom was at its peak in 2010. Initially estimated to start operations in 2014 and reach full capacity by 2022 to export 60 million tonnes of coal, the Adani mine would be the largest of six megamines, and a total of nine proposed coalmines in the Galilee.”

(Talukdar, 2019)

Indigenous Groups Welcome NT Treaty Commissioner
Published on the 19th of February, 2019
(Indigenous Allies in Positions of Power)

“Indigenous land and reconciliation councils have welcomed Mick Dodson’s appointment as treaty commissioner of the Northern Territory, saying this will progress treaty talks between government and Indigenous people in the NT.”

“The former Australian of the Year’s new role, which was publicly announced on Monday, will see him consult with Aboriginal people in the NT on their support for a treaty, and develop a framework for

treaty negotiations.”

“Dodson will have 12 months to prepare a discussion paper on the matter, and another 18 months to finalise recommendations on the best treaty model.”

“A Yawuru man, from the Southern Kimberley region, Dodson has been a prominent Indigenous rights activist and voice in Aboriginal affairs.”
(Coggan, 2019)

March

Noongar elders are collecting funds to defend traditional rights and culture

Published on the 12th of March, 2019

(Legislation bypassing Indigenous Rights)

“In 1993, when the Native Title Act was passed, it appeared that the traditional rights of Australia’s first people, would finally be recognized. The Act however was an illusory ‘bundle of rights’ created to regulate traditional laws and customs and allow for business contracts between indigenous elders and mining corporations.”

“By 1998 the Native Title Act was amended to include provision for ‘Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)’. The ILUAs are especially convenient for mining companies, governments and those wanting high levels of contractual security in business negotiations with Native title groups. Once registered, it is unlike a regular contract, as it binds several native title groups, regardless if they want to be bound or if they signed or not. In the past, this made it easy for industry to expedite exploration by getting just one or two members to sign on behalf of the native group, often without even notifying all the registered claimants.”

“However, community elders in Western Australia’s south west region, refused to sign off on four of the six ILUAs. These elders filed the McGlade application in court against the National Native Title Tribunal, The Federal Government, the State Government as well as the South West land and Sea Council. These organizations had been conducting authorization meetings throughout the country to get indigenous people to vote YES to the ILUAs terms.”

“By 2017, The elders won the McGlade case in the Federal Court, which held that if a single member of the registered native title claimant (RNTC) withholds their consent to execute an ILUA the agreement cannot be registered despite authorization of the agreement by all persons who hold or may hold native title within the area of the ILUA.”

“After the McGlade victory though, the Federal Government made an appeal.”

“In 2015, the West Australian government struck a deal to extinguish Noongar Native Title rights forever. Successful registration of these Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) would mean that half of Western Australia’s Aboriginal population will no longer have native title rights and Noongar native title will be extinguished forever.”

“This extinguishment by the West Australian Government would leave [Australia] vulnerable to mining and fracking. It removes our right to negotiate on any future development forever.”

(De Sousa, 2019)



Australia Aboriginals win right to sue for colonial land loss
Published on the 15th of March, 2019
(Legislative Victory)

“The High Court of Australia has handed down the biggest "native title" ruling affecting Aboriginal ownership of the land in decades, amid claims that billions of dollars in compensation will need to be paid by governments to indigenous groups.”

“Lawyers, including those representing mining companies, said the ruling in favour of the Ngaliwuru and Nungali Aboriginal groups - from a remote part of the Northern Territory - paved the way for billions of dollars in compensation nationally.”

“Now, the High Court has handed down another landmark ruling on the matter of paying compensation for the loss of those rights - the loss of economic income related to the land and the loss of a spiritual connection to the land. Or in other words, putting a financial price on the severing of cultural ties.”

(Code, 2019)

High Court hands down landmark native title compensation decision
Published on the 25th of March, 2019
(Compensation)

“The High Court has handed down its decision in the Timber Creek native title compensation claim.”

“In its decision on 13 March 2019, the Court awarded compensation and interest to the native title holders in an amount of approximately \$2.5 million dollars.”

“The decision relates to a claim for compensation by the Ngaliwuru Nungali People for the impairment and extinguishment of their native title rights and interests caused by the grant of development and Crown leases and freehold and the construction of public works (the compensable acts) over 127 hectares of land in the town of Timber Creek in the Northern Territory.”

For more on this issue, please refer to the cited article.

(Humphris & Buck, 2019)

April

Landmark ruling provides compensation to indigenous peoples in Australia
Published on the 30th of April, 2019
(Aboriginal Land Rights & Compensation for Spiritual Loss)

“In a landmark decision on 13 March 2019, the Australian High Court ordered the Government of the Northern Territory to pay \$2.53 million AUD (1.78 million USD) in compensation to the Ngaliwuru and Nungali peoples for the loss of Native Title in the town of Timber Creek.”

“The verdict is significant, as it is the first time that the issue of compensation for lost rights to Native Title has been considered in Australia by the High Court. It has set a precedent that will influence and spur future claims for compensation by groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.”

“Timber Creek is a remote community in the Northern Territory, some 600 kilometres south of Darwin. The town was first proclaimed in 1975. In 2006, the Ngaliwuru and Nungali peoples won Native Title to parts of their land in Timber Creek. However, at the time of the decision it was also found that these rights had been lost in other areas where government infrastructure had been built. Examples included a concrete bridge that had been built across a dingo dreaming site in Timber Creek, and a number of water tanks that were built across the same dreaming. In 2011 the Ngaliwuru and Nungali peoples sued the Northern Territory Government for the loss of these rights.”

Please refer to the IWGIA report for more on this issue.

(IWGIA, 2019)

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Papua New Guinea

January

UN challenges govt over SABL land grab
Published on the 14th of January, 2019
(Land Grabbing)

“The United Nations has accused the Papua New Guinea government of racial discrimination against its own people over its failure to stop foreign companies using SABL leases to illegally occupy customary land.”

“More than 50,000 square kilometres of indigenous land has been seized using the illegal agriculture leases, as exposed in a 2015 Commission of Inquiry.”

“Despite many claims it will cancel the leases, the PNG government has been slow to take any steps to reverse the land grab and is still allowing foreign companies to use the stolen land for logging and oil palm planting.”

“In response, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has delivered a letter to the PNG government demanding answers as to why it is continuing to allow the illegal occupation of land and has not implemented the recommendations of its own Commission of Inquiry that the land be handed back to local communities.”

A copy of the letter can be found in the cited article.
(Act Now!, 2019a)

Rising tide of opposition to large-scale mining in PNG
Published on the 17th of January, 2019
(Civil Opposition to Mining)

“Opposition to large-scale mining in Papua New Guinea is becoming more and more visible as communities become much more vocal in expressing their anger and disapproval.”

“Both existing and proposed new mines are feeling the heat from landowners who are realising the benefits they are promised are illusory and it is they and their families who suffer the severe negative environmental and social consequences of large-scale resource extraction.”

“Landowners in Enga have lodged a [US\\$13 billion claim](#) against the government over unfulfilled promises and environmental and social damage from the Porgera mine. The mine is owned by Barrick Gold and Zijin Mining and has been operating since 1989.”

“Meanwhile landowners in Madang are [petitioning the government](#) not to allow a planned K5 billion expansion of the Ramu nickel mine and they want the existing Basamuk refinery shut down. Again, it is the lack of tangible benefits and the environmental and social costs that are angering local people.”

“Proposed new mines in Morobe and the Sepik are also facing opposition.”

“Last week, landowners in Morobe [forced the evacuation](#) of the site of the proposed Wafi-Golpu mine. They are unhappy at the terms of an MOU agreement signed by the government with the mine owners, Harmony Gold and Newcrest Mining.”

(Act Now!, 2019b)

February

Government Land Summit is a new corporate land grab
Published on the 20th of February, 2019
(Civil Opposition to Mining)

“The government [is]... plotting to grab more customary land and hand it to multi-national companies and the commercial banks.”

“While it has been forced to stop issuing illegal SABL leases, the government now intends to use the National Land Summit as a cover to find new ways to ‘facilitate access to customary land’.”

“To try and to justify their land grab the government and industry are using the same false idea that customary land is unutilized and a barrier to development, that they have been peddling for decades.”

“The truth is customary land is our nations most valuable asset. It already supports 3 million rural farmers and an informal economy and subsistence lifestyles that are [worth up to K40 billion a year](#).”

(Act Now!, 2019c)

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Africa



Multi-Country Incidents

February

SOCFIN under scrutiny over alleged abuses and malpractices in Africa despite pledges to clean up its act
Published on the 22nd of February, 2019
(Rights Abuses, Land Grabbing and the Agro-Industry)

This is an extensive report covering several African Nation-states (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon, DRC & Ghana) as well as two Southeast Asian Countries (Cambodia & Indonesia).

“Recent reports have shed light on land rights violations and other abuses allegedly committed by SOCFIN oil palm and rubber plantations against local communities in Africa. Despite commitments made by the firm to change its behaviour, the reports reveal that communities affected by SOCFIN agricultural activities continue to face an uphill battle to have their land and human rights respected. SOCFIN and one of its two major shareholders, the Bolloré Group, have been accused of making repeated use of courts to intimidate those who speak out against their practices.”

“SOCFIN, a major palm oil, natural rubber and seed producer headquartered in Luxembourg, is controlled by Belgian businessman (Hubert Fabri) and the French group Bolloré. The company controls thousands of hectares of plantations in Africa and Asia, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cameroon, DRC, Ghana, Cambodia and Indonesia.”

“The Bolloré Group is run by Vincent Bolloré, one of France’s richest and best known businessmen. The group’s businesses [include](#) shipping, advertising, construction and media.”

“In April 2018 Vincent Bolloré was briefly [arrested](#) and [indicted](#) by a judge in France for corruption. Bolloré, who denies any wrongdoing, is facing accusations that one of his companies undercharged for work on behalf of presidential candidates in Guinea and Togo in return for port contracts. He could face up to 10 years in prison if convicted.”

For more on this pertinent ongoing issue, please refer to the cited article. Please note the two 2019 reports cited within this IDM article are reported in the Liberia and Sierra Leone sections of this bulletin.
(IDM, 2019a)

March

Land deals threaten to impair River Nile
Published on the 26th of March, 2019
(Land Grabbing)

“Up to 10.3 million hectares of land have been acquired by investors in 11 countries that form the Nile basin countries since 2000, according to Angela Harding, data coordinator for Land Matrix Africa team.”

“[Land Matrix](#) is an independent global land monitoring initiative. The Nile basin covers an area of 3.18 million square kilometers, almost 10 percent of the African continent.”

“These are, “just concluded deals,” says Angela, implying that there could be other land deals underway.”

“Although there are a few new land grab deals being signed now, and others being abandoned in countries such as Ethiopia, “more of the older deals are being brought under implementation,” she noted.”

“Generally most deals are leases, forest concessions and very few are outright purchases. Data from Land Matrix initiative shows South Sudan as the biggest victim of land grabbing in the Nile basin. “

“Several countries have acquired land in the Nile Basin. These range from countries outside of Africa investing in land, as well as those investors registered within Africa also known as regional investors. Land matrix website, shows some of these countries to include Austria, Belgium, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, India, Israel, Norway, Saudi Arabia, UK, USA and others.”

"Most of these investors are acquiring land for growing food crops, non-food agri-commodities such as tobacco, biofuels, livestock and timber plantation."

For more please refer to the article and the *Land Matrix* Website.
(Mugira, 2019)

April

IN-DEPTH: One year after Coming Storm, temporary halt in deforestation not an end to Congo basin's threats

Published on the 4th of April, 2019

(Cameroon, Congo, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo & Gabon)

"EarthSight's shocking [report](#), published in March 2018, revealed evidence of collusion by top government officials with illegal rubber and palm oil plantation developers. It exposed how rights to clear pristine forest three times the size of London had been sold off to an opaque offshore shell company, its true beneficial owners deliberately obscured. The research also showed that logging firms with reputations for illegalities and human rights abuses were now connected to deforestation for palm and rubber plantations in a number of Congo basin countries."

"The report found that corruption was being aided by an almost total failure of governments to meet their promises to publish contracts. It claimed that the international donors whose money helps bankroll the region's agriculture ministries have made little effort to use their influence to crack open the 'black box' in which a disaster is developing, and argued that all it would take to ignite a rapid acceleration of the destruction was a modest increase in the price of rubber or palm oil."

"Since the publication of Coming Storm, EarthSight has followed the reported cases carefully. A few positive steps have been taken by some of the companies, and forest clearing for large plantations in the region has slowed appreciably, to perhaps its lowest level in a decade."

"But part of the reason for this slowdown in deforestation is the persistence of depressed rubber and palm prices. The underlying problems of corruption, collusion and lack of transparency remain unchanged."

"Our report identified the Cameroonian company Sudcam – a subsidiary of Singaporean Halcyon Agri, an international rubber giant supplying many of the most famous global tyre companies – as the largest deforester in the Congo Basin at the time of publication. Sudcam has cleared almost 10,000 hectares of dense tropical forest in Cameroon in an area directly adjacent to the Dja Faunal Reserve, a World Heritage Site. NGOs and local communities had alleged that the company's license had been illegally issued, had dispossessed local inhabitants of their community lands, and that government authorities had reacted to their protests with threats and intimidation."

Please refer to the linked report for more details.
(IDM, 2019b)

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Algeria

On the **31/03/2018** Kamal Eddine Fekhar, Mozabite minority rights defender, founder of Tifawt and member of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, was arrested near his workplace along with his two minor children. On the same day Mozabite minority rights defender, Hadj Ibrahim Aouf, was also arrested. They are both on an open-ended hunger strike ⁽¹⁾.

On the **07/04/2019**, Meziane Abane, a journalist at Al Watan newspaper and human rights defender advocating for the rights of the Amazigh people in Algeria, was arrested while he was covering the protests. He saw members of the security forces chasing protesters and arresting those who resisted. They then arrested him when he refused to leave. There are several other individuals suffering as a result of judicial harassment and arbitrary detentions ⁽¹⁾.

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Cameroon



Photo taken from FPP, 2019

March

The situation of indigenous forest peoples in Cameroon - Factsheet Published on the 29th of March, 2019 (Community Monitoring System & Rights Abuses)

"As part of the [Indigenous Navigator](#) project, the Gbabandi Platform, Okani and FPP have produced a factsheet on the situation of indigenous forest peoples in Cameroon. This document provides an overview of the situation of Cameroon's indigenous forest peoples, including Cameroon's legal and policy framework, key challenges for forest peoples and policy recommendations."

This document is available in French only.

[La situation des peuples autochtones de la forêt du Cameroun - Fiche d'information](#) 666.74 KB

Please refer to the link above for the article in French.

(FPP, 2019)

April

Cameroon: Indigenous people demand consultation in forest management Published on the 7th of April, 2019 (The Baka & Forest Management)

"Stakeholders in the forestry sector have committed to consult the Baka people on all development projects that may impact their lives."

"This commitment was made as hundreds gathered to celebrate the Baka Cultural festival from 25-31 March. The festival, themed "BAKA DREAM DAYS" was commemorated this year focusing on: 'Decentralization and Sustainable Management of Biodiversity in The Congo Basin: The Place Of Indigenous Peoples'."

"An animated roundtable debate between indigenous people, Greenpeace Africa, Sudcam's staff and the media, focused on the impact of development projects and the need to involve indigenous people living around the Sudcam project. The initiative to sensitise the general public about the rich cultural aspect of the indigenous people is an interactive awareness campaign by Greenpeace Africa, APIFED and Baka communities. It is also to highlight the symbiotic relationship between the Baka people and the forest."

"The forest plays an important role in regulating the global climate and halting runaway climate change for the benefit of the entire biosphere. However, our forest and the indigenous communities leaving and depending on it are under threat from alarming deforestation and land grabbing which is rubbing indigenous communities of their livelihood."

"The government urgently needs to enact and implement regulations that safeguard the forest and grant land rights to indigenous people."

(Journal du Cameroun, 2019)

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Democratic Republic of the Congo

Since the **27/02/2019** Léon Nkubiri Mbeba, coordinator of the Réseau d'aide aux Femmes et Enfants Nécessiteux (RAFEN), has been the subject of death threats, attempted kidnappings and received threatening phone calls. Attempts to bribe his family were also made with the demand that Léon Nkubiri Mbeba abandon his work. He has been subject to smear campaigns during his past two years of work documenting and denouncing human rights violations by Société Zhengwei Technique Coopération (SZTC), a Chinese company implementing a World Bank-funded road development project. RAFEN documented many cases of sexual and gender-based violence committed by SZTC employees against women and girls living around construction sites of the ProRoutes Project, including rape ⁽¹⁾.

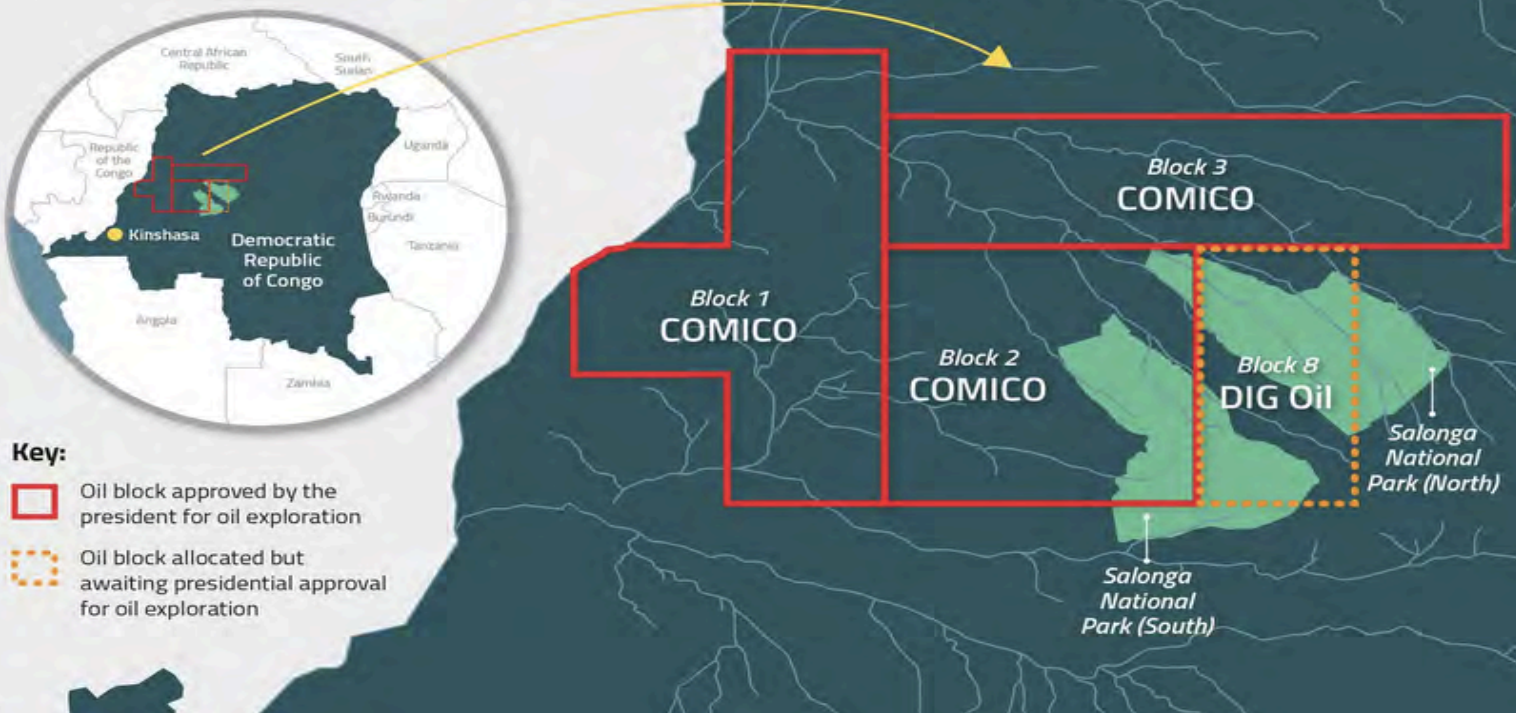
February

Oil rights in Salonga National Park could be null and void, Global Witness analysis reveals
Published on the 1st of February, 2019
(Oil Rights)

“Global Witness reveals today that an opaque Guernsey-owned company’s oil rights threatening a protected national park in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) could be null and void, according to our legal analysis.”

“In February 2018, Guernsey-owned oil company CoMiCo won approval for a contract originally signed in 2007, under a previous version of the oil law. As [we revealed last May](#), one of the three oil blocks assigned to CoMiCo encroaches on DRC’s Salonga National Park, the largest protected tropical rainforest in Africa and a [UNESCO-protected World Heritage Site](#).”

Salonga National Park at risk of oil exploration



Source: Letter from Phanar Legal representing COMICO shareholders and DRC Interactive Map, WRI and MEDD (Jones & Blakey, 2018).

“Global Witness’s legal analysis of the contract and the oil law indicates that rather than give CoMiCo a long-awaited green light for oil exploration, the presidential ordinance signed in February 2018 may have rendered CoMiCo’s contract void.”

“In January, Felix Tshisekedi was declared the winner of a disputed presidential election in DRC. Tshisekedi will succeed outgoing President Joseph Kabila, who had been in power since January 2001.”

“President Tshisekedi and his administration must seize the opportunity to improve upon the record of the previous government by enforcing strict adherence to Congolese law in natural resource deals, especially in terms of transparency around contracts and the real beneficiaries behind natural resource companies,” said Peter Jones, Campaign Leader at Global Witness.

“According to Global Witness’s analysis, CoMiCo’s contract formally came into effect after Kabila signed the presidential ordinance in February 2018, and it contains clauses that are not in line with the new oil code, dating from 2015. The law makes it clear that any contract coming into force after 2015 cannot contain clauses that contradict the standards set by the 2015 oil law, ‘under penalty of being void’.”

“Oil exploration in Salonga National Park could have a devastating impact on the park’s integrity, its biodiversity and the local communities living off its resources,” said Jones.
(Marcuson & Jones, 2019)



Salonga National Park, photo by Thomas Nicolon, taken from (Jones & Blakey, 2018).

March

Widespread human rights abuses in Africa's largest forest park

Published on the 6th of March, 2019

(WWF Cause Crimes Against Humanity)

“Rainforest communities living around Central Africa's largest national park have been subjected to murder, gang-rape and torture at the hands of park rangers supported by funding from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and a range of international donors, an investigation by the Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK) has found.”

“RFUK's investigators found evidence of widespread physical and sexual abuse being inflicted by 'eco-guards' employed by the Salonga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Serious incidents in recent years include two cases of gang rape, two extra-judicial killings, and multiple accounts of torture and other forms of mistreatment committed by park guards.”

“Around 700 communities, with several hundred thousand inhabitants, live around the park, which is becoming increasingly militarised through anti-poaching initiatives run by the Congolese protected area authority, ICCN (Institut Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature), sometimes in collaboration with the Congolese army. Since 2015, WWF has been responsible for the park's management, with the financial support of various international agencies, including the European Commission.”

“Many communities now living outside the park were evicted from their lands when Salonga was established in 1970, and banned from accessing their ancestral forests, which they depend on for survival. These communities report widespread malnutrition, which they overwhelmingly attribute to conservation-related restrictions on traditional hunting and fishing activities.”

CALG strongly condemns the crimes against humanity committed against indigenous peoples in the name of conservation such as what has occurs in this case and others.

(RFUK, 2019)

New analysis shows a worrying surge in exports of tropical timber to Vietnam and China from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2018

Published on the 11th of March, 2019

(Deforestation & Timber Exports)

“Ahead of a debate today by MEPs on the EU's Voluntary Partnership Agreement with Vietnam, a new analysis has revealed a worrying surge in exports of tropical timber from the DRC to Vietnam and China in 2018.”

“The new 2018 trade documents, analysed by Global Witness, underline the importance of both countries prioritising the introduction new import controls.”

“According to the data, which has been cross referenced with other sources, exports of timber from the DRC to Vietnam more than doubled from 2017 to 2018, from just under 40,000 tonnes of round wood to nearly 90,000.”

“China's imports also increased significantly after a decrease in recent years, with imports back to 2015 levels, at around 40,000 tonnes in 2018.”

“Whilst these export figures are still lower than the volumes exported from other tropical timber countries the significant increase show a worrying trend which is highly concerning because of the large amounts of illegal or high risk timber shown to have been coming out of the DRC in recent years; and because Vietnam and China, the biggest importers of DRC timber, do not yet have effective systems in place to prevent imports of illegal timber. There are currently no obligations on importers or traders to exercise due diligence in either country.”

“These tropical timber imports have surged despite the EU undertaking a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with Vietnam – where the country agreed to introduce import controls on timber.”

Illegally logged timber is a serious threat to forest dwelling communities and cultures. The surge in unregulated illegal exports is therefore a worrying issue that raises several red flags pointing towards potentially serious rights abuses taking place in these remote areas.

(Iqbal & Blackman, 2019)

Ten European companies could be importing illegal Congo timber worth millions to the EU, new Global Witness investigation reveals
Published on the 14th of March, 2019
(Timber Exports)

“Ten European companies could be breaking important EU legislation on illegal logging, a new briefing by Global Witness reveals today.”

“The anti-corruption NGO exposes how traders in six different EU member states could be in breach of the European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR), by buying timber from *Industrie Forestière du Congo* (IFCO) – a company flouting forest laws in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).”

“The briefing outlines how IFCO, the second biggest timber exporter in the DRC, has illegally logged outside of permitted boundaries. During 2018 the company also carried out extensive logging while its operations were suspended by authorities for breaches of DRC’s labour and environmental laws.”

“And it shows how companies based in France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Poland have together placed over 1,400m³ of IFCO’s high-risk timber, with a value of approximately €2 million, on the EU market in the space of five short months during 2018.”

“IFCO is a recently created company that has inherited logging rights and operations belonging to Cotrefor, a notorious logging company accused of a series of illegal activities. Cotrefor was also the subject of alleged links to a Lebanese conglomerate that is sanctions-listed by the US Treasury as a financial supporter of Hezbollah.”

“Under the EUTR, companies must be able to show they have taken clear steps to reduce the risk that timber imported to the EU has been illegally harvested. IFCO’s European clients that are listed in the briefing are named as:”

- Exott, Belgium
- TimTrade, Italy
- Edwood, France
- Angot Bois, France
- JAF Polska, Poland
- France Noyer, France
- Interarrod, Portugal
- Timbearth, France
- Carbon Market Timber, France

For more on this issue please refer to Global Witness’ work on that matter. The Illegal timber trade has serious consequences for communities living in these areas, any company supporting illegal trade should be held accountable for the crimes against humanity they help commit, both directly and indirectly.
(Iqbal & Robertson, 2019)

Military open fire on communities protesting oil palm development in DRC
Published on the 22nd of March, 2019
(Oil Palm and Local Rights)

“Tensions between local communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Canadian Oil Palm Company Feronia have escalated in recent months following a complaint presented last year to the company’s international financial backers. Affected communities have denounced forced displacement and the illegal occupation of their ancestral lands. They now hope Feronia will come under increased international pressure to finally address a long history of violent land conflicts.”

“On 16 March military forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) reportedly [fired](#) live bullets against protesters from the Bolombo and Wamba villages in the municipality of Mwingi, Tshopo Province. The two villages are located within the Lokutu oil palm concession of Canadian company Feronia.”

“Tensions in the area have [increased](#) in recent months following an international complaint presented late last year by affected communities against Feronia over the alleged illegal occupation of their lands. Since the beginning of the year, nine communities have protested over unpaid or underpaid wages for local plantation workers, and demanded that the company return their lands.”

“Feronia [controls](#) the Lokutu, Yaligimba and Boteka oil palm plantations in DRC, which together cover 100,000 hectares. The Canadian company gained control of the plantations in 2008 when it acquired Unilever’s subsidiary Plantations and Huileries du Congo (PHC). Local villagers have [denounced](#) displacement and occupation of their lands since colonial times and throughout Unilever and

Feronia’s tenure of the concessions.”
(IDM, 2019)



Aerial view of oil palm plantation at Ingende, Democratic Republic of the Congo.
Courtesy of Daniel Beltrá/Greenpeace

April

Congolese General sanctioned by U.S. and EU for human rights abuses is trading in illegal logging permits over DRC’s climate-critical forests, Global Witness reveals
Published on the 16th of April, 2019 (Press Release citing Corruption in the Timber Industry)

“General Gabriel Amisi Kumba (known as “Tango Four”), sanctioned by the EU and US for human rights abuses, is a powerful figure in DRC and a close ally of former President Joseph Kabila, raising concerns that he used his influence to sidestep the law in his acquisition and subsequent sale of logging permits.”

“Amisi’s family obtained five logging concessions in June 2018, in contravention of DRC’s longstanding moratorium on the allocation of industrial logging concessions, which was intended to protect the country’s biodiverse and environmentally-critical rainforests.”

“The DRC’s Minister of Environment had confiscated these licences from other logging companies without warning, before transferring them to Amisi’s family-held company, Maniema Union 2.”

“The cancellation of the licences and their allocation to Maniema Union 2 occurred within four days. Within weeks, the Amisi family sold the company and its licences on to Lei Hua Zhang, a Chinese timber

magnate who is an owner of a sizeable but mysterious logging company operating in DRC.”

Please refer to the cited article for more on this important issue.

(Blakey & Marcuson, 2019)

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Egypt

On the **7/4/2019**, the Aswan Misdemeanour State Security Emergency Court acquitted Seham Osman, along with seven other defendants, in the case known as the “Dofof Trial”. 25 other Nubian human rights defenders, who were prosecuted in the case, including Maysara Abdoun and Mohamed Azmy, were handed a suspended fine of 50,000 EGP (approx. 2,600 euros) each. The case refers to a peaceful protest held on 3 September 2017, during which Nubians demanded the right of return to their ancestral lands, a principle enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution ⁽¹⁾.

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Equatorial Guinea

On the **15/03/2019**, Vice-President of the NGO *Centro de Estudios e iniciativas para el Desarrollo* (CEID), Alfredo Okenve Ndoho was arbitrarily detained. He has been particularly active on the need for more transparency in the field of extractive industries' transparency. Alfredo Okenve Ndoho was arrested, by eight security officers, at Malabo airport passport control office. He was then flown handcuffed to Bata aboard a military plane, and driven to an undisclosed location before being finally brought to his house in Bata, where he was put under house arrest. The police confiscated his mobile phone and passport. On the same day, security forces had arrested Mr. Alfredo Okenve Ndoho's cousin, Mr. Joaquín Mangué Obama, at his home in Malabo because he refused to disclose the human rights defender's whereabouts. For this reason, Mr. Alfredo Okenve Ndoho decided to try to flee the country and was then arrested at the airport control office ⁽¹⁾.

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Ghana

On the **16/01/2019** Ahmed Hussein-Suale Divela (33) was shot in the neck and chest while he was driving in Accra. He died immediately. He was renowned for his investigative journalism, working tirelessly to expose corruption in Ghana. A member of the Ghanaian parliament, Kennedy Agyapong, revealed Mr. Hussein-Suale's identity and called on the public to attack him. He also gave information on the neighbourhood where Mr. Hussein-Suale lived ⁽¹⁾.

Edward Adeti, an anti-corruption journalist, has been receiving threats to his life as a result from his work, the most recent being on the **29/04/2019**. He has been working on uncovering the links between Chinese mining company, Shaanxi Mining Ghana Limited, and the most senior judge in the region, Justice Jacob B. Boon, cause the Minister of State, Rockson Ayine Bukari's resignation ⁽²⁾.

February

Ghana and FLEGT licences: Only technical steps remain
Published on the 5th of February, 2019
(Forest Governance)

"Ghana is poised to become the first African country and the second country in the world to issue FLEGT (Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade) licences. Officials from the EU and Ghana's Ministry of Land and Natural Resources and Forestry Commission [announced that Ghana will continue to the last stage of implementation of its Voluntary Partnership Agreement](#) (VPA), a bilateral trade agreement on timber and timber products."

"Since Ghana signed its VPA in November 2009, the country has made significant progress, improving Ghanaian forest governance by carrying out legal reforms, increasing transparency ([VPA Update December 2018](#)), welcoming civil society participation and completing corrective actions since its last evaluation (the first Independent Technical Joint evaluation in 2014)."

"During this last stage, the second and final Independent Technical Joint Evaluation, independent

forestry experts will assess Ghana's Legality Assurance System (LAS), the core of each Voluntary Partnership Agreement. They will examine the LAS's five components: its legality standard, chain of custody system, verification system, licensing and independent monitoring of timber and timber products."

"After reviewing recommendations to the Ghanaian Forestry Commission and EU Delegation resulting from the 13-week evaluation, Ghana and the EU will jointly agree on a date for licensing."

"At the end of the VPA implementation process, Ghana will mark an important milestone and set a valuable example as Africa's first nation to issue FLEGT licences. In addition to its many technical aspects, the VPA process has required years of reform and deep foundational changes. Most importantly, Ghana will have established a system that strengthens the governance of their forests and protects Ghanaian forests and forest peoples."

(FERN, 2019)

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Kenya

March

Survey ordered to settle Del Monte land dispute

Published on the 4th of March, 2019

(Colonial Land Grabs & Resettlement)

"Fruit processor Del Monte will have its land surveyed in order to address the historical injustices committed against the area residents."

"The move, aimed at settling the demands of communities in Murang'a and Kiambu counties where the Del Monte holds 22,000 acres, requires the American firm to surrender any land that is not registered in its name."

"The National Land Commission (NLC) has directed that any surplus land identified be surrendered to the Murang'a and Kiambu claimants for resettlement as well as the respective county governments in the ratio 70:30 respectively."

"The notice heralded the beginning of the end of decades-long court battles between the people who were displaced from the land and the company."

"Before the NLC's directive, the residents, through the Kandara Residents Association (KRA), had petitioned the commission's historical land injustice committee last year during a public hearing in Thika. They presented the historical injustices committed against them by Del Monte and the colonial soldiers who had returned from World War I and II."

"The land was first owned by Agro-French, which grew sisal, then Kenya Cannery, which grew pineapples, and later, by Del Monte."

"Among the historical injustices the community cited were forcible evictions from their ancestral land, torching of their houses, murder and rape."

"They said their forefathers used the land for mixed farming before White settlers took some of it, followed by the soldiers who had fought in the world wars, who were awarded the land by the colonial government. They claimed that their villages were converted into labour camps, and that they were forced to work in the sisal estates before the land changed hands."

For more on this pertinent historical issue, please refer to the cited article.
(Wambui, 2019)

April

Righting colonial-era wrongs in land rights
Published on the 9th of April, 2019
(Colonial Laws)

“The continued dominance of colonial-imposed laws over pre-existing customary legal systems, has been the bane of land rights disputes involving indigenous peoples across the globe for many years.”

“Post-colonial states have been unable to address such issues since formal law has continued to prevail over ancient customary systems even post-independence.”

“One such example is the Ogiek in Kenya’s Mau Forest, whose fate is to be determined by a Task Force whose report is due at the end of April. The Task Force report should be significant not only for the Ogiek, but for indigenous peoples in Kenya and Africa, with wider global repercussions.”

“The Ogiek have lived in the Mau Forest for centuries. Their struggle through courts to gain recognition of their ancestral domain through formal law has been a long one.”

“It culminated in a [famous victory](#) in the African Court of Human and Peoples Rights on the 26 May 2017 – the first meaningful regional court-determined recognition of indigenous peoples’ title to territory on the African continent.”

“The Court ruled that evictions of the Ogiek from their ancestral lands were illegal, and that the Kenyan government not only had an obligation to restore the communities to the forest, but they also had the obligation to determine how the issue of title could be resolved in perpetuity, and to pay reparations where appropriate.”

“For the Ogiek people, the ruling was a vindication of the existence of their right.”

“Their actual enjoyment of the right can only commence once the community had been restored to the forest, their title recognised, and the reparations due, paid.”

“Despite a legal ruling and international attention, Kenya's Ogiek people have continued to face evictions, underlining the inherent difficulties in implementing judgments.”

For more on this issue please refer to the cited article and the other works of Joshua Castellino.
(Castellino, 2019)

Sengwer ask taskforce to explain role of EU staff in its meetings
Published on the 11th of April, 2019
(Indigenous & Land Rights)



Men from the Ogiek community walk along the road after harvesting honey in Mount Elgon game reserve, where they have reached an agreement with the government allowing them to remain in their ancestral lands in western Kenya, April 26, 2016. REUTERS/Katy Migiro

“The indigenous Sengwer community living in Embobut Forest has questioned the presence of

international agencies in a task force established to look into indigenous peoples' land rights.”

“Yesterday [the 10th of April], the community questioned the presence of a team, it claimed, comprises a European body in the task force on implementation of the decision of the African Court on Human and People’s Rights.”

“The task force was formed after the African court ruled in 2017 that Kenya had violated the rights to land, religion, culture, development, and non-discrimination of the Ogiek, a hunter-gatherer community residing in Mau Forest and other forests in the Rift Valley.”

“Sengwer community secretary Elias Kimaiyo told The Standard that the community was shocked to discover the presence of the agencies in a task force created to seek views on how to improve the relationship between indigenous communities and state agencies.”

The Sengwer have an ongoing conflict with the Kenya Forestry Service who, in affiliation with the EU-funded Water Towers Protection and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation (WaTER) project, have committed serious crimes against the Sengwer peoples. For more on this please refer to the previous bulletin edition and the work of Forest Peoples Programme who work closely with the Sengwer people.

(Rutto, 2019)

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Liberia

February

PRESS RELEASE: Palm Oil Giant Golden Agri-Resources Removed from Dow Jones Sustainability Index after Bribery and Corruption Scandal – so what next for ‘sustainable’ palm oil?

Published on the 6th of February, 2019

(RSPO & Sustainable Palm Oil)

“The Dow Jones Sustainability Index has removed the world’s second largest palm oil company, Golden Agri-Resources (GAR), from its list of sustainable companies, reported Friends of the Earth (FoE) this week.”

“The human rights violations and environmental record highlight GAR’s failure to live up to its human rights and sustainability commitments. [In 2018, GAR and its subsidiaries were accused](#) of clearing protected forest, establishing shadow companies to continue destructive operations, and disregarding the recommendations of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO).”

“The RSPO has been under pressure for years to rule against GAR’s continuing violations of human rights and its slow action to make remedy in palm oil areas.”

“Although this news is welcomed, there are many questions which must be answered if sustainable palm oil can be claimed as such, not least around human rights abuses.”

(Dixon, 2019)

Rubber group ousts farmers in Liberia
Published on the 20th of February, 2019
(Rubber & Rights Abuses)



The rubber plantation of the Salala Rubber Corporation (SRC) covers an area of around 4500 hectares. © Bread for all

“Land rights violations, expulsions, violence: According to a [report](#) [*Struggle for Life and Land Socfin’s Rubber Plantations in Liberia and the Responsibility of Swiss*] by the development organization *Bread for all*, the Luxembourg-based Socfin plantation group and its Swiss subsidiaries are involved in serious human rights violations in Liberia. Food security and access to water and education have also deteriorated in the villages surrounding the rubber plantations. This example demonstrates the urgency of the Responsible Business Initiative, which is currently being discussed in the Swiss parliament.”

These are the principle findings from the executive summary of the report.

“The two Liberian plantation companies Salala Rubber Corporation (SRC) and Liberian Agricultural Company (LAC) hold concessions of over 128,000 hectares in Central Liberia. They have been accused of repeatedly abusing international human rights-based standards. The Luxembourgish company Socfin owns SRC and LAC as well as several Swiss subsidiaries, including Sogescol and Socfinco. Activities of these companies have deprived affected communities in Liberia of the use of their customary land to a high degree. All of the subsidiary companies, including the Liberian plantation companies, have the responsibility to prevent and address human rights abuses according to the United Nations Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights. On the basis of their research, the authors of this report conclude that the following rights violations and human rights violations have happened on the SRC and LAC plantation areas in Liberia:

- The plantation companies violated the customary and sometimes even private land rights of community members when they developed and expanded the plantations on community customary land. Research related to this report found that at least 37 villages since 1959 are affected, including 25 villages that lost their customary land after Socfin bought the plantations.
- People in many of the communities covered by this report were insufficiently consulted about the plantation expansions, did not give their consent and were forcefully evicted from their customary lands. Compensation payments, where they were made, were in most cases insufficient to compensate for the losses.

- As a consequence of the plantations encroaching their customary lands, customary land rights holders can no longer access their land. Food security has deteriorated and access to water has become difficult for many of the interviewed people.
 - Families in affected communities face increasing difficulties in sending their children to school because of the loss of farmland combined with meager employment opportunities provided by the plantations.
 - Plantation life is riddled with violence and threats, particularly against women and human rights defenders.
- (Bread For All, 2019)

March

Land is power: How land rights can enfranchise Liberia's women **Published on the 8th of March, 2019** **(Optimistic News)**

"Liberia is in the throes of finalising one of Africa's most progressive land rights laws but its potential will be thwarted if women are excluded".

"In Liberia, power is tied to land."

"Agriculture and forestry are the engines of Liberia's economy, contributing around 40 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Yet, while 80 percent of agricultural workers and a fifth of forestry labourers are women, their access to and control of land is limited."

"In 2006, the Liberian Legislature voted in the Community Rights Law, which established a process for communities to collectively own land."

"While that law was a crucial moment for community rights, the freedoms that came with it were only accessible to men."

"Since rural communities traditionally only involve men in decisions around land, women have been left landless and excluded from decision-making structures."

"Over the last decade, [Foundations for Community Initiatives (FCI), an NGO based in Liberia's capital] worked with the government and other NGOs to develop a law that addresses women's land rights. This work culminated in September 2018 when President George Weah signed a new Land Rights Act into law."

"The Act is one of the most progressive land rights laws in Africa and is the first [Liberian](#) law that recognises women's rights to land."

"Prior to this, women were considered outsiders to the communities that they married into and were rarely allowed to participate in decisions about land."

"Although the 2003 Inheritance Law defined some land rights for married women (granting them just a third of their husband's property post-mortem), married women had no land rights outside of inheritance and unmarried women were not able to own land privately or collectively."

"In practice, this means that unmarried women - who represent 62 percent of Liberian women - can't own land or have their own house and often have to squat with their families. These women are often unpaid labourers within their families, having to tend to the land and take care of relatives at the same time - yet they can't own or make decisions about the very land they stand on."

"With the passage of the Land Rights Act, women are defined as part of their community, able to participate in land governance decisions and management bodies, and all women, married or not, are able to own land privately, jointly and collectively."

For more information on the progression of this law, and the work behind it, please refer to the cited article.

(Kai, 2019)

Community forestry in Liberia **Published on the 13th of March, 2019** **(Community Forestry)**

"In a world where communities have less access and ownership to land and forests, what happens when forests are too small to commercially log?"

"This report documents three community stories, showing how they have tried to benefit from their forests. Each case study helps showcase small-scale forest management whilst revealing that it is often

not in line with national and formalised legislation and processes. Land rights laws need to reflect and build on existing forest communities.”

The full report is available in the link within the citation of this article.
(Manvell, 2019)

Liberia’s new land rights law hailed as victory, but critics say it’s not enough
Published on the 22nd of March, 2019
(Land Rights & Industry)

“When rebels tore through the ancient forests of Sinoe county during the civil wars that ravaged Liberia between 1989 and 2003, villagers often fled to the only road in their district to escape death or mutilation. Sometimes miles away on foot, small towns that sat on wide, unpaved tracks offered safety in numbers, and the hope that help might arrive one day soon.”

“In 2013, the machines of Golden Veroluem Liberia (GVL), an oil palm developer owned by Singapore-listed Golden Agri-Resources (GAR), began clearing the forest for planting, exposing the fertile soil to the sky. This time, [activist Beatrice Flahn, aged 50, (displaced from Jacksonville by the conflict and attempting to return to her land)] fears, the land will be lost permanently.”



Beatrice Flahn. Photo by Jennifer O’Mahony for Mongabay.

“By the time GVL appeared in Jacksonville, following the previous government’s signing of a raft of post-war agreements with foreign companies, research indicates areas allocated to rubber, oil palm and logging concessions covered [approximately 25 percent](#) of Liberia’s total land mass. Riots, legal complaints and the freezing of operations have hit oil palm projects in Liberia in the intervening years, especially in southeastern Sinoe county, but also in northwestern Bomi county, where Malaysian firm Sime Darby has a concession.”

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Trust has eroded in several ways.

“In September 2018, President George Weah signed the Land Rights Act into law, in what was hailed as a [“landmark victory”](#) by activists. Weah’s inauguration speech in January 2018 promised “clarity on fundamental issues such as the land beneath their feet,” and many citizens felt a long struggle was coming to a close.”

“The law is ambitious and [clearly asserts](#) the right to what is known as ‘customary land,’ territory that can be claimed through oral testimony and community agreement. However, locked within the legislation is a flaw for those living on the quarter of the country’s land set aside for concessions: it isn’t retroactive. The law won’t apply to those already living close to oil palm concessions, a difficult truth that is only just beginning to permeate thousands of villages in Liberia, including Jacksonville.”

For more detail on this issue please refer to the cited article by Jennifer O’Mahony. (O’Mahony, 2019)



An area cleared of trees at the GVL concession in Tajuowon district. Photo by Jennifer O’Mahony for Mongabay.

April

Palm oil development leaves Liberians poorer, says winner of ‘Green Nobel’

Published on the 29th of April, 2019

(Palm Oil)

“Palm oil plantations in Liberia are billed as bringing jobs and development but actually leave locals poorer, said a Liberian lawyer who won the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize on Monday.”

“The U.S.-based Goldman Environmental Foundation gives the prize - often known as the Green Nobel - to six grassroots activists each year for efforts to protect the environment, often at their own risk.”

“Alfred Brownell was awarded for his successful campaign to protect more than 500,000 acres of tropical forest from palm oil development in the West African country, after which he was forced to flee Liberia in fear for his life.”

““These forests mean a lot to Liberia. The communities that we supported who live in these areas... it is their home and their resources and their farms,... Instead of trying to empower them, (palm oil) causes the impoverishment of those communities. So this is not development at all,” he told the

Thomson Reuters Foundation.

“Sometimes palm oil companies offer jobs, but not enough for the number of people who lose their land, he said... Liberians have protested land grabs by foreign palm oil companies for over a decade, since the former government gave out nearly half the nation’s territory in resource concessions.”

“The World Bank has credited these policies with transforming Liberia into a promising place for investors after a long civil war, but activists say local communities rarely benefit.”
(Peyton, 2019)

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Mali

On the **23/03/2019** more than 150 Fulani pastoralists were killed in their village in Ogossagou in Mopti region in central Mali. The attack started at dawn and was carried out with guns and machetes in a brutal manner. Men and women, young and old were killed, and the victims included many children and small babies. The massacre is believed to be the deadliest incident of ethnic violence in Mali in a generation and is a result of escalating conflict over natural resources. According to a list received by IWGIA, 173 people were killed - ranging from old people of 98 years to a 10 days old baby ^(1.).

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Mozambique

On the **23/04/2019**, journalist and human rights defender Amade Abubacar was provisionally released. He still faces charges linked to his work reporting on human rights violations committed against internally displaced persons in the Macomia district, and was released on condition of presenting himself regularly to the authorities and is under a travel ban. A trial date is yet to be set ^(1.).

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Sierra Leone

January

Land rights defenders condemn gross human rights abuses in Sahn Malen Published on the 30th of January, 2019 (Palm Oil and Rights Violations)

“Proponents of land rights in Sierra Leone note with grave concern the grave human rights violations against members of the Malen Affected Landowners and users Association (MALOA) who were dispossessed of their land by the agro-based multinational SOCFIN investment company. It is worth noting that since the inception of SOCFIN in the Sahn Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun District in 2009, more than 80% of the Chiefdom’s arable land was leased by the company to produce palm oil. During the negotiation of the agreement, the free prior and informed consent of land owners was not respected and insufficient consultations were held with the chiefdom’s indigenous people. This has since resulted in serious conflict between the company and landowners. Local land owners and activists have come under sustained intimidation, harassment, and attack for defending their land rights and challenging the excesses of the company.”

“On Monday 21st January, 2019, an unfortunate skirmish ensued between members of the traditional ‘Poro’ Society and state security personnel deployed to protect the company. A group of the traditional ‘Poro’ Society members were purportedly identified by the government security forces as representatives of MALOA group, resulting in the death of two civilians who were allegedly shot dead by state security personnel. Hundreds of members of MALOA were harassed, intimidated and physically assaulted, their houses vandalized and properties and cash amounting to millions of Leones were looted. Consequently, two thousand five hundred people have been displaced and thousands more continue to live in perpetual fear.”

“The rights to life, protection of security and safety of persons, unlawful arrest and detention, right to property, the right to food and dignified life are amongst the human rights safeguards that were severely violated by the security forces. During a fact finding mission undertaken by land rights defenders between the 24th and 27th January, 2019; the following human rights violations were recorded:”

4. The arbitrary arrest, detention and beating of particularly members of MALOA who have become direct target of intimidation, harassment and violence by either government security personnel or company officials;
 5. Excessive use of force by Military and the Police against protesting civilians and other community members during raids mostly undertaken during hours when they were sleeping.
 6. Extra-judicial killing of two civilians shot dead during the protest between the members of the traditional ‘Poro’ society and the government security personnel;
 7. Looting and vandalising of properties for which the communities accused personnel of government security forces;
- (Farm Land Grab, 2019)

February

Land Grabbing for Palm Oil in Sierra Leone Analysis of the SOCFIN Case from a Human Rights Perspective Published in February, 2019 (Land Grabbing in the Oil Palm Industry)



“Since the arrival of multinational agribusiness company SOCFIN in 2011 as part of a large-scale investment in palm oil in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone, social conflict has raged in the Malen Chiefdom. SOCFIN is controlled by a Belgian businessman (Hubert Fabri) and the French group Bolloré, which has developed a business empire in many parts of Africa.”

“This report found that affected communities who have lost access to and control over their land have been exposed to serious human rights violations and abuses since 2011. Several issues emerged, spanning from the rights to land, food, water and a healthy environment, to workers’ rights, women’s rights, the rights of the elderly and the right to education. Added to this are serious violations and abuses of civil and political rights, including the rights to peaceful assembly and association, physical integrity and clear cases of criminalization of human rights defenders.”

“The report also points to serious allegations of corruption, lack of transparency and non-implementation of corporate social responsibility promises by SOCFIN. The report paints a grim picture of a profound, multi-faceted decline in the enjoyment of rights by local communities as a direct result of the shift in control over land in Malen, and the subsequent development of SOCFIN’s activities in the Chiefdom.”

“The report is based on three fact-finding missions carried out by FIAN Belgium in collaboration with local and national organizations, in 2012, 2016 and 2018. It analyses the land conflict in Malen Chiefdom from a human rights perspective, exploring the extent to which human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled, and the extent to which states and non-state parties have upheld obligations arising from international human rights instruments. It also draws on existing reports and publications from international human rights experts, local and international NGOs, academics and journalists.”

Please refer to this detailed 84 page report for more information on this subject matter.

(Phoenix, Kroff & Eggen, 2019)

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Uganda

On the **24/04/2019** human rights defender Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa was hospitalized as a result of a violent assault by a group of police officers at the main entrance to the Uganda Police Force headquarters in Naguru, Kampala District. The human rights defender, who is seven months pregnant, was attacked while she was trying to obtain permission to organize a peaceful protest against human rights violations committed by security forces ⁽¹⁾.

February

Understanding mailo land and dual ownership

Published on the 10th of February, 2019

(Mailo Land, Dual Ownership)

“The Mailo land tenure system is one of the most complex among Uganda’s four tenure system.

“Its ambiguity leaves many people mistaking it for the Freehold tenure system. While these two tenure systems have some similarities, they are by far different. Mailo land has its origins in the 1900 agreement which was signed between the regents of Buganda, acting on behalf of the young Sir Daudi Chwa, and Sir Harry Johnson on behalf of the queen of England.”

“This agreement divided the 19,600 square miles that form Buganda kingdom among different entities and individuals. These included the Kabaka (king), regents, chiefs, central government, key offices and other individuals who were found fit.”

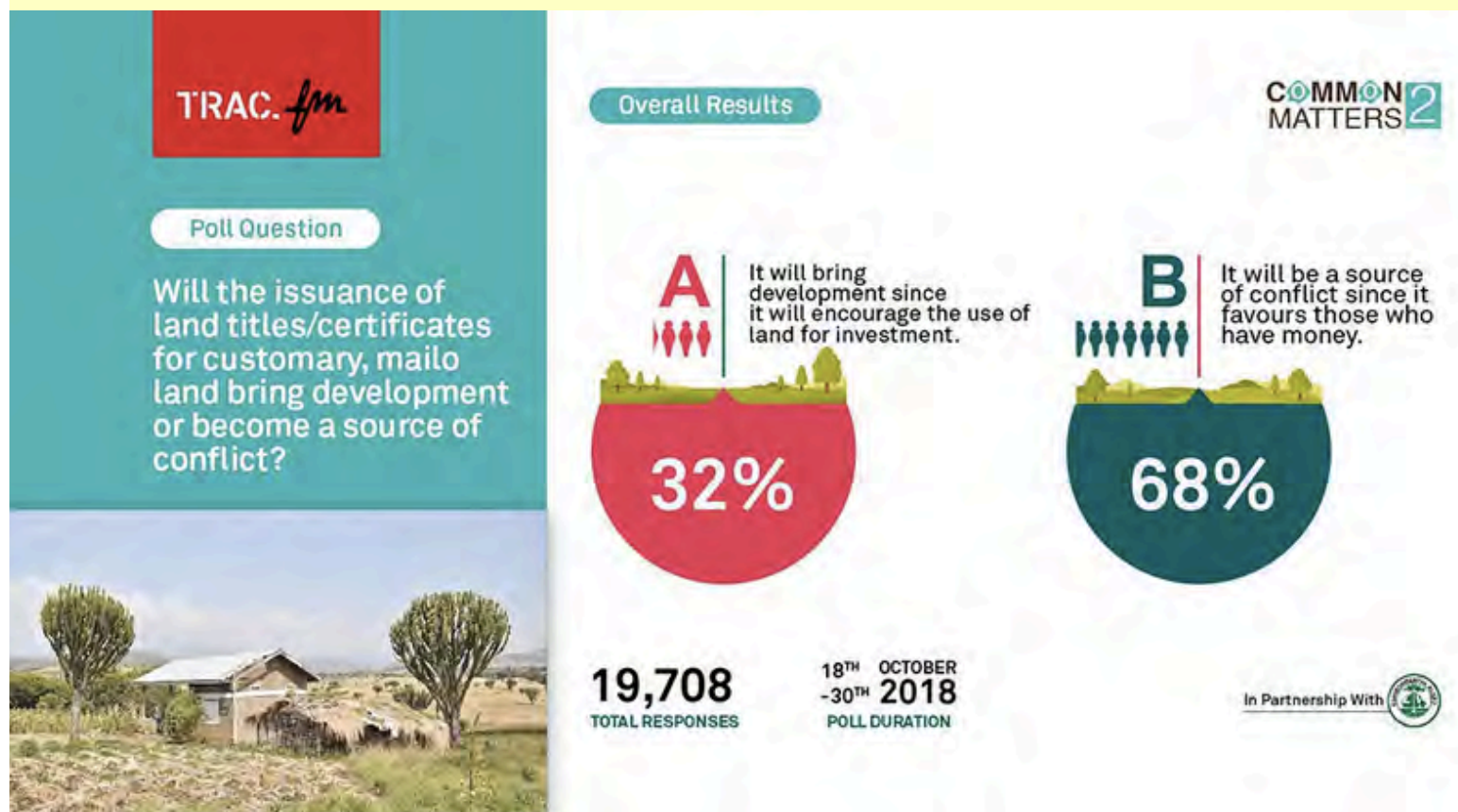
“Before we delve much into the distribution of this land, let us first understand Uganda’s four tenure systems. The first one is customary land tenure; this is land that is held basing on particular customs, traditions and norms of people. It is often communal. It is commonly owned by indigenous communities in Uganda.”

“Such land is found in the northern and eastern parts of the country. Freehold tenure system; under this system, one owns land for eternity and he/she is entitled to a certificate of title. In Uganda, this is the most favoured tenure.”

“Leasehold tenure; this is where a lessee has exclusive possession of land through an agreement with the landlord. The agreement is for a specific period of time subject to premium and ground rent. Mailo land tenure; This is the most misunderstood tenure in Uganda simply because it creates dual ownership over the same piece of land.”

For more on this pressing issue of land ownership in Uganda, and its history, please refer to the cited article.

(Mulindwa, 2019)



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Togo

On the **16/01/2019** Foly Satchivi received a three-year prison sentence with one year suspended from a lower court in Lomé for three charges consisting of “rebellion”, “glorification of and incitement to commit crimes and misdemeanors”, and “serious disruption of public order” in connection with his role in organising a press conference in August 2018 about the deteriorating socio-political climate in Togo. Foly Satchivi is the leader and spokesperson of En Aucun Cas (Under No Circumstances), a human rights movement that works to raise awareness on human rights issues in Togo, especially in rural areas, and achieve peaceful socio-political transformation in the country through means such as peaceful protests ^(1.).

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Western Sahara

On the **06/02/2019** Brahim Dihani had all charges against him dropped and his confiscated cameras returned to him. Brahim Dihani monitors and documents peaceful protests with the Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Violations of Human Rights Committed by the Moroccan State, or ASVDH. ASVDH is independent human rights NGO that operates in occupied Western Sahara. The organisation has been denied registration by the Moroccan authorities since its foundation in 2005 ^(1.).

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South America

January

Oil palm companies connected to land grabbing, illegal deforestation and industrial pollution in Latin America

Published on the 14th of January, 2019

(Deforestation & Oil Palm in Latin America)

“A Mongabay Latam [series](#) (in Spanish) on the oil palm industry in several Latin American countries has revealed that the advance of oil palm monocultures in Latin America – especially Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica and Colombia – since 2000 has resulted in illegalities, deforestation, environmental pressures, and conflicts with local communities. Below, IDM highlights some of the findings on Peru, Ecuador and Guatemala.”

For more on these articles, please refer to the cited web page.
(IDM, 2019)

Notes and References

Illegal Deforestation Monitor (IDM). (2019). Oil palm companies connected to land grabbing, illegal deforestation and industrial pollution in Latin America – bad-ag.info. Retrieved from <http://www.bad-ag.info/oil-palm-companies-connected-to-land-grabbing-illegal-deforestation-and-industrial-pollution-in-latin-america/>



Argentina

January

As EU demand for soy grows, illegal deforestation gathers pace in northern Argentina
Published on the 8th of January, 2019
(SOY, EU Policy & Deforestation)

“Despite a political backlash, illegal deforestation, driven by growing soy and beef production for international markets, has continued to gather pace in northern Argentina. Earthsight’s research shows that EU consumption of Argentinian soy increased by 40 percent in the five years to 2017.”

“According to a recent [report](#) by Greenpeace Argentina, between 2016 and 2018, 80 percent of deforestation in the country took place in the four northern provinces of Chaco, Santiago del Estero, Salta and Formosa.”

“The report points to the advance of the agricultural frontier driven by soy and beef production for international markets as the main cause behind this deforestation.”

“Earthsight’s research shows that one fifth of all Argentina’s soy exports are destined for the EU, and that EU consumption of Argentinian soy increased by 40 percent in the five years to 2017.”

(IDM, 2019)

Argentina’s Indigenous People Fight for Land Rights
Published on the 12th of January, 2019
(Indigenous Land Rights and Systemic Violence)

“Today, indigenous people in Argentina are struggling to preserve their way of life in a scenario made complex mainly due to conflicts over land.”

“Ninety-two percent of the communities do not have title to the land they live on, according to a survey published in 2017 by the National Audit Office, an oversight that depends on the legislative branch.”

“The scope of the conflict is huge. Approximately half of the 1,600 native communities in the country have carried out or are carrying out the process of surveying their lands that the State began more than 10 years ago, and they lay claim to eight and a half million hectares – a total area larger than the country of Panama.”

“The backdrop is the pattern of discrimination that persists in Argentina despite advances made on paper, as then UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples James Anaya reported after a visit to the country in 2011.”

“Nancy López, a leader in her community, says children no longer want to speak Wichí, because if they do, they suffer discrimination at school, which must have a bilingual assistant teacher, according to the National Education Law in effect since 2006.”

“The Wichí and other indigenous peoples of the area, who are hunter-gatherers, have historically depended on the forest for food, medicine, or wood to build their houses.”

“But every day there are fewer forests. Along with neighbouring Santiago del Estero, Salta is the Argentine province that has suffered the greatest deforestation in recent years, due to the expansion of the agricultural frontier, pushed mainly by transgenic soy, which today occupies more than half of the area planted in the country.”

For more on this topic refer to the cited article.

(Gutman, 2019)



A group of Wichi children play in the mud in the indigenous community of El Quebracho, in northern Argentina. This country's laws recognise the right to bilingual support in the education of native children, but in practice the rule is not enforced and children suffer discrimination when they speak their native languages. Credit: Daniel Gutman/IPS

Notes and References

Gutman, D. (2019). Argentina's Indigenous People Fight for Land Rights. Retrieved from www.ipsnews.net/2019/01/argentinas-indigenous-people-fight-land-rights/

Illegal Deforestation Monitor (IDM). (2019). As EU demand for soy grows, illegal deforestation gathers pace in northern Argentina – bad-ag.info. Retrieved from <http://www.bad-ag.info/soy-and-beef-production-drive-deforestation-in-northern-argentina-as-local-governments-continue-to-come-under-fire-for-illegally-serving-agribusiness-interests/>



Bolivia

April

An Indigenous Nation Battles for Land and Justice in Bolivia
Published on the 2nd of April, 2019
(Qhara Qhara Nation Stands up for Rights)

"The ancient Qhara Qhara nation began a battle against the State of Bolivia in defence of its rich ancestral lands, in an open challenge to a government that came to power in 2006 on a platform founded on respect for the values and rights of indigenous peoples."

"Men and women from the Qhara Qhara indigenous people marched nearly 700 km over the space of 41 days, between the official capital, Sucre, and La Paz, the country's political hub, to protest that the fragmentation of their ancestral lands threatens their culture."

"They now hope that in two months the measures and laws governing this question will be modified." [T]he demonstrators, who marched from the Andes highlands and valleys of the south of the country and reached La Paz on Mar. 18, began to return a week later to their home villages, after declaring that they would put their mobilization on hold until July, while their leaders monitor the progress of legislative changes that protect their rights and land."

"Legislative committees received three bills that, in coordination with the government, will study the demands of the Qhara Qhara people, which include the restitution of ancestral territories, respect for indigenous justice systems, and respect for their autonomy."

Please refer to the cited article for more information on this issue. (Chávez, 2019)

Bolivia approves GM soy cultivation for biofuel use, stoking fears of more illegal forest loss
Published on the 9th of April, 2019
(Soy & Deforestation)

“In late March the Bolivian government [authorised the large-scale cultivation](#) of two new types of genetically modified soy in the department of Santa Cruz for biofuel production. The decision will allegedly lead to an expansion of the agricultural frontier in the department – which currently has around 1.3 million hectares [planted](#) with soy – by 250 thousand hectares, allowing the production of 100 million litres of biofuel.”

“Gonzalo Colque of Fundación Tierra, a conservation NGO, questioned this estimate and [reckons](#) that in fact between 300 and 500 thousand hectares could be deforested as a result of the measure, which would more than double Bolivia’s current annual rate of deforestation of around 210 thousand hectares.”

“Santa Cruz was already on track to [lose an estimated 175,000 hectares](#) of forests for ethanol production until 2025 as the government has made agreements with sugar cane producers to increase biofuel production.”

“Marco Gandarillas of the Bolivian Centre for Documentation and Information (CEDIB) [called](#) the decision ‘a crime against the environment and biodiversity’ since it represents a ‘stimulus to clear forests and prioritise agribusiness expansion over territories that should be dedicated to conservation or that belong to indigenous communities’.”
(IDM, 2019)

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Chávez, F. (2019). An Indigenous Nation Battles for Land and Justice in Bolivia. Retrieved from <http://www.ipsnews.net/2019/04/indigenous-nation-battles-land-justice-bolivia/>

Illegal Deforestation Monitor (IDM). (2019). Bolivia approves GM soy cultivation for biofuel use, stoking fears of more illegal forest loss. Retrieved from <http://www.bad-ag.info/bolivia-approves-gm-soy-cultivation-for-biofuel-use-stoking-fears-of-more-illegal-forest-loss/>



Brazil

On the **29/01/2019** Rosane Santiago Silveira (59), was found dead inside her house, with her hands and feet tied and cloth around her neck (indicating strangulation). She had been stabbed twice (possibly a knife), and shot in the head (possibly from behind). The case was initially treated as a suspected robbery, although valuables, including the victim’s notebook, were not taken. Rosane had been struggling to create an association to protect the environment on the island of Barra Velha, threatened by oil exploration ^(1.).

On the **08/02/2019** one of the indigenous leaders of the Tupinamba indigenous peoples, Rosivaldo Ferreira da Silva, reported to the ministry of public affairs, that he and his family are targets of an assassination plan by large landowners ^(2.).

On the **27/02/2019** indigenous leader, Francisco de Souza Pereira (53), was killed in his home in Manaus. He was shot twice in front of his wife and daughter ^(3.).

On the **22/03/2019** Dilma Ferreira Silva (47), regional coordinator of the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB) in the Tucuruí region of Pará state, was murdered in her home. Her husband, Claudionor Costa da Silva, and friend of the couple, Hilton Lopez (38), were also killed. All three were tied up and gagged, the men were killed first and then Dilma’s throat was cut. Witnesses say they saw 5 men arrive in three motorcycles and entered the house; loud music began to play shortly after they entered. In a rare turn of events police have arrested landowner, large-scale farmer and businessman, Fernando Ferreira Rosa Filho, known as Fernando Shalom, over the killings ^(4.).

On the **30/03/2019** 4-armed hooded men invaded the landless camp known as Seringal São Domingos to evict landless peasants. The leader of the camp, Nemis Machado de Oliveira (53), was shot and killed. 3 others were also killed and several houses were set on fire. The area is plagued by agrarian conflicts, land grabs, illegal logging and deforestation that has resulted in violence and murders ^(5.).

January

UPDATE 2-Bolsonaro gives Brazil farm ministry powers on indigenous land, in win for farmers

Published on the 2nd of January, 2019

(Systemic Violence against Indigenous Peoples)

“New Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro issued an executive order on Wednesday making the Agriculture Ministry responsible for deciding on lands claimed by indigenous peoples, in a victory for agribusiness that will likely enrage environmentalists.”

“The temporary decree, which will expire unless it is ratified within 120 days by Congress, strips power over land claim decisions from indigenous affairs agency FUNAI.”

“It hands it to the Agriculture Ministry, which will now be responsible for ‘identification, delimitation, demarcation and registration of lands traditionally occupied by indigenous people.’”

“The move is likely to stoke concern among environmentalists and rights groups that the far-right new president, who took office on Tuesday, will open up the vast Amazon rainforest and other ecologically sensitive areas of Brazil to greater commercial exploitation.”

“The executive order also moves the Brazilian Forestry Service, which promotes the sustainable use of forests and is currently linked to the Environment Ministry, under the control of the Agriculture Ministry.”

“Additionally, the decree states that the Agriculture Ministry will be in charge of the management of public forests.”

(Inouye & Boadle, 2019)



Members of the Brazil's Landless Movement (MST), who are protesting for change in the process of land reform, hold a flag up by burning tires on a highway in Brasilia, Brazil November 21, 2012. REUTERS/Ueslei Marcelino/File photo

Brazil's new President Jair Bolsonaro rolls back Indigenous tribe protections

Published on the 2nd of January, 2019

(Indigenous Rights)

“Brazil's new far-right President Jair Bolsonaro has stripped the government department charged with protecting the country's Indigenous people of much of its responsibilities, which distressed critics

say could lead to the destruction of dozens of tribes.”

“Funai, the department established in 1967 to protect the rights of Brazil's Indigenous people, has been effectively broken up, with one of its biggest responsibilities — to identify and draw boundaries of Indigenous land across the country — handed over to the Ministry of Agriculture.”

“The rest of Funai will be transferred to the Ministry of Human Rights, which is led by evangelical pastor Damares Alves.”

“The decision is part of one of Mr Bolsonaro's key election promises — that he would deny new land claims by Indigenous tribes and that he wants to open their land to commercial mining and farming. He argued they had a right to charge royalties to improve their quality of life and to integrate with the rest of Brazil, comparing them to animals trapped in a zoo.”

(ABC News, 2019)

Indigenous People, the First Victims of Brazil's New Far-Right Government

Published on the 10th of January, 2019

(Indigenous Resistance)

“In an open letter to President Jair Bolsonaro, leaders of the Aruak, Baniwa and Apurinã peoples, who live in the watersheds of the Negro and Purus rivers in Brazil's northwestern Amazon jungle region, protested against the decree that now puts indigenous lands under the Ministry of Agriculture, which manages interests that run counter to those of native peoples.”

(Osava, 2019)

Brazil to fight invasions by landless workers: official

Published on the 14th of January, 2019

(Landless Workers Movement)

“Brazil's right-wing government under President Jair Bolsonaro will seek to classify invasions of farmland by landless workers movements as akin to terrorism, with harsher penalties for perpetrators, an Agriculture Ministry official said on Monday.”

For more on this pertinent issue, please refer to the full-length article cited below.

(Spring & Boadle, 2019a)

In Brazil, indigenous groups clash with mining companies in 400 areas

Published on the 17th of January, 2019

(Mining & Indigenous Peoples)

“The remote indigenous land Xikrin do Rio Cateté is located 1,000 kilometres from Belém, the capital city of the Amazonian state of Pará. Inhabited by 1,056 people of the Kayapó indigenous ethnic group, the reserve spreads over [roughly 439,000 hectares](#) in the cities of Água Azul do Norte, Marabá, and Parauapebas. Xikrin do Rio Cateté is also home to hidden and valuable mineral reserves-highly coveted both by big mining companies and illegal prospectors.”

“Brazilian mining giant Vale has a concession to extract copper, gold, and manganese in the region, which puts the company constantly at odds with indigenous groups. In 2015, a professor at the University of Pará measured the presence of heavy metals in the waters of the Cateté River, finding levels of contamination 30 times higher than the limits established by environmental agencies. These findings corroborate [accounts by local indigenous people](#)-who have reported cases of skin and eye problems as well as a decrease in fish stocks, ever since Vale subsidiary started extracting nickel there in 2010.”

“This, however, is hardly an isolated case: socio-environmental conflicts related to mining operations are on the rise in Brazil.”

“[Latentes](#), a journalistic project to map conflict areas in Brazil, backed by the national fund for human rights, found that there are at least 428 latent disputes involving mining companies, [quilombolas](#), and indigenous peoples in Brazil. Of this total, 245 [conflicts] are found in indigenous reserves, while 183 are in *quilombos*”. **Please refer to the article for more information on this important issue. The Latentes site is a wonderful source of information for those interested in this area or research.** (Paes, 2019).

Brazil general with mining link takes over indigenous agency
Published on the 17th of January, 2019
(FUNAI)



A Yanomami indian stands near an illegal gold mine during Brazil's environmental agency operation against illegal gold mining on indigenous land, in the heart of the Amazon rainforest, in Roraima state, Brazil April 17, 2016. REUTERS/Bruno Kelly

“A retired Army officer who last year advised a Canadian company seeking to mine gold in the Amazon returned to the head of Brazil's indigenous rights agency on Thursday, vowing to improve the lives of the country's native peoples.”

“General Franklimberg Ribeiro de Freitas had run the National Indian Foundation (Funai) until April 2018, but was fired by the previous government under pressure from farmers who considered him too sympathetic to the land rights of indigenous tribes.”

“He returns to Funai at a crucial time for the agency, which has lost funding and authority on land issues now settled by the farmer-friendly Ministry of Agriculture under Brazil's new right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro.”

“A respected military officer of native descent, Freitas has served in the Amazon rainforest on operations aimed at reducing deforestation by evicting illegal loggers and miners from vast reservations, such as the Yanomami territory.”

“Our indigenous policy must be strengthened and our sole aim will be to improve the conditions and support we give native peoples,” Freitas said on taking office at the Funai.

“Brazil's 890,000 indigenous people from 300 tribes make up less than 1 percent of the population and live on reservation lands that cover 12 percent of its territory. Much of that land is threatened by

illegal loggers and miners, along with pressure from an agricultural frontier advancing into the Amazon jungle.”

“On the campaign trail last year, Bolsonaro said he would not grant “one centimeter” more of land to indigenous peoples, whom he vowed to integrate into Brazilian society by engaging them in commercial activities and earning royalties from mining companies that would be allowed into reservations.”

“Freitas, 62, served last year on an advisory board at Belo Sun Mining Corp ([BSX.TO](#)), a Canadian company with a project on the on the Xingú river that promises to be Brazil’s largest gold mine.”

“A spokeswoman for the company said its installation license has been suspended pending a report on the impact on indigenous communities adjacent to the planned open-pit mine. The general left the company at his own request in December, she said.”

“Freitas gained respect from subordinates during his first tenure at Funai by working to improve the quality of life for native tribes by helping them produce goods and forest crops that could be sold, agency employees said.”

“He appears to share Bolsonaro’s view on integrating native peoples that are already in contact with Brazilian society, while insisting on the need to protect and shield uncontacted or recently contacted tribes.”

“Anthropologists oppose integration in order to preserve native cultures and languages. Environmentalists say the tribes are the last guardians of the rainforest and opening their lands to commercial activity will speed deforestation of the Amazon.”

(Boadle, 2019a)

Brazil ag minister wants to open indigenous land to commercial farming

Published on the 18th of January, 2019

(Indigenous Reservations)

“Brazil should open indigenous land to commercial farming, Agriculture Minister Tereza Cristina Dias said on Friday, while also seeking to soften many of President Jair Bolsonaro's controversial stances on native people and the environment.”

With farmers as his key base Bolsonaro “has placed pro-agribusiness policies at the center of his agenda. Activists warn his government's positions would strip away protections for the environment, the Amazon rainforest and indigenous peoples.”

“Reservation land covering roughly 12 percent of Brazil's territory is currently off limits for commercial farming.”

‘They could plant there ... and maybe have income for their community,’ Dias told reporters. ‘They cannot do this today. That needs to be changed in Congress.’

“Reservations should still be required to preserve a minimum percentage of native vegetation, as all farmers currently are, she said.”

“Bolsonaro has given control over indigenous land designations to the Agriculture Ministry, after arguing on the campaign trail that no new indigenous reservations should be created. But Dias struck a more moderate tone, saying Bolsonaro did not favor new reservations in areas that have long been settled by farmers.”

“As for a campaign promise to end the ‘industry’ of environmental fines, Dias told Reuters prior to the briefing that Brazil must end “indiscriminate” fines levied by multiple agencies without working with the farmers to resolve misunderstandings.”

(Spring & Boadle, 2019b)

Illegal cattle ranching in protected area in Rondonia, Brazil, has wiped out nearly half its forests

Published on the 23rd of January, 2019

(Deforestation)

“Large-scale cattle ranchers are illegally rearing an estimated 100,000 heads of cattle at the Jaci-Paraná extractive reserve in the Amazonian state of Rondonia, Brazil, which has caused the [loss](#) of nearly half the reserve’s forests. An investigation by [O Eco](#), a Brazilian environmental news agency, has found that JBS, the world’s largest meat processor, has allegedly sourced livestock from illegal farms at the reserve.”

“According to [Ibama](#), Brazil’s environmental enforcement agency, Jaci-Paraná is one of Rondonia’s most heavily deforested protected areas, having lost 49 percent of its forest cover.”

(IDM, 2019a)

Brazil prosecutor warns Bolsonaro government on indigenous land rights
Published on the 23rd of January, 2019
(Indigenous Rights & Bolsonaro)

“Brazil’s top prosecutor on Wednesday called for right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro’s government to respect the land rights of 900,000 indigenous citizens, which have been threatened by a wave of land invasions since he took office.”

“Prosecutor General Raquel Dodge said indigenous land rights were guaranteed in Brazil’s constitution and the new government must explain its intentions because the international community is concerned about the future of Brazil’s indigenous peoples.”

“There can be no backsliding on public policies toward the indigenous people,” she said at a conference attended by representatives of some of Brazil’s 305 native tribes, advocacy groups and a dozen European nations.

(Boadle, 2019b)

American missionary accused of exposing isolated Brazilian tribe to potentially fatal diseases
Published on the 24th of January, 2019
(Religion & Indigenous Rights)

“The Brazilian government has accused a missionary from the US of exposing an isolated indigenous tribe to potentially fatal diseases.”

“The Christian missionary Steve Campbell entered an area occupied by the Hi-Merimã tribe last month, one of the few dozen tribes in Brazil that has had no contact with the outside world.

“It’s a case of rights violation and exposure to risk of death to isolated indigenous population,” said a spokesman for the Brazilian government’s Indigenous Affairs Department (Funai).

“Even if direct contact has not occurred, the probability of transmission of diseases to the isolated is high.”

“Mr Campbell camped in the area the Hi-Merimã occupy and invaded one of the isolated tribe’s recently abandoned camping grounds, Funai said.”

“Little is known about the tribe, who live in the state of Amazonas. They became known for rejecting contact with the outside world and maintaining hostile relations even with other indigenous communities.”

“Details about what kind of penalties Mr Campbell may face are not clear. Funai has not yet notified federal prosecutors or the police, but the government agency said it will notify them this week.

“According to reports from Brazilian newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo*, Mr Campbell claimed to have entered the area by mistake, while teaching Indians from the neighbouring Jamamadi tribe to use a GPS device.”

“Mr Campbell has been living among the Jamamadi for years, but received no authorisation to do so, according to Funai officials. Attempts to reach Mr Campbell for clarification were unsuccessful.”

(Forrest, 2019)

February

'That's going to burst': Brazilian dam workers say they warned of disaster
Published on the 6th of February, 2019
(Mining Dam, Disaster)

“The Brazilian mining dam which [collapsed in January, killing hundreds of people](#), suffered a leak last year that compromised its safety, according to employees who allege the mine’s operators did not inform the workforce or relocate a canteen and administration building that were destroyed in the disaster.”

“One hundred and forty-two people died and 194 are still missing after the dam near Brumadinho in Minas Gerais state collapsed on 25 January.”

“On the day of the disaster, Vale – the Brazilian company which owns the mine – said the dam was regularly checked, most recently on 22 January, and had received “declarations of condition of stability” from TÜV SÜD, a German inspection company. Four days after the disaster, police [arrested](#) three Vale employees and two engineers from TÜV SÜD, but on Tuesday a high court ordered their release.”

“But three mine workers told the Guardian that around July last year, repairs were carried out after

the dam leaked water near its base. Another man said his brother – who worked at the mine and is still missing – was so worried about the leak he planned to leave his job.”
(Phillips, 2019)

Bolsonaro govt backs indigenous tribe for commercial farming practices
Published on the 7th of February, 2019
(GMO on Indigenous Lands)

“Brazil's new right-wing [government](#) is backing an indigenous tribe that was fined under the previous [administration](#) for commercial farming practices banned on tribal [land](#), saying they are an example to be followed as it pushes to open reservations to agriculture.”

“The [Parecis](#) in western [Mato Grosso state](#) had partnered with local [farmers](#) to produce [soy](#) and were using genetically modified crops (GMO), both practices that are banned on reservation land. Environmental authority Ibama slapped the [Parecis](#) and the [farmers](#) with an unprecedented fine of 129 million reais (\$34.72 million) last year. But since far-right firebrand [Jair Bolsonaro](#) took office on Jan. 1, [government](#) officials have come out overwhelmingly in favour of the [Parecis](#) and allowing mechanized agriculture on indigenous [land](#).”

“Nabhan Garcia, vice minister of [land](#) affairs at the Agriculture Ministry, praised the [Parecis](#) and said he would participate in the ceremony marking the beginning of their harvest next week. ‘We’re in favor of the Indian learning to farm,’ Garcia told [Reuters](#) in an interview.”
(Devdiscourse News Desk, 2019)

Brazil's indigenous groups decry Bolsonaro's escalating attacks
Published on the 14th of February, 2019
(Increasing Violence)



The head of the Uirapuru indigenous community walks along a corn field near the town of Conquista do Oeste, Brazil [File: Ueslei Marcelino/Reuters]

“Brazilian [indigenous groups](#) say far-right President [Jair Bolsonaro](#) has ramped up land grabs, intimidation and killings during his short time in office.”

“On Wednesday, several indigenous organisations gave the [Inter-American](#) Commission on Human Rights, hosted in Bolivia a grim joint report.”

“The report, obtained by Al Jazeera, details a sharp uptick in [attacks on indigenous people](#) since Bolsonaro won the presidency in the October 2018 elections.”

“In less than three months, the report says, at least 16 attacks on [indigenous](#) communities in Brazil were documented. In addition to four homicides, the report recounts stonings, deforesting, threats and arson.”

For more on this troubling, recurring issue, please refer to the cited article and the others cited in this

text.
(Alberti, 2019)

Brazil sees growing wave of anti-indigenous threats, reserve invasions
Published on the 19th of February, 2019
(Increasing Violence against Indigenous Peoples)

“Since the beginning of the year, anti-indigenous actions have been reported across Brazil. In [a recent article](#) Repórter Brasil, an online non-profit news service and Mongabay media partner, reported that at least 14 indigenous reserves have been invaded or threatened with invasion.”
(Branford & Torres, 2019a)

Brazil indigenous group mobilises against planned soy railway
Published on the 22nd of February, 2019
(Indigenous Rights & Agro-industry)

“The Kayapo, a Brazilian Amazon [indigenous group](#), is mobilising to protect its land rights as the government works to launch an ambitious soy railway project that would pass within 60km of the tribe's territory.”

“The \$3.3bn, 933km EF-170 "Ferrograo" or "Grain Railway" is a priority project of the government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro, whose 2018 victory was backed by Brazil's powerful agriculture sector, in part on promises to freeze indigenous land demarcations.”

“Tarcisio Freitas, [Brazil's](#) Minister for Infrastructure, has described the Ferrograo project as "a revolution in terms of agribusiness". Bidding is expected to begin by the end of the year or in early 2020.”

“The planned extension would connect Sinop in Brazil's soy heartland state Mato Grosso to the Miritituba port in Para that sits on the Tapajos River, a major tributary of the Amazon. From there, soy shipments for export to China and other countries would head to ports in Belem and Santana.”

“Doto Takak-Ire, a Kayapo leader and member of Kabu Institute, an organisation formed of 12 Kayapo villages, told Al Jazeera he worried that the project would bring an influx of speculative farmers to the edges of the Kayapo Menkragnoti and Bau reserves and that increased use of pesticides would pollute local rivers.”

(Cowie, 2019)

March

Emboldened by Bolsonaro, armed invaders encroach on Brazil's tribal lands
Published on the 3rd of March, 2019
(Violence Against Indigenous Peoples)

“Ten days after Brazil's right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro took office, dozens of men entered protected indigenous land in a remote corner of the Amazon, hacking a pathway beneath the jungle canopy.”

“Inspired by Bolsonaro's vow to open more native territory to commercial development, the men, armed with machetes, chainsaws and firearms, had come to stake their claims.”

“A tense stand-off ensued with members of the Uru-eu-wau-wau tribe, who captured the January confrontation on a cellphone video viewed by Reuters. The trespassers threatened to set fire to their villages to drive them out, tribal members said. Tribesmen readied poison-tipped arrows in their bows.”

“The invaders retreated. But a bullet-riddled sign at the entrance to their sprawling reservation now



The Kayapo say they are worried that the project would bring an influx of speculative farmers encroaching on the edges of the Kayapo Menkragnoti and Bau reserve [Giovanni Bello/Rede Xingu/Al Jazeera]

serves as their calling card.”

“The placard is emblazoned with the acronym FUNAI, a federal agency charged with protecting indigenous land rights that is widely loathed by agricultural interests.”

“The confrontation is part of a surge of threats and illegal incursions that tribes and indigenous rights groups say have accompanied Bolsonaro’s rise to power.”

“Land invasions have increased 150 percent since he was elected in late October, according to the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), a Brazilian advocacy group.²

“On the night of Bolsonaro’s victory, a health post and a school were firebombed on Pankararu lands in northeastern Pernambuco state, CIMI reported. In midwestern Mato Grosso do Sul, the group said, convoys of farmers fired shots at the Guaraní Kaiowá community to intimidate the tribe.”

For more on this subject, please refer to the cited article.

(Boadle, 2019c)



An indigenous child of Uru-eu-wau-wau tribe, looks on in an area deforested by invaders, after a meeting was called in the village of Alto Jamari to face the threat of armed land grabbers invading the Uru-eu-wau-wau Indigenous Reservation near Campo Novo de Rondonia, Brazil January 30, 2019. Picture taken January 30, 2019. REUTERS/Ueslei Marcelino

**A quarter of Brazil’s new congress tainted by campaign donations from illegal deforesters Published on the 4th of March, 2019
(Deforestation & Corrupt Politics)**

“A quarter of Brazil’s new congress have reportedly received electoral campaign donations from illegal deforesters or individuals implicated in slave labour, says a new [investigation](#) by Repórter Brasil. IDM’s own research reveals the details of the forest crimes committed by some of the donors, which include illegal deforestation of protected areas and illegal timber trade.”

“The donations were made during the presidential and legislative electoral campaigns of October 2018. The elected congressmen and women took their seats on 1 February.”

“Repórter Brasil, an investigative NGO, compared lists of donors made available by the High Electoral Court (TSE) with those of individuals and companies sanctioned by Ibama – Brazil’s environmental enforcement agency – or named on the Labour Ministry’s “dirty list” of slave labour.”

“The NGO’s researchers found that 131 federal deputies^[1] – 25 per cent of the lower chamber of congress – and 17 senators – 21 per cent of the senate – received a total of 8.3 million reais (\$2.2 million USD) from businessmen implicated in environmental or labour violations.”

“Agriculture Minister Tereza Cristina and President Bolsonaro’s Chief of Staff Onyx Lorenzoni are

among the parliamentarians who have received such donations (they were both elected to congress but have since taken up ministerial posts).”

“Senators Renan Calheiros and Rodrigo Pacheco received the largest sums, at half a million reais (\$134,000 USD) each. Calheiros received this sum (20 per cent of his total campaign funds) from Cícero Rafael Tenório da Silva, a businessmen fined no less than 10 times by Ibama for illegal deforestation.”

“IDM’s own research of Ibama’s public database shows that Tenório da Silva has had at least two farms in the state of Alagoas – Rio Bonito and Esperança – suspended for illegal clearing of protected areas at the Atlantic Forest biome.”
(IDM, 2019b)

**Indigenous Rights Ignored as Brazil Jump-Starts Power Line: Prosecutor
Published on the 8th of March, 2019
(Energy and Indigenous Rights)**

“Brazil’s move to accelerate construction of an electric line to the northern state of Roraima, which now relies on crisis-ridden Venezuela for power, could violate the rights of indigenous peoples whose land it must cross, a federal prosecutor told Reuters.”

“Roraima is not connected to the rest of Brazil’s power grid, and its electricity supply from Venezuela has experienced outages amid that country’s economic collapse.”

“The power line project to connect Roraima with the power grid in Amazonas state was auctioned off in 2011, but it has been held up in the licensing process. The power line must cut across 120 kms (75 miles) of an indigenous reserve, home to the Waimiri-Atroari, who were nearly wiped out in the last century, complicating the process.”
(Costa, 2019)

**Brazil to build long-resisted Amazon transmission line on indigenous land
Published on the 13th of March, 2019
(Indigenous Territory and Infrastructure development)**

“Brazil’s Bolsonaro government has invoked reasons of national security to push forward on the construction of a long-resisted 125 kilometer (78 mile) electrical transmission line through the heart of the Waimiri Atroari Indigenous Reserve in the states of Amazonas and Roraima.”

“For years the Waimiri Atroari people have fought government attempts to build the powerline through their territory, demanding compensation and safeguards to protect their way of life and the wildlife they depend on for food. Right-of-way negotiations with federal authorities, including FUNAI, the indigenous affairs agency, IBAMA, the environmental protection agency, and MPF, the federal prosecutors office, have long been ongoing.”

“But at the end of February, presidential spokesman General Otávio Rêgo de Barros announced that construction of a 750 kilometer (466 mile) powerline to bring energy from Manaus, the capital of Amazonas state, to Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima, Brazil’s northernmost state, will begin on 30 June; 125 kilometers (almost 80 miles) of the line will pass through the indigenous reserve.”

“The general justified the rush to build by saying that questions of national security override the interests of the Waimiri Atroari and the environment.”
(Rocha, 2019)



The BR-174 where it runs through the Waimiri Atroari Indigenous Reserve. The transmission line, if built, would run beside it. Construction is slated to start in June, though could be delayed by a court challenge. Image by SallesNeto BR licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license.
(Rocha, 2019)

Serious Deterioration of Human Rights and Indigenous Rights Conditions in Brazil
Published on the 14th of March, 2019
(Indigenous Rights)

"María Lourdes Alcántara, anthropologist and coordinator of the Guaraní Youth Support Group of Mato Grosso del Sur (GAPK / AJI) and Professor of medical anthropology in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of São Paulo, reflects on the main threats to indigenous communities in Brazil after Jair Bolsonaro, a former right-wing government representative and retired military captain, assumed power." Below is a short summary of each of the serious threats mentioned in the article

- **Dismantling of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI)**

"Within the Ministry of Agriculture, the Special Secretariat of Funding (SEAF) is responsible for demarcating indigenous lands and granting environmental licenses to extractive projects with environmental impacts. According to the newspaper Folha de São Paulo, both offices would be moved to a government body in the as-yet-to-be-created National Institute of Colonisation and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) linked to SEAF."

"The fact that FUNAI sat under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice meant protection for the delineation of boundaries, as it was a ministry supposedly exempt from economic and political interests."

"The first legal measure that President Bolsonaro signed into effect was the transfer of FUNAI to the Ministry of Family, Women and Human Rights, which is headed by controversial Minister Damares Alves, whose declarations demonstrate his lack of knowledge on indigenous rights and display his racism. In addition to this transfer, the responsibility of boundary demarcations has been assigned to the Ministry of Agriculture."

"The chain of command is now in the hands of the most radical rural groups. The new Minister of Agriculture is Federal Deputy Tereza Cristina (DEM-MS). The Special Secretary of Funding Affairs, who will be in charge of agrarian reform, is Luís Antônio Nabhan García, President of the Rural Democratic Union (UDR). His Assistant Secretary is Luana Ruiz, an attorney for large landowners involved in several land demarcation processes."

- **The Danger of Revising Indigenous Lands**

"In addition to the inaction plaguing land demarcation, the other major threat is the revision of lands already demarcated, as in the case of Raposa Serra do Sol. According to Special Secretary of Funding Luiz Antonio Nabhan García, "the largest landowner in the country is the Indian." Because of this, he aims to find gaps in the demarcation law to revise titled lands."

"The process of demarcating indigenous land takes an average of 10 to 15 years and can take up to more than 20 years."

"This point is very delicate since both legislation and the Constitution are being violated, judicial power has been disregarded, and anthropologists and the indigenous population have been discredited; all of which is generating direct confrontation that is without precedent, with the result being serious setbacks for human and indigenous rights."

- **Pesticides**

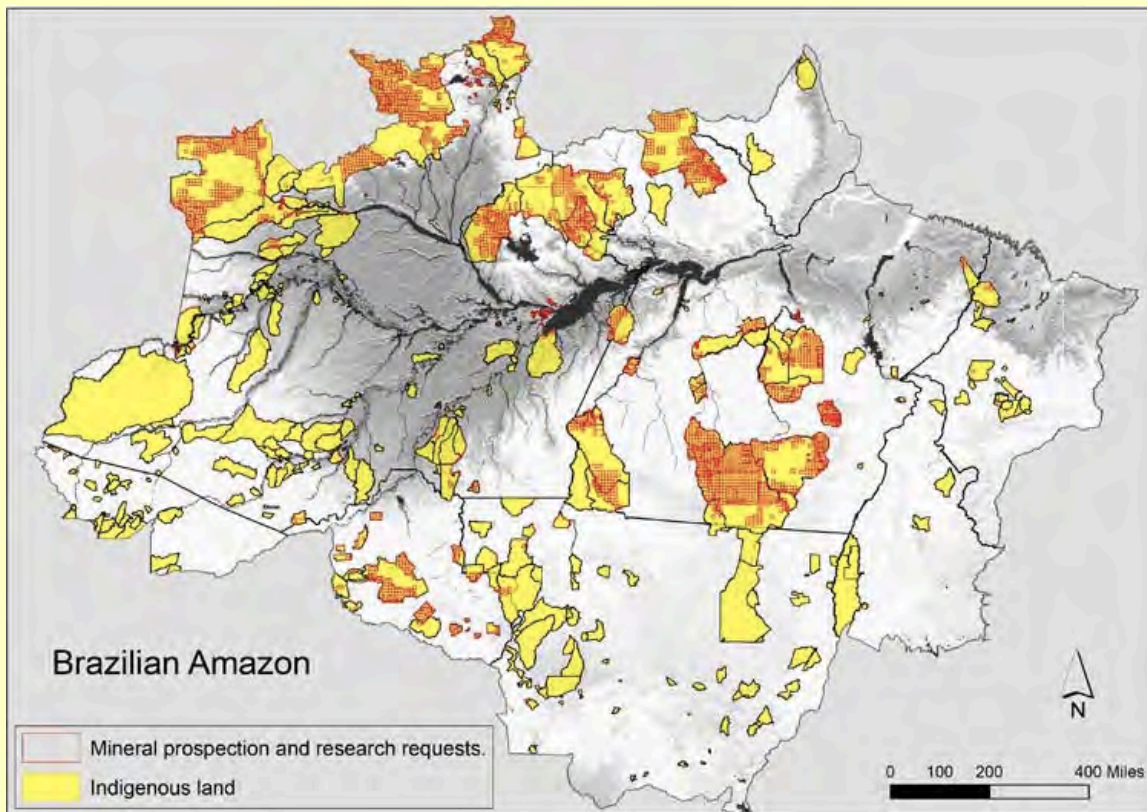
"On 10 January 2019, the Ministry of Agriculture published a list of 28 agrochemicals and their active ingredients in the Official Gazette of the Union. Among those listed is an unpublished additive called sulfoxaflor, a chemical controversially used in the United States. Of the 28 agrochemicals already published, methomyl—an ingredient used in cotton, potato, soybean, cabbage and corn fields—is considered extremely toxic; four more chemicals were classified as highly toxic. According to the official classification, almost all are dangerous for the environment; fourteen are categorized as 'very dangerous' and 12 as 'dangerous'."

- **Climate Change**

"Ricardo Salles, the Minister of Environment, supports all measures that clearly oppose international agreements that Brazil signed regarding global warming. He asserts that climate change is nothing more than an ideology and that there is no significant evidence to demonstrate this phenomenon."

For more information on the rights of indigenous peoples of Brazil and the risks they face, please refer to the cited article.
(IWGIA, 2019)

Brazil to open indigenous reserves to mining without indigenous consent
Published on the 14th of March, 2019
(Indigenous Land Rights)



Mining industry and individual prospecting requests on indigenous land as filed with the federal government.
Map by Mauricio Torres using data provided by the Departamento Nacional de Produção Mineral.

“For many years, international and Brazilian mining companies have dreamed of getting access to the mineral wealth lying beneath indigenous lands. And finally, the government of Jair Bolsonaro seems determined to give them that opportunity. On 4 March, while Brazilians were distracted by Carnival celebrations, the new Minister of Mines and Energy Admiral Bento Albuquerque [announced](#) plans to permit mining on indigenous land.”

“Speaking at the annual convention of the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC), a major event in the mining world that attracts tens-of-thousands of attendees, the Minister said that Brazil’s indigenous people would be given a voice but not a veto in the matter. The opening of indigenous ancestral territories to mining, he predicted, would “bring benefits to these communities and to the country.”

“He also said that he intends to allow mining right up to Brazil’s borders, abolishing the current 150-kilometer (93-mile) wide mining buffer zone at the frontier.”

“The minister [said](#) that current mining restrictions are outdated. The long-restricted indigenous and border areas ‘have become centers of conflict and illegal activities, that in no way contribute to sustainable development or to sovereignty and national security.’ The administration will shortly be holding a nationwide consultation to discuss how the changes should be made, he concluded.”

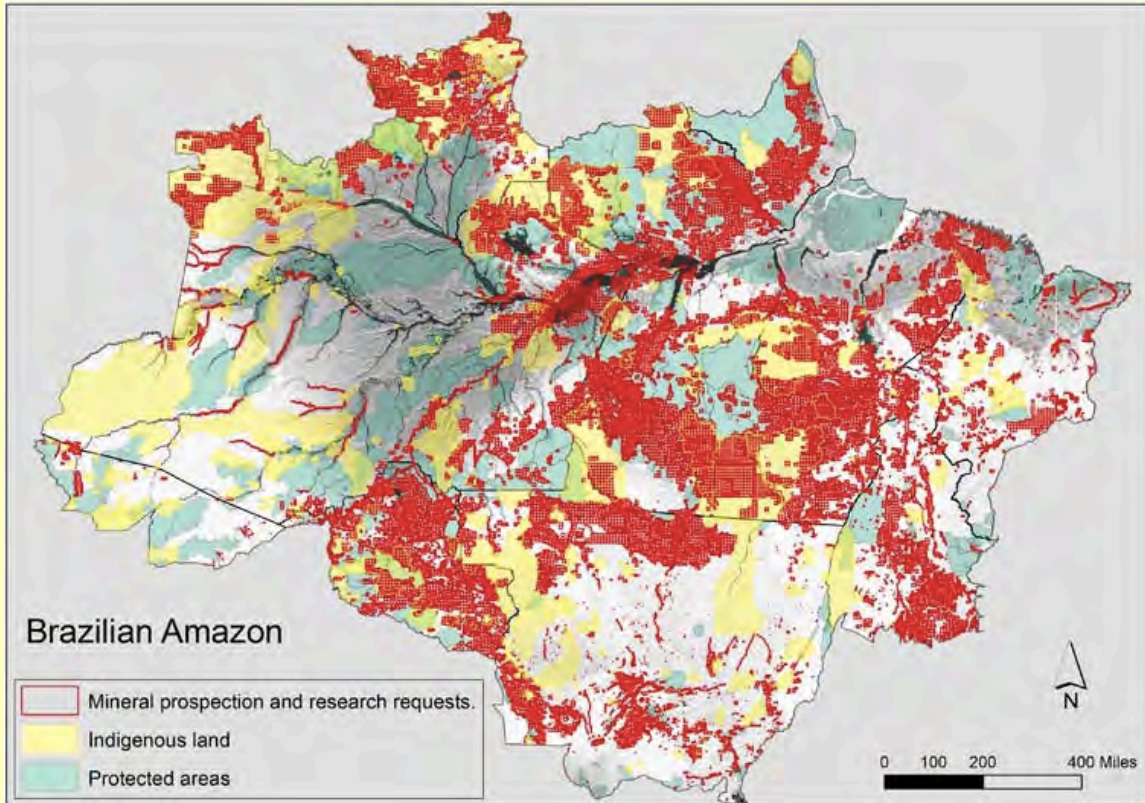
“Bolsonaro recently [wrote](#) on Twitter: ‘Over 15 percent of national territory is demarcated as indigenous and quilombola land. Less than a million people live in these isolated areas, exploited and manipulated by NGOs. We are going to integrate these citizens.’”

“Article 231 of the Constitution states: “Indians have the right to the permanent occupation of their traditional land and to enjoy the exclusive use of the wealth in the soil, rivers and lakes.” Moreover, their land rights are “inalienable.” The Constitution allows for mining on indigenous land, but only after the Indians have been consulted and specific procedures for doing so, approved by them, have been ratified by Congress.”

“The Ministry of Mines and Energy has, however, confirmed to Mongabay that it plans to authorize mining on indigenous areas.”

“Though its reports are unconfirmed, analysts suggest Bolsonaro will probably issue [a presidential decree](#) to allow mining, which is the approach he plans to use [to permit agribusiness to lease land](#) within indigenous reserves -- a move that faces a similar constitutional roadblock.”

This ongoing issue is being closely followed, for more information refer to the cited article.
(Branford & Torres, 2019b)



The mining industry has not only made prospecting requests (red) within indigenous reserves (yellow), but also on other conserved lands (green). Map by Mauricio Torres using data provided by the Departamento Nacional de Produção Mineral.

Amazon deforestation continues to rise as prominent figures warn that Bolsonaro is seeking to turn indigenous people into slave labour for Big Ag
Published on the 18th of March, 2019
(Deforestation)

“Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has continued to rise compared to a year ago, when forest loss had already reached decade-high levels. Since coming to power, President Jair Bolsonaro has taken controversial steps to undermine environmental and indigenous protections, an approach that has been compared to that of Brazil’s military dictatorship. Current efforts to legalise agribusiness activity on indigenous lands promise to unleash hard battles for the preservation of the Amazon.”

“Data published by Imazon, a Brazilian conservation NGO, reveals a 54 percent increase in deforestation in the Amazon in [January](#) 2019 compared to the same month last year. Forest loss totalled 108 square kilometres, the equivalent to around 490 football fields per day.”

“Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has been [higher](#) every month since August 2018 compared to the same month the year before, except for October.”

“In [December](#), 246 square kilometres were deforested, a 34 percent increase compared to December 2017. In [November](#), deforestation reached 287 square kilometres, a 406 percent increase compared to November 2017.”

“More than two thirds of the deforestation registered from November to January took place in the states of Pará and Mato Grosso, part of the Amazon ‘arc of deforestation’ that has suffered heavy forest loss in recent decades to cattle ranching, grain crops – especially soy – logging, mining and infrastructure projects.”

“These increases follow the highest levels of Amazon deforestation in a decade recorded between August 2017 and July 2018, when 7,900 square kilometres of native forest were [lost](#) mostly to illegal logging and agricultural expansion.”

“[Greenpeace](#) laid the blame for these decade-high levels of Amazon forest loss on the federal government and the agribusiness lobby in congress for adopting measures to undermine protected areas, starve enforcement agencies of resources and give amnesty to illegal deforesters.”

“Part of the deforestation registered between November 2018 and January 2019 took place at protected areas, including indigenous reservations, such as Ituna/Itatá, Cachoeira Seca do Iriri and Apyterewa in Pará, and Xingu in Mato Grosso. Together these reservations lost nearly 27 square kilometres. Other protected areas in Rondonia, Amazonas, Pará and Acre have also lost several thousand hectares of forests.”

(IDM, 2019c)

Brazil’s key deforestation drivers: Pasture, cropland, land speculation

Published on the 19th of March, 2019

(Deforestation)

“Brazil’s cropland (row crop) area nearly doubled between 2000 and 2014, [new research](#) from the University of Maryland’s Department of Geographical Sciences shows. This expansion is significant given that Brazil was already a major agricultural producer at the end of the 20th Century. In 2000, 26 million hectares (100,387 square miles) were used for cropland, that area grew to 46.5 million hectares (179,538 square miles) by 2014.”

“The study is the result of a deep dive into Brazil’s rich remote sensing knowledgebase. It combines various satellites monitoring at different resolutions to cross-check and validate results derived from the analysis of Landsat data – one of the world’s major satellite imagery archives. Researchers say that the new study shows that, using the many available data sets, it’s getting much easier to measure and forecast policy effects on deforestation, and to avoid errors.”

“The availability of accurate baseline data is particularly crucial today, as fears grow that deforestation rates will spike due to the expected deregulation of environmental protections under the rightest presidency of Jair Bolsonaro. “Satellite data allows us to monitor changes in the Earth’s cover, so whatever happens, we will know,” says Viviana Zalles, study lead author and a doctoral candidate at the [Global Land Analysis and Discovery \(GLAD\) lab](#).”

“A key finding: most cropland is not created via the direct conversion of native vegetation. Rather it is established in a two-step process: forests are cut to create pasture; then those grazing lands are, over time, converted to croplands, especially soy. Of all existing Brazilian cropland, only 20 percent resulted from direct native vegetation conversion, while 80 percent was created from pastures.”

Please refer to the cited article for more information on this topic.

(Prager, 2019)

Indigenous Population Testify Against The Brazilian Military For Alleged Genocide

Published on the 26th of March, 2019

(Court Case)

“An Indigenous Amazonian population, the Waimiri-Atroari, have testified in court against the Brazilian Military for genocidal actions against its people. Temehe Tomas Waimiri gave the testimony to the judge alongside several additional leaders of the group. The hearing was held in Waimiri-Atroari territory, which occupies land in the Brazilian states of Amazonas and Roraima. Prosecutors claim 3000 indigenous people lost their lives between 1964-1985 under the military dictatorship. The alleged genocide of the Waimiri-Atroari population was heightened during the construction of the BR-174 highway, which runs through the group’s territory. During the hearing, the Waimiri-Atroari claimed that white uniformed men entered their land, carrying out mass executions, shootings, and stabbings. In addition, reports of chemical bombs, air raids, and poison spills have been made against the dictatorship. The Brazilian military has denied all accusations of violence.”

(Abbott, 2019)

April

100 Days of Bolsonaro - Ending the EU's role in the assault on the Amazon Published on the 10th of April, 2019 (Bolsonaro & European Complicity)

“A new reality has unfolded in Brazil in the 100 days since Jair Bolsonaro became leader of the world's fourth largest democracy.”

“Incursions by armed invaders on Indigenous Peoples' lands have surged.”

“An assault on the country's environmental protections is underway.”

“And the country's extraordinarily powerful agribusiness lobby now has even more political clout.”

“In January 2019, deforestation in the Amazon reportedly rose by 54 per cent compared to the same period in 2018. The same month, Bolsonaro's temporary measure to put indigenous lands under the jurisdiction of the agriculture ministry paved the way for powerful cattle ranching and soy interests to accelerate their sweep through the world's largest tropical forest, as well as Brazil's other ecologically precious biomes. Their destruction has significant global ramifications, including acceleration of climate change...”

“The EU bears some measure of responsibility for this.”

“On the 100th day of its presidency, 20+ organisations, including Fern, are publishing “[100 Days of Bolsonaro - Ending the EU's role in the assault on the Amazon](#)”, a new briefing which details how the EU and Brazil are deeply economically entwined.

(FERN, 2019)

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March

Indigenous peoples' rights to autonomy and self-government: the case of Rapa Nui, Chile **Published on the 11th of March, 2019** **(Indigenous Rights)**

“The Rapa Nui people are the original inhabitants of Rapa Nui/Te Pito o Te Henua, also known as Easter Island. Some 6,000 people live on this island, of which around 60% belong to the Rapa Nui people.”

“The whole of Rapa Nui is claimed as ancestral territory by virtue of the people’s customs and laws. Situated on an underwater ridge 3,000 km long, a migratory route for large cetaceans and species of great commercial interest, its economic area is regularly violated by fishing boats illegally fishing its territorial waters.”

“To this day, only 13% of the island’s lands are under the control of the Rapa Nui; the rest are shared between a private commercial company aimed at exploiting the land and the Rapa Nui National Park, the 7,000 hectares of which are administered through a co-management agreement which, in practice, prevents the Rapa Nui from freely accessing their territory.”

“Through the Council of Elders and the Rapa Nui Parliament, the people have submitted a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to obtain recognition of their rights to the lands and waters of Rapa Nui. In this, they specifically demand their ancestral property rights to their sacred places, which have been declared protected areas by the Chilean state and now form part of the Rapa Nui National Park. The IACHR has yet to assess the request as admissible.”

For more information on the rights of indigenous peoples on Rapa Nui/Te Pito o Te Henua, and Chile in general, please refer to the cited page.
(IWGIA, 2019)

April

‘Indigenous people’s livelihoods at risk in scramble for lithium, the new white gold’ **Published on the 9th of April, 2019** **(Water Rights & Lithium Mining)**

“The so-called ‘lithium triangle’ – an area spanning Chile, Bolivia and Argentina – holds around [60 per cent of the world’s lithium reserves](#). Demand for lithium, which is used for electric car batteries and



Chile's farmers are having to compete for water with major lithium producers. (Credit: Jess Kraft/Shutterstock)

storing renewable energy, is [projected to increase tenfold over the next decade](#), leading all three countries to double down on being world leaders in this ‘white gold’.”

“This lithium boom is having an impact on a dozen mostly indigenous communities... Across the border in Argentina, Martina and Juan from San Jose de Miraflores worry about how lithium extraction in the Salinas Grandes salt flats and the Guayantayoc lagoon will affect their livelihoods.”

Communities fear that “lithium extraction will swallow up the water their animals need to survive.”

“[L]ithium is contained in salt water brines beneath salt flats in the three countries. This brine is extracted with pumps and directed into large pools, where the water evaporates, leaving a mixture of lithium and other minerals. These are separated using a chemical process, and then sent off and used to make batteries, among other uses.”

“The impact is already being felt. In Chile’s Atacama Desert, where lithium extraction has been under way for longer, communities are experiencing water shortages affecting their home lives and agriculture. The world’s driest desert, Atacama has not escaped the impact of climate change. But this has been made worse by water-reliant industries’ actions in the region, including lithium extraction. Chemical companies Albermarle and SQM have both been accused of [extracting more than their legal quota](#) of salt water. Tourism and copper-mining has also put pressure on these scarce water resources.”

“To sweeten the pill, mining companies have made agreements with communities, which include financial benefits, jobs, and other contributions, such as building or repairing schools and providing scholarships. While some residents are happy with these agreements, others question what will happen after the boom, especially since many of these provisions replace what used to be state services.”

“In both Chile and Argentina, there are strong civil society movements challenging this trend and advocating for the rights of indigenous people. These include the right to self-determination, the right to free, prior and informed consent, and rights to water and land in line with their cultural traditions.”

Please refer to the article for more on this issue facing the indigenous peoples of the Atacama region of Latin America.

(Horvath & Romero-Medina, 2019)



BrinBrine is extracted from salt water flats in South America to obtain lithium. (Credit: Klaus Balzano/Shutterstock)

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On the **1/1/2019**, the Colombian advocacy group RECON announced that social leader Gilberto Valencia was murdered. Valencia, a recipient of many awards and recognition for his "Traveling Dialogues for Peace" initiative was an active member of the human rights community in Colombia ⁽¹⁾.

On the **04/01/2019** Wilmer Antonio Miranda was shot and killed by four men. He was a human rights defender and member of the Cajibío Peasant Workers Association (Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos de Cajibío), of the National Association of Peasant Reserves (Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reserva Campesina), the National Coordination of Coca, Amapola and Marijuana Cultivators (Coordinadora Nacional de Cultivadores de Coca, Amapola y Marihuana), and the Social and Political Coordinator of Marcha Patriótica in the Cauca region ⁽²⁾.

On the **04/01/2019** José Rafael Solano (60) defender of artisanal mining and a member of the Communal Action Groups (JAC) for territorial peace was gunned down by a group of unidentified men outside his family home ⁽³⁾.

On the **04/01/2019** on the Dimar Parada (45), leader of the Catatumbo integration committee was shot 5 times in Hacarí. He survived this attempt on his life ⁽⁴⁾.

On the **05/01/2019** rights defender and member of the Movement for the Popular Constituent (*Movimiento por la Constituyente Popular*, MCP), Wilson Pérez Ascanio, was shot and killed in Hacarí ⁽⁵⁾.

On the **06/01/2019** Maritza Isabel Quiroz Leiva (60), was shot twice and died as a result of the attack. Maritza was a leader of a group of Afro-Colombian Woman who are victims of forced displacement ⁽⁶⁾.



Colombia

January

January Update: Colombian Social Leaders Begin 2019 with a Disturbing Security Situation
Published on the 18th of January, 2019
(WOLA Update)

100 Colombians under Security Threat at the Beginning of 2019

"A January 14 article in the Colombian newspaper El Espectador reports that there are already 100 Colombian social leaders under threat in the New Year. The most alarming situation is currently in the Pacific Region (mainly the Department of Chocó) where there are 27 people under threat. The Caribbean region and the central region of the country are also under heavy threat. These cases are all under the purview of National Protection Unit (Unidad Nacional de Protección, UNP) that has claimed that 96% of those under threat have received some form of protection."

Afro-Colombian Advocacy Group Calls for full Implementation of Law 70

"On January 10, the Advocacy for Afro-Colombian Communities (Proceso de Comunidades Negras en Colombia, PCN) called on the Colombian government to strengthen efforts to implement Law 70 passed in 1993. After 25 years of its signing into law, the Colombian government has not applied the proper resources to allow Afro-Colombian communities to participate in community development plans and has ignored several requests for land restitution."
(Sánchez-Garzoli, 2019a)

February

At Least 13 Human Rights, Social Leaders Killed in Colombia So Far in 2019
Published on the 7th of February, 2019
(WOLA Update)

"Since WOLA's last update from January 3, at least three more Colombian activists were murdered; in total, 13 cases of murdered social leaders were reported to WOLA in just the first month of 2019. In 2018, WOLA counted at least 123

On the **10/01/2019** Awá indigenous leader of the Cuasacuabi resguardo, Leonardo Nastacuás Rodríguez (36), was shot multiple times and killed ^(7.).

On the **11/01/2019** the vehicle in which Alfamir Castillo Bermúdez was travelling was shot at by two unidentified men on a motorcycle while she was on her way to Pradera, Valle del Cauca. This is the latest in a series of threats and incidents, which have increased since the end of 2018, against the woman human rights defender. She began her human rights work following the extrajudicial execution of her son, Darbey Mosquera Castillo, by the Military Forces of Colombia. She has since dedicated herself to the pursuit of truth and justice in Colombia in relation to extrajudicial killings carried out during the conflict ^(8.).

On the **13/1/2019**, two young Afro-Colombian men were assassinated in the town of Riosucio. According to reports, two unidentified actors entered the house of Pedro Moreno (20) and shot him five times. That same night, Yuber Cordoba (20) was also shot. Mr. Cordoba, is the nephew of Marino Cordoba, president of AFRODES, member of the Afro-Colombian Peace Council and finalist for the 2019 Martin Ennals Human Rights Award. This 'social cleansing' has led to forced displacement and assassinations of several social leaders ^(1.).

On the **13/1/2019**, unknown armed actors followed a high-ranking indigenous authority, Rubén Orley Velasco, of the indigenous council Tacueyó. The unidentified followers – dressed in black – quickly fled the scene when the Kiwe Thegnas Indigenous Guard was notified ^(1.).

On the **15/01/2019** Víctor Manuel Trujillo (20) was shot and killed by the ELN in the department of Montecristo, Bolívar. He was a member of the Association of *de Hermandades Agroecológicas y Mineras de Guamocó - Aheramigua* ^(9.).

On the **16/1/2019**, the paramilitary group Black Eagles released pamphlets in Northern Cauca targeting prominent Afro-Colombian social leaders. The pamphlet

assassinations of Colombia human rights leaders or members of vulnerable ethnic communities in the country.”

“The assassinations have primarily targeted Afro-Colombian and indigenous rights activists, in addition to rural farmers and landowners in Valle del Cauca, Putumayo, and La Guajira. Human rights defenders and union leaders, especially those in Valle del Cauca, continue to confront a high volume of death threats from paramilitary and dissident guerrilla groups.”

Three Military Officials Sentenced for “Operation Dragon” (Cali)

“The Special Fourth Circuit Criminal Court in Cali upheld the conviction of three Army officers for a 2004 plot known as “Operation Dragon” to assassinate a senator and four human rights defenders. This plan formed part of a broader plan to assassinate over 150 activists including trade unionists from SINTRAEMCALI. Senator Alexander López Maya, who was then a Congressman and who was targeted, publicized the plot to silence elected officials and human rights defenders who opposed the privatization of the Cali Municipal Corporations (Emcali). Although the conspiracy implicated more than 8 agencies of then-President Álvaro Uribe, the District Attorney delayed the charging Colonel Julián Villate and Majors Fidel Rivera Jaimes and Hugo Alfonso Abondano until 2013 for the conspiracy to commit murder.”
(Sánchez-Garzoli, 2019b)

Amenazas a líderes indígenas y sociales no cesan en Colombia Published on the 11th of February, 2019 (Threats to Leaders)

In an interview with Robinson López, the human rights coordinator of one of Colombia’s biggest national indigenous organisations OPIAC (*Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana*), he spoke of the recent threats to his life and the risks facing the other leaders across the country.

“It is only January and already 17 leaders have been either killed or threatened.”

Indigenous leaders are not always able to escape the murders and threats they face. Guerrilla and paramilitary groups such as the ELN and Águilas Negras have distributed pamphlets threatening leaders, educators, indigenous governments and communicators in the region of Putumayo.

López states that leaders are targeted to repress their activity. They have filed lawsuits and guardianships (legal mechanisms for the defence of fundamental rights) in favour of the territory and in this way have prevented the granting of licenses or the granting of mining and oil project concessions.
(Paz, 2019)

Grave Situation Prevails for Indigenous Peoples Granted Precautionary Measures in Colombia Published on the 12th of February, 2019 (The Siona Indigenous Peoples’ Struggle)

promised 5,000,000 Colombian Pesos for the heads Héctor Marino Carabalí, Deyanira Peña, Andres Felipe Posu, and Edis Lasso ⁽¹⁾.

On the **18/1/2019** two brothers, Miller Díaz López (32) and Luis Díaz López (22), died in disputed circumstances. They were both members of the Julieros indigenous community, of the Betoyo people of the municipality of Tame ⁽¹⁰⁾.

On the **21/1/2019** 108 people from the Ipu Euja and Eperara Siapidara villages were displaced while those remaining in their homes face threats. Hooded men threatened 28 families from the two villages, who fled their homes in fear for their lives. The villagers' restricted movement has prevented them from collecting food according to their traditional way of life, leaving children facing food insecurity ⁽¹¹⁾.

On the **26/1/2019** the Valle Del Cauca Regional Indigenous Association (ORIVAC) [reported](#) a death threat issued by the paramilitary group *Aguilas Negras* (Black Eagles) to indigenous Governor Rubén Darío Vélez ⁽¹¹⁾.

On the **27/1/2019** Alberto Santos Fuentes, a rural farmer and landowner in the municipality of Río Viejo, was murdered. Santos Fuentes had previously made a report to the National Land Restitution Unit detailing the invasion of his land from armed groups, but continued farming with only a bulletproof vest cellphone as protection measures ⁽¹¹⁾.

On the **27/1/2019** *La Guajira Hoy* newspaper reported an assassination attempt against indigenous social leader Debora Barros Fince. Barros is an indigenous Wayúu social leader and was greeting fellow leaders on the street for a meeting when her husband spotted two armed men approaching on a motorcycle. Barros took the opportunity given by the temporary shelter from an approaching truck to run into a neighboring home for shelter ⁽¹¹⁾.

“The Colombian State has failed to comply with precautionary measures ordered by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in the Siona People’s case, increasing the risk of their physical and cultural extermination.”

“In spite of the Siona community’s consistent attempts to reach out to the State and cooperating with all of the State’s requirements to reach an agreement on the implementation of protective measures — threats and harassment towards members of the Siona community, mobility restrictions and the enforcement of codes of conduct by armed actors, the recruitment of local youth and the presence of anti-personnel mines in the territory, continue to have a serious impact on the security, integrity and life of the Siona People of the Gonzaya (Buenavista) and PoPiyuya (Piyuya) Reserves,” Amazon Frontlines’ lawyer, Lina María Espinosa, remarked.

“While the Colombian Foreign Ministry recognized that it was aware of the proposal made by the Siona People and developed an institutional plan based upon it, the petitioners indicate that it does not meet the community’s requirements and instead attempts to impose a culturally inadequate methodology, one that is incompatible with how the Siona People make decisions and self-govern. On the other hand, budgetary obstacles have often been cited by the State as an argument to avoid the working meeting with the Siona in territory to come to agreements on necessary actions. Likewise, in spite of explicit invitations from Siona leaders, the State has refused to hold the meeting in Siona territory without the accompaniment and participation of members of the armed forces.”

This bulletin will discuss more the plight of the Siona people in the coming months, however, if interested, one should refer to the work of Amazon Frontlines who have been closely monitoring the situation of the Siona. (Amazon Frontlines, 2019)

**MAAP #97: Deforestation Surge in the Colombian Amazon, 2018 update
Published on the 12th of February, 2019
(Deforestation)**

“The Colombian Amazon is currently experiencing a **deforestation surge** (see graph).”

“The surge started three years ago (2016) and peaked in **2017** with the highest annual deforestation on record (214,744 hectares).”

“Deforestation remains high in **2018**: 156,722 hectares (based on early warning alert data).* If this estimate is confirmed, it would be the second highest on record (behind just 2017).”

“National experts indicate that **land grabbing** (acaparamiento de tierras) is an increasingly dominant direct driver of deforestation.”

For access to this data please refer to the cited article.
(MAAP, 2019)

On the **29/01/2019** rights defender and rural leader, Dilio Corpus Guetio, was killed. He was a member of the Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos (ASOCORDILLERA), an organisation that protects the rights of small holders in the Region of Cauca (12).

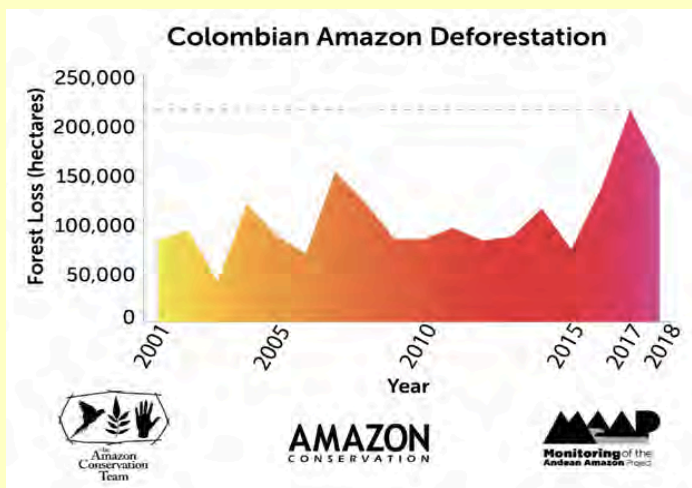
On the **31/01/2019** rights defender, smallholder and nominated municipal candidate for mayor, Jorge Herney Castrillón Gutierrez, was disappeared and then found dead (13).

On the **31/1/2019** Armando Valbuena Vega [publicized](#) a death threat he had received from the “Black Eagles” (“Aguilas Negras”) paramilitary group. Valbuena, an indigenous Wayuu, is the former president of the Colombian National Indigenous Organization (ONIC), representing 68 different indigenous organizations. The threat called Valbuena, recognized as an indigenous elder by UNESCO, an offensive slur and accused him of “spreading lies” in light of Valbuena’s attempts to raise awareness of municipal corruption. The threat gave Valbuena and his family 72 hours to vacate their property or be shot (11).

On the **5/2/2019** a 16-year-old indigenous teen died from injuries sustained after a Colombian military bombardment. Both her arms were amputated, and vital organs damaged during the January 30 government operation. The bombardment is part of the renewed offensive against the Ché Guevara front of the ELN guerrilla after peace talks between the insurgency and the government stalled in January (14).

On the **09/02/2019** indigenous leader, Jesús Albeiro Díaz Ulcué (40), e 40 años, was shot and killed (15).

On the **10/02/2019** José Arquímedes Moreno (34) was shot and killed by two people on a motorcycle in the municipality of Tibú, Norte de Santander. José was a member of the JAC (16).



Deforestation trends in the Colombian Amazon. Data: UMD/GLAD, Hansen/UMD/Google/USGS/NASA, RAISG

Colombia: New Army Commanders Linked to Killings (Part 1)
Published on the 20th of February, 2019
(False Positives)

“The Colombian government has named in key positions of the army multiple officers against whom there is credible evidence of involvement in extrajudicial executions and other abuses that are under investigation. On December 10, 2018, the government of President Iván Duque appointed General Nicasio de Jesús Martínez Espinel as the new head of the country’s army. On December 21, Defense Minister Guillermo Botero and Gen. Martínez Espinel named new commanders in key army positions. Human Rights Watch has identified evidence linking 10 of these officers, including Martínez Espinel, with “false positive” killings and other abuses. These killings of innocent civilians were committed systematically between 2002 and 2008 to boost body counts in the country’s long-running armed conflict.” (HRW, 2019a)

Colombian tribe calls for action on alleged effects of UK oil firm
Published on the 22nd of February, 2019
(Contaminating Water)



Women from the Siona tribe in Colombia claim water contaminated by a UK-based company is causing severe health problems for their tribe. Photograph: Mateo Barriga/Amazon Frontlines

María Isaura Cuaran and Marleni Piaguaye, both indigenous Siona women, talked to David Hill over the alleged contamination of several rivers in the Putumayo Region of the Colombian Amazon.

On the **14/02/2019** María Nelly Bernal Andrade, indigenous guard, was died as a result of being shot 5 times while on her way home ⁽¹⁷⁾.

On the **14/02/2019**, Martín Barrios (25), was shot and killed by the neo-paramilitary branch of the Gaitanista Self-Defense (AGC) group. The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP) [noted](#) that Martín is the son of Imber Barrios, a prominent social leader incarcerated for “rebellion” after working for land reclamation in the Bajo Atrato region ⁽¹⁴⁾.

On the **16/02/2019** Querubín de Jesús Zapata Avilés was out with friends when he was approached and shot by the assailant and shot. He was a social leader for several causes and verbal critic of the paramilitary control over the territory ⁽¹⁸⁾.

On the **17/02/2019** four armed men on motorcycles entered the town and conducted a patrol around the town council headquarters of the Kxsaw Nasa tribe in the municipality of Puerto Asís Two of the men sought out the home of local indigenous community leader Juan Pilcue. After observing the house for approximately 20 minutes, the men left the town. They were identified as paramilitary. The Kxsaw Nasa have reported the presence of armed men in their territory since 2017 with no response from Colombian state authorities ⁽¹⁴⁾.

On the **19/02/2019** José Víctor Ceballos Epinayu, a Wayúu Indigenous leader, was killed ⁽¹⁹⁾.

On the **21/02/2018**, paramilitary group calling itself the Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC) delivered a pamphlet with a bullet casing to the home of Juan Francisco Campos Goma and Arelis Uriana Guariyu in the municipality of Sincelejo. The threat was issued in response to Campos and Uriana’s meeting with indigenous leader Luis Fernando, Council Director of the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) ⁽¹⁴⁾.

“...Cuaran talks about ‘the company’ and how, she alleges, it has affected the local river.”

“Stomach problems, coughing, fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, welts, little spots, little blotches, general malaise ...”

“Between them, Cuaran and Piaguaye have seven children. They form two families living in the tiny village of Puerto Silencio, in the north-east of a roughly 4,500-hectare (11,100-acre) Siona reserve called Buenavista, deep in the Colombian Amazon along the border with Ecuador. Buenavista is the largest in geographic terms of six Siona reserves and home to approximately 600 people.”

“In Puerto Silencio, like across the vast majority of the rural Amazon, the local river is the main source of water – for drinking, cooking, bathing, swimming, and washing clothes and utensils.” In the past years the water has changed.

“Before, the water was clear,” Piaguaye said. “Now it’s dirty... Now [the fish] sometimes smell of oil, gasoline. Sometimes you can even see it.”

“Piaguaye claims this is severely affecting the Siona’s health – even the women’s most intimate parts. ‘We enter the water and our body starts to itch. The whole body. Welts appear. Welts! And our vaginal areas ... they’re a lot worse’.”

“Both Cuaran and Piaguaye, like many others in Puerto Silencio, are adamant they know who is responsible: *the Colombian subsidiary of the UK-based company Amerisur Resources*, which reportedly began exploiting oil in a concession called Platanillo, just to the west of Buenavista’s reserve, a decade ago.”

“...the women allege that the company was using a tube to dump untreated – or inadequately treated – production wastewater into a stream called the Mansoya River, which ultimately feeds into the Piñuña Blanco. They say they have seen that tube for themselves.”

“We think the river’s contaminated because, when the company arrived, they pointed that tube towards the stream,” Piaguaye said. “Not directly, but there’s one stream [running away from the oil installations], the Mansoya, and it’s the water from the Mansoya that feeds into another stream that then arrives here in the Piñuña Blanco.”

“Permission to dump into the Mansoya was granted by Colombia’s ministry of environment in 2009.”

“Colombia’s national authority of environmental licences (ANLA) visited the authorised dumping point on the Mansoya last year and found no observable “impact on the water, soil or vegetation”, noting in a report that there was no longer any infrastructure to dump, that Amerisur claimed it had not done so since 2012, and that in 2015 the company was granted permission to reinject waste water into the ground instead.”

“The Piñuña Blanco isn’t the only body of water the Siona in Buenavista allege Amerisur has affected. According to a report issued in August 2017 after a visit to the reserve by numerous government agencies, wastewaters from Platanillo had not been treated adequately and had contaminated wetlands, rivers and/or streams, including the Mansoya, Singuiyá and Peneya.”

According to the Siona, the company has also dumped poorly treated wastewaters directly into the Putumayo.”

“The ministry of environment also granted permission to dump wastewaters into the Putumayo River in 2011.”

“Buenavista’s spokesman, Mario Erazo Yaiguaje, showed the Guardian the tube running through the forest that was allegedly used to do it.”

On the **08/03/2019** Alexander Cunda, indigenous community leader, was assassinated in the department of Cauca ^(20.).

On the **13/03/2019** Alfonso Correa Sandoval was walking to his farm when three men who had been waiting in the bushes shot him 20 times. Correa was the president of the Community Action Council of the Cabuya, a rural farmer's organization dedicated to land restitution. Correa was in the process of fighting for his land to be officially re-titled. Correa had also founded the Farmer's Environment Association (ASOCAM) ^(14.).

On the **14/03/2019** Gabriel Alfonso Correa Chavestan (49), communal leader (JAC), was found dead on his farm ^(21.).

During the **MINGA protests**, ten members of the indigenous guards were killed due to violent actions taken by government forces to repress protesters near the municipalities of Santander and Popayán. Eight of the indigenous guards were killed on March 21 after an unknown individual threw an explosive device in one of their homes. The guards had been meeting to strategise responses to the government protest violations. The ESMAD was deployed with the military, police, helicopters, and drones during the March 10 protests. Nearly 51 MINGA activists were injured from pellet fire and tear gas ^(14.).

On the **17/03/2019** in the region of Cauca, member of the rural guard, John Jairo Noscué was killed. He was on duty working on a control point into the region of El Tablón ^(22.).

On the **27/03/2019** indigenous leader Ebel Yonda Ramos was found with 10 bullets across his dead body. The old indigenous governor of Cabildo La Gaitana denounced the displacement of his community while he was governor in 2010 ^(23.).

Please refer to David Hill's articles for more on this issue; this is part 2 of his series investigating the Siona peoples claim that their health is being affected by apparent contamination of local rivers. (Hill, 2019a)

Colombia: New Army Commanders Linked to Killings (Part 2) Published on the 27th of February, 2019 (False Positives)

"The [Colombian](#) government has appointed at least nine officers credibly implicated in extrajudicial executions and other abuses to key positions of the army, Human Rights Watch said today. At least three of the officers are under investigation, and prosecutors are investigating killings by forces under the command of the other six."

"On December 10, 2018, the government of President Iván Duque appointed General Nicacio de Jesús Martínez Espinel as the new head of the country's army. On December 21, Gen. Martínez Espinel and Defense Minister Guillermo Botero appointed other [new commanders to key army positions](#). Human Rights Watch has identified evidence linking eight of these officers, as well as General Martínez Espinel, to "false positive" killings and other abuses. From 2002 through 2008, in the cases that have come to be known as false positives, army personnel carried out systematic killings of innocent civilians to boost body counts in the country's long-running armed conflict."

"Human Rights Watch [research has shown](#) that patterns in false positive cases – including their systematic nature and the implausible circumstances of many of the reported combat killings – strongly suggest that commanders of units responsible for a significant number of killings knew or had reason to know about them. Under international law, commanders are not only responsible for war crimes or crimes against humanity that they directly order and carry out. They must also be held criminally responsible if they knew or had reason to know that subordinates under their effective control were committing such crimes and failed to take all necessary and reasonable steps in their power to prevent or punish the act."

"The newly appointed officers credibly linked to abuses are Martínez Espinel, head of the army; Jorge Enrique Navarrete Jadeth, Head of General Staff for Human Resources and Logistics; Raúl Antonio Rodríguez Arévalo, Head of General Staff for Planning and Policies; Adolfo León Hernández Martínez, head of the Army Transformation Command; Diego Luis Villegas Muñoz, head of the Vulcano Task Force; Edgar Alberto Rodríguez Sánchez, commander of the Aquiles Task Force; Raúl Hernando Flórez Cuervo, commander of the National Training Center; Miguel Eduardo David Bastidas, commander of the 10th brigade; and Marcos Evangelista Pinto Lizarazo, commander of the 13th brigade. All of them are army generals."

(HRW, 2019b)

March

The "Command Responsibility" Controversy in Colombia: A Follow-Up

Published on the 13th of March, 2019

(Ambiguous Constitutional Language enabling Impunity)

"In 2017, the Colombian Congress passed a constitutional

On the **29/3/2019**, at 1:00 in the morning, three men broke down the door of a rural cabin outside of Tumaco, entering with gunfire. Two farmers, Winston Preciado and Tomas Solís Valencia, were killed instantly. According to the community council representing communities outside of Tumaco, ASOMINUMA, two of the men were dressed in the uniform of the National Police. The men tied the two men's bodies together and dragged them to a waiting helicopter. The murders took place in front of Preciado's wife and children, who could not identify a motive for the killing ^(14.).

On the **02/04/2019** Déiner Ceferino Yunda Camayo was shot through the thorax by a projectile coming from a banana plantation. According to the human rights council of the indigenous organisation CRIC (*Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*) the projectile was from the Colombian armed forces attacking the people protesting in MINGA along the Pan-American Highway ^(24.).

On the **10/04/2019** Policarpo Guzmán Mage, a human rights defenders and the first president of the peasant and workers movement of Argelia (*Asociación Campesina de Trabajadores de Argelia - ASCAMTA*), was killed. He was shot ten times ^(25.).

On the **12/04/2019** Aquileo Mecheche Baragon (52), Embera indigenous leader in the Riosucio Chocó of CAMIZBA – ASOREWA, was forcibly taken from his home and shot in the face 3 times. He died. The killing took place just after an international humanitarian mission had been present in the area, investigating the high level of risk faced by by indigenous peoples and Afro communities in the region ^(26.).

amendment containing a “command responsibility” definition that is inconsistent with the one applied under international law. A previous [post](#) reviewed the background and lead-up to the approval of that legislation. This post will examine how the controversy has evolved since. The post begins by describing the submission by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) of an unusual amicus brief to Colombia’s Constitutional Court about the compatibility of the definition with international law. We then summarize the Constitutional Court’s decision upholding the definition in the amendment, before considering an ongoing case involving a former army chief, where the definition is being tested.”

This is an important post regarding Colombia’s ruling class, we suggest you read the full article if Colombia is an area of interest.
(Pappier, 2019)

Native protests affect regions of Colombia and Peru
Published on the 29th of March, 2019
(Minga, Indigenous Protests)



Native populations in Colombia and Peru face separate but similar confrontations with government officials over land rights and pollution. File Photo by Mauricio Duenas/EPA

“Native protests over land rights in Colombia spread Friday while natives in Peru clashed with officials over pollution at a copper mine.”

“In southwest Colombia, dialogue between the natives and government were suspended after President Ivan Duque visited the Cauca region to discuss reopening the blocked Pan American Highway, El Tiempo reported.”

"Native communities from Tolima, Huila, Boyaca, Arauca, Santander, Antioquia, Cauca have joined protests that began earlier this week, announcing plans for labor strikes on three other main highways connecting major Colombian cities.”

"This Minga [protest] will increase progressively, and our goal is that by this weekend all the indigenous movement will be mobilized in Colombia," said Luis Fernando Arias, leader of the

Cauca Indigenous Regional Council, in a report by El Tiempo.

“Further south in Peru, farmers continue to block a road used by a copper mine to transport mineral. They have done so for 54 days. They're protesting a plan they say should've transported the mineral in special ducts -- not by truck on roads through their fields, as it's been happening. The protests have



intensified in recent days after native community leaders were detained, ATV News reported.”

“Community leaders near the mining area, about 300 miles southeast of Lima, were arrested last week on charges they tried to extort mine owners. That led nearby communities to join the demonstrations. Peruvian officials are now deciding whether to release the leaders, RPP radio reported.”

(Pipoli, 2019)

Why they won't stop protesting in Cauca

Published on the 29th of March, 2019

(Minga, Indigenous Protests)

“Indigenous communities in Cauca are now in their 18th day of protest against the government. Using the so-called weapons of the weak, communities have taken over the Panamerican highway in an effort to force the government to meet a series of demands – old and new. Among them, longstanding land-reclamations promised by past governments, real progress on the protection of social leaders, and a renewed effort to implement the peace agreement with the FARC. While many of the petitions from the communities are legitimate, some are also nearly impossible for the government to meet in a reasonable time frame.”

(Guzmán, 2019)

April

Agresiones contra Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Colombia Enero–marzo 2019

Published in April, 2019

(Attacks Against Defenders)

Type of individual aggression in the first trimester	2019	2018
Threats	207	84
Assassinations	25	41
Attempted Assassinations	11	13
Detentions	0	0
Legal Persecution	1	1
Theft of Information	1	6
Total # of Aggressions	245	146

For the first trimestre (Jan-March) of 2019 the organisation ‘Programa Somos Defensores’, by means of the System of Information for Aggressions against Defenders of Human Rights - SIADDHH (*Sistema de Información sobre Agresiones contra Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en Colombia*), registered 245 individual cases of aggressions. These individual cases of aggressions are registered as assassinations, attempted assassinations, threats, legal persecution and theft of sensitive information. These are only some of the daily risks and threats that social leaders face throughout Colombia.

Of the 245 individual cases 87 (35%) took place in January, 115 (47%) took place in February and the remaining 43 (18%) took place in March. Of these 245, 75 (31%) were against woman while 170 (69%) were committed against men. Compared to the previous year (2018) aggressions against men have increased some 57% while aggressions against women have increased 97%.

The perpetrators of these 245 individual crimes are as follows:

Paramilitary Groups 146 cases (59,6%), Unknowns 65 cases (26,5%), FARC dissidents 23 cases (9,4%), the ELN 10 cases (4,1%) and the Public Armed Forces 1 case (0.4%).

The various forms of threat were received as follows:

Text Message (28), Email (9), Phone Call (38), Harassment (58) & Pamphlet or Suffrage (74).

The aggressions are further divided into the type of social leader the victim was/is.

These can be divided as follows:

Representatives of Indigenous communities, 58 (23.7%); Communal Action Groups (JAC), 49 (20%); Human Rights Groups, 43 (17.6%); Victim Organisations, 24 (9.8%); Farmer Organisations, 24 (9.8%); Communal Processes, 19 (7.8%); Afro-Colombians, 10 (4.1%); union organizations, 7 (2.9%); DESCA Leaders, 6 (2.4%); and, LGBTI Groups, 5 (1,9).

(Programa Somos Defensores, 2019)

'Defending our existence': Colombian tribe stands in way of oil exploration
Published on the 2nd of April, 2019
(Seismic Testing, FPIC & Indigenous at risk of “Extermination”)

Part 3 of David Hill’s series goes further into the proposals by the Colombian subsidiary of the UK-based company Amerisur Resources on oil exploration in the Siona territory and how this community is opposing *any* operations on their territory.

“...it would not be the first time an oil company had operated in Siona territory. Just across from the meeting room stands a health post, now abandoned, dating from the 1990s and donated by Ram Petroleum and Grant Geophysical... [to conduct seismic tests]”

“It appears to be seismic tests that Amerisur is most interested in, too. The Guardian’s request for a copy of the environmental impact assessment of its proposed exploration was denied by the company on the grounds that it is “private”, but information presented to Maniguaje’s community, Buenavista, during a “prior consultation” process suggests Amerisur wants to cut at least nine seismic lines in order to explore for oil.”

“Amerisur’s concession, Putumayo-12, extends for more than 54,000 hectares (133,000 acres). It entirely overlaps Buenavista’s roughly 4,500-hectare reserve as well as approximately half a 52,000-hectare area into which the Siona are trying to expand the reserve under a government land restitution programme.”

“Going by the information presented in the consultation, it appears four of the seismic lines would cross the north of the reserve, while another five would go through the potentially expanded area.”

“The Siona number roughly 2,600 and were declared at risk of “extermination” 10 years ago by Colombia’s constitutional court. Buenavista, home to about 600 people, is the largest Siona reserve in geographical terms.”

““We’re firm in our opposition to the transnationals,” said Erazo [a central Siona figure]. “No company can operate in our territory.”

Please refer to previous works by David Hill for more contexts on the pressing issues facing the Siona (Hill, 2019b)



A map of the area showing oil concessions including Putumayo-12 and the Buenavista reserve. Photograph: Map-Digital Democracy

Human Rights Attacks Continue in Colombia
Published on the 2nd of April, 2019
(WOLA Update)

“Since WOLA’s last update from February 7, at least 31 more Colombian activists or members of vulnerable ethnic communities were murdered; in total, 44 cases of murdered social leaders or members of vulnerable ethnic communities were reported to WOLA so far this year.”

“Currently, indigenous protests known as the MINGA are taking place throughout Colombia to pressure the Duque Administration to fulfill the over 1,000 commitments made by successive governments to the indigenous communities. These protests are being met with excessive use of force on the part of Colombia’s Mobile Anti-Disturbance Unit (ESMAD) and other public security forces. Ten members of the indigenous guards were killed due to violent actions taken by government forces to repress protesters near the municipalities of Santander and Popayán. Eight of the indigenous guards were killed on March 21 after an unknown individual threw an explosive device in one of their homes. The guards had been meeting to strategize responses to the government protest violations. The ESMAD was deployed with the military, police, helicopters, and drones during the March 10 protests. Nearly 51 MINGA activists were injured from pellet fire and tear gas. On March 25, MINGA began de-escalation negotiations with the Colombian government. The organization identified Santander de Quilichao (La Agustina y Mondomo), Caldono (El Pital, Monterilla and the ancestral territory Sa’t’h Tama Kiwe), Purace (Patico y Paletara), Cajibío (La Pajosa y El Cairo), Rosas (Parraga) y Suárez (Asnazu) as the primary communities participating in the demonstrations and affected by the violence. WOLA urges the Colombian authorities to stop the violent repression of indigenous protests, to bring those responsible for killings and injury to justice and to resolve the differences with the indigenous authorities through dialogue.”

Clashes between Displace Rural Communities in the Bajo Atrato region (Chocó)

“Helicopters flew over three communities, including one humanitarian zone in the Bajo Atrato amid territorial clashes between paramilitary groups, FARC dissidents, and the Colombian police force. The Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (CIJP) [documented](#) the escalation of threats to the communities, many of whom have remained restricted to their homes and unable to seek basic necessities. The Gaitanista Self-Defense Forces (AGC) had previously threatened the Las Camelias Humanitarian Space on March 8. According to Contagio Radio, the National Protection Unit [recalled](#) bodyguards that had been guarding 6 land reclamation activists ahead of the incidents without any prior warning. The outbreak of violence and intimidation is especially concerning due to the Bajo Atrato region’s previous history of massive forced displacements.”

Report Finds Female Social Leaders Targeted with Disproportionate Cruelty

“The Institute for the Study of Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES) released a [report](#) finding that female social leaders have a 66 percent higher risk of being sexually assaulted or tortured than their male counterparts. The research team compared patterns of violence between social groups, and concluded that 51 percent of murdered female social leaders are ethnic minorities or from rural communities.”

(Sánchez-Garzoli, 2019c)

Indigenous leaders decry Colombia’s deadly crackdown on land protesters
Published on the 4th of April, 2019
(Impunity in the Killing of Defenders)

“Indigenous groups in southwestern Colombia have since March 10 mobilized mass protests, known as *minga*, to demand a meeting with President Iván Duque over his government’s failure to implement agreements made during the previous administration’s historic 2016 peace deal and recognize community land rights. Protest leaders estimate there were 20,000 people involved in the massive mobilization as of March 27, including Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, students, and associations of peasant farmers, or *campesinos*. The Indigenous Regional Council of Cauca (CRIC) has denounced the crackdown by the police’s anti-riot squad, known as ESMAD.”

“When the protests first broke out, Duque said his administration would not negotiate with the

indigenous organizations until the Pan-American Highway blockade was lifted. Instead, he sent in ESMAD to forcibly break up the blockade.”

“As the government cracked down on the protesters, however, roadblocks sprang up in indigenous communities in the nearby departments of Chocó, Huila and Putumayo. This increased pressure forced Duque to reverse course by sending Interior Minister Gutiérrez to Cauca to negotiate with the protesters.”

“The protesters lifted many of their blockades while still maintaining the main block on the Pan-American Highway. But in a televised speech, Duque accused the indigenous groups of having been infiltrated by dissident armed rebels, after a policeman from ESMAD was shot dead, apparently by a sniper, near a protest in Cauca.”

“CRIC denied the allegations, saying the groups rejected violence as a matter of principle and did not tolerate the armed rebel groups. CRIC said the president’s words only served to ‘stigmatize legitimate expressions of protest’.”

“On March 22, an explosion in remote indigenous territory in Valle del Cauca department [killed nine indigenous protesters](#). Before launching an investigation, the government claimed the deaths were caused by an accident.”

“Defense Minister Guillermo Botero [told *El Tiempo*](#) the explosive devices were brought into the territory by an indigenous protester, ‘presumably to generate an attack. That is the most probable hypothesis in consideration that they are near the Buga-Buenaventura highway’.”

“The National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) rejected the notion that indigenous people were responsible for the explosion, calling the incident a paramilitary-led massacre.”

(Volkhausan, 2019)



Indigenous protesters in the Cauca department of southwestern Colombia are directly in the path of armed military. Image via @ONIC_Colombia on Twitter.

Afro-Colombian protesters in Cauca denounce racist intimidation by police and smear campaign in the national media

Published on the 18th of April, 2019

(Minga)

“On Friday April 5 (2019), protesters lifted a 27-day peaceful blockade of the Pan American Highway



in Colombia. This was done as a good-will gesture in the framework of negotiations between the Colombian government and the indigenous, afro descendent and other popular and social movements that were taking part in a mass protest labelled the *Southwestern Minga (collective action) in defence of life, territory, democracy, justice and peace.*”

“Participants in the Minga are calling on the government to comply with commitments made by state officials earlier this year in relation to public resources in the national budget needed to guarantee rights, respect ethnic territories, ensure security for social leaders and human rights defenders, and advance implementation of the 2016 Peace Agreements. Social organizations mobilized peacefully to exercise their constitutional right to protest, after other efforts to persuade the government to fulfill its commitments failed.”

“Although the highway blockade has been lifted, the Minga continues with protesters occupying the Permanent Assembly, where a few days ago they awaited the President of Colombia, Ivan Duque, to engage in a political debate on April 9. Regrettably, the President did not respect the collective requests of the Minga, and instead requested a private meeting with a few leaders. He did not attend the Minga gathering.”

“In Cauca, protesters complained that their public protests had been unjustly stigmatized as being infiltrated by terrorist interests in an effort to justify a violent response from the police and illegal armed groups. During the Minga, there were several threats from paramilitary groups against the protesters, 10 indigenous deaths, and 88 Mingueros “protesters” wounded.”

(FFP, 2019)

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Ecuador

February

Ecuador’s indigenous Cofán hail court-ordered end to mining on their land

Published on the 11th of February, 2019

(Indigenous Resistance)



Members of the Cofán community of Sinangoe walk along the Aguarico River as a backhoe removes land in the background. Image by Jerónimo Zuñiga for Amazon Frontlines.

“In January 2018, the Cofán indigenous people of Sinangoe, Ecuador, discovered several machines mining the Aguarico riverbed near Cayambe Coca National Park. This came as a surprise to them because they’d never been consulted about any mining projects in their territory. They decided to speak



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out against the violation of their rights to prior consultation as well as the rights of nature and a healthy environment, which are both recognized in the [Ecuadoran constitution](#)."

"After nearly a year of legal struggle to halt the mining and the water pollution that came with it, the provincial court of Sucumbíos ordered that the concessions already in operation and those currently in the process of being granted must be canceled, affecting some 324 square kilometers (125 square miles) in total. With the court's ruling, mining will not be allowed in any of those areas. Additionally, the decision requires the reparation and/or remediation of the areas already affected by mining. Before any new concession is granted, miners must begin the prior consultation process with the Cofán de Sinangoe community."

For more on this topic, please refer to the cited article.

(Cardona, 2019)

Indigenous Waorani People of Ecuador's Amazon Launch Lawsuit To Protect Their Ancestral Lands From Oil Auction

Published on the 28th of February, 2019

(Waorani Legal Battle)

"On February 27th, 2019, hundreds of indigenous Waorani elders, youth and leaders arrived in the city of Puyo, Ecuador, having journeyed from their communities deep in the Amazon rainforest to launch a lawsuit together with the Waorani political organization of Pastaza CONCONAWEP and the Ombudsman's Office."

"The lawsuit, filed against the Ecuadorian Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources, the Secretary of Hydrocarbons and the Ministry of Environment, alleges that the Waorani's rights to free, prior and informed consultation, to self-determination, to collective territory, and the rights of nature, were violated due to an improper consultation process prior to an oil auction which would offer up the Waorani's lands in the Pastaza region to the highest bidding oil company."

"In 2018, Ecuador's Minister of Hydrocarbons announced an auction of 16 new oil concessions covering nearly seven million acres of roadless, primary forest in the titled territories of the Shuar, Achuar, Kichwa, Waorani, Shiwiar, Andoa, and Sápara nations. The region is home to some of the highest levels of biodiversity on the planet. Under pressure from Ecuador's Amazonian indigenous nationalities, the State announced in October 2018 that the oil auction of the Ronda Petrolera Suroriente (South-East Oil Round) would be reduced from the original 16 blocks to two. While this decision marked a victory for indigenous resistance involving the Waorani, the State later issued information stating that this did not exclude the Waorani's territory from being tendered in a next round nor the possibility that their territory could be handed directly over to state company Petroamazonas EP without further consultation from the Waorani."

"Waorani's testimonies and the documented evidence presented in the lawsuit affirm that the prior consultation process carried out in 2012 by the Secretary of Hydrocarbons and the Ministry of Environment in the Waorani communities of Obepare, Daipare, Awenkaro, Teweno, Kenaweno, Toñanpare, Damointaro, Nemompare, Kiwaro, Tzapino, Tepapare, Gomataon, Akaro, Tarangaro, Kemono, and Titepare did not comply with international prior consultation standards, thus implicating a violation of the Waorani people's rights to self-determination, identity, and territory."

Please refer to the Amazon Frontlines website for more on this issue.

(Amazon Frontliners, 2019a)

March

Waorani Women Forces Judge to Call Lawyers to the Bench, Hearing for High-Stakes Lawsuit Suspended Until Further Notice

Published on the 13th of March, 2019

(Right to Fair Trail & a Translator)

"*Puyo, Pastaza Province, Ecuador* – Called to a rushed hearing to argue their high-stakes lawsuit against the Ecuadorian government, Waorani women broke into song in court and did not stop until the hearing was suspended in protest of unfair and discriminatory treatment by the judge."

"The Waorani's lawsuit, co-filed with Ecuador's Ombudsmen on February 27 th, 2019 against the Ecuadorian Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources, the Secretary of Hydrocarbons and the Ministry of Environment, alleges that the Waorani's rights to free, prior and informed

consultation, to self-determination were violated due to an improper consultation process prior to an oil auction which would offer up the Waorani's lands in the Pastaza region to the highest bidding oil company, putting their collective territory and the rights of nature in imminent risk."

"The Waorani had filed a motion to judge Esperanza del Pilar Araujo Escobar requesting that the hearing be held in their own territory to guarantee participation of traditional leaders and witnesses, as communication and travel to remote communities is extremely limited, but the Judge decided to initiate the rushed hearing regardless. When, in the absence of a court-certified translator, the judge proposed an arbitrary selection process that disregarded the approval of Waorani elders, Waorani women stood and took over the courtroom with traditional song."

"Unable to be heard over the songs of the Waorani women, the judge called the parties' lawyers to the bench and declared the suspension of the hearing until a translator was found."
(Amazon Frontliners, 2019b)

Indigenous Organizers Halted Plans for Oil Drilling in the Amazon Published on the 13th March, 2019 (Oil in the Amazon)

"Ecuador's partially nationalized oil industry has long helped the government [pay for social programs](#) and poverty relief. But with a global drop in oil prices, Ecuador's much-needed [oil revenue plummeted](#) from 12.1 to 5.4 percent of GDP between 2013 and 2016. The center-left President Lenin Moreno, elected in 2017, launched an ambitious campaign to recover lost income by expanding oil production in the Amazon. This included [auctioning 16 blocks](#), each up to 2,000 square kilometers, of the Southeast oil fields, which encompass Kurintsa. It also included the development of [oil fields in Yasuni National Park](#), one of the most biodiverse regions of the planet and home to two uncontacted indigenous communities."

"Indigenous groups rejected these plans, saying that leaks and waste have contaminated the soil and water in other regions of the Amazon, displacing indigenous communities who could no longer live off the land."

"Environmentalists also argue roads built to enable oil production will increase deforestation, inviting destructive industries deeper into the region. A [2014 report](#) from the World Resources Institute and the Rights and Resources Initiative found that, because many indigenous groups live in carbon-storing forests, "strengthening the land and resource rights of indigenous peoples" is key to fighting climate change."

"Representatives of the Amazon communities say Moreno never consulted them about his plans, a violation of Ecuador's constitution and international law. This assertion is backed up by Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, who [travelled to Ecuador in November 2018](#)."

For more on this please refer to the cited article.
(Brown, 2019a)

April

'We do not want to disappear': Indigenous peoples go to court to save the Amazon from oil company greed Published on the 8th of April, 2019 (Waorani Legal Battle)

This is an incredibly important case for the indigenous peoples of the Ecuadorian Amazon. Loki's article does good work of summarising, up until the date of the publication, the history and technicalities of this case. It is recommended that interested parties refer to the full-cited article for more detail. The first few paragraphs have been included for general summary purposes.

"On February 27, hundreds of Indigenous Waorani elders, youth and leaders arrived in the city of Puyo, Ecuador. They left their homes deep in the Amazon rainforest to peacefully march through the streets, hold banners, sing songs and, most importantly, submit documents to the provincial Judicial Council to launch a lawsuit seeking to stop the government from auctioning off their ancestral lands in the Pastaza region to oil companies. An eastern jungle province whose eponymous river is one of the more than 1,000 tributaries that feed the mighty Amazon, Pastaza encompasses some of the world's most biodiverse regions."



Indigenous Waorani elders, youth and leaders gathered in Puyo, Ecuador, on February 27, 2019, to launch a lawsuit against the government's auctioning of their ancestral lands to the oil industry. (Photo credit: Mitch Anderson/Amazon Frontlines)

“Co-filed with the Coordinating Council of the Waorani Nationality of Ecuador–Pastaza (Pastaza CONCONAWEP), a political organization of the Waorani, and the Ecuadorian Human Rights Ombudsman against the Ecuadorian Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources, the Secretary of Hydrocarbons and the Ministry of Environment, the lawsuit alleges that the Waorani’s rights granted to them under the Ecuadorian constitution “were violated due to an improper consultation process prior to an oil auction which would offer up the Waorani’s lands in the Pastaza region to the highest bidding oil company,” [according to Amazon Frontlines](#), a nonprofit advocacy group supporting the Indigenous peoples living in the Amazon rainforest. The government’s auction, announced in February of last year, included [16 new oil concessions](#) covering nearly seven million acres of roadless, primary Amazonian forest across southeast Ecuador.”

“A hearing to argue the lawsuit was held in Puyo on March 13, but according to Amazon Frontlines, the group of assembled Waorani women ‘broke into song in court and did not stop’ until the judge, ‘unable to be heard over the songs of the Waorani women ... called the parties’ lawyers to the bench and [declared the suspension of the hearing](#) until a translator was found.’ The Waorani said that, in keeping with Waorani tradition, they would only accept a translator approved by their elder leaders. ‘The Waorani have their own authorities and their own systems, which must be respected by the Western systems,’ Lina Maria Espinosa, attorney for the Waorani petitioners and a member of Amazon Frontlines’ legal team, told the Independent Media Institute. ‘This case is an example of the country’s obligation to apply intercultural justice’.”

“The concessions overlap with the titled territories of the Shuar, Achuar, Kichwa, Waorani, Shiwiar, Andoa and Sápara nations, with one block located almost entirely within Waorani territory. If taken over by the fossil fuel industry, the Indigenous coalition warns, the health and livelihoods of the communities living in the area—as well as the region’s unique biodiversity and sensitive ecosystem—will be threatened. But regardless of the environmental and sociocultural threat, the plaintiffs argue that the concessions trample on their constitutional rights.”

“In November 2018, following pressure from Ecuador’s Amazonian Indigenous nationalities, Carlos Pérez, the nation’s hydrocarbon minister, reduced the auction from [16 blocks to two](#). But it may end up being a pyrrhic victory, as the government said that the land may still be [put on the auction block in the](#)

future."

(Loki, 2019)

Indigenous Waorani sue Ecuadorian government over land rights

Published on the 12th of April, 2019

(Waorani Legal Battle)

"More than 200 indigenous Waorani people and their supporters marched to the court in the Amazon city of Puyo on Thursday to begin their high-stakes hearing against the Ecuadorian government."

"After long protesting oil extraction in its territory, the community are suing three government bodies - the Ministry of Energy and Non-renewable Natural Resources, the Secretary of Hydrocarbons and the Ministry of Environment - for violating their rights and putting their territory up for an international oil auction."

(Brown, 2019b)



A Waorani man sings as hundreds of community members and supporters march to the judicial office in Puyo Thursday [Kimberley Brown/Al Jazeera]

Waorani People Win Landmark Legal Victory Against Ecuadorian Government

Published on the 26th of April, 2019

(Waorani Legal Battle)

"Today, the Waorani people of Pastaza won a historic ruling in Ecuadorian court protecting half a million acres of their territory in the Amazon rainforest from being earmarked for oil drilling. The decision by the three-judge panel of the Pastaza Provincial Court immediately voids the consultation process with the Waorani undertaken by the Ecuadorian government in 2012, indefinitely suspending the auctioning of their lands to oil companies. The verdict also **disrupts the contemplated auctioning of 16 oil blocks that cover over 7 million acres of indigenous territory** by providing an invaluable legal precedent for other indigenous nations across the Ecuadorian Amazon."

"The court's decision represents a **major setback for the Ecuadorian Government's plans to develop oil resources across the southcentral Amazon**, and could mark a watershed moment in the indigenous movement to permanently protect their rainforest from oil drilling, and other extractive projects. The panel of judges ruled that the Ecuadorian government must repeat the free, prior and informed consent process according to the standards of international law and the Constitutional Court of Ecuador, and that the Ministry of Energy and Nonrenewable Resources and the Ministry of the Environment must sufficiently train government officials regarding the right to free, prior and informed consent and self-determination before sending them out into the field."

Please refer to the Amazon Frontlines website for more on this case. Along with the Waorani people, Amazon Frontlines have worked tirelessly to improve the situation facing these communities. This victory is an important step in the right direction. We at CALG are happy to share this information here in the

Bulletin, congratulate the efforts of all involved and hope to report more victories in the coming editions of this Bulletin.

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French Guyana

March

Montagne d'Or Mine: France needs to walk the talk on halting deforestation in the tropics

Published on the 5th of March, 2019

(Gold Mining & Deforestation)

"At a time when France vows to champion the fight against imported deforestation and climate change, Montagne d'Or, a massive project in French Guyana has become a pebble in the shoe of the environment minister, raising concerns in French environmental groups and the French judiciary."

"In February, an [administrative judge](#) found in favour of Maiouri Nature Guyane and Association Guyane Nature Environnement, in their challenge to the authorisation for alluvial gold mining known as "Boeuf Mort" in the mining concession of Montagne d'Or. The ruling found that the company had violated the provisions of the French environment code, which transposes obligations of EU Directives 2001/42/EC and 90/11/92/EU, by failing to include the impacts of the open-air industrial mega-mine project. This illegal practice of separating elements of an environmental impact assessment (saucissonnage: "making sausages") is a violation of the EU obligation to provide comprehensive information on overall impacts on a project site. Failure to represent the project accurately impedes the assessment, for instance, of how human health is affected, as well as biodiversity protected under the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives."

"[Launched in 2017](#), Montagne d'Or mine, one of the largest gold mine projects in French Guyana, and the world, will create an open pit gold mine of eight km², starting in 2022, south of Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, in Guyana's tropical forest. The French government and the project promoters, Russian multinational [Nordgold](#) and Canada's [Columbus Gold](#), presented the plans as socially and environmentally responsible, and a chance for local development and job creation in the [crisis/recession stricken](#) overseas department."

"However, Amerindian organisations in Guyana and environmental groups such as [Or de Question](#) and [WWF France](#) raised alarms about the negative impact of clearing more than 1,000

hectares of forests including primary forests. The risks would be considerable while the economic benefits for local people would be insignificant.”

For more on this topic please refer to the cited article by FERN.
(FERN, 2019)

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January

‘All the creeks are polluted. People have a lot more mercury in their system’

Published on the 27th of January, 2019

(Illegal Mining & Mercury Poisoning)

“Over the past two weeks, miners from Georgetown, Lethem and Brazil have returned to the Marudi Mountain area in the South Rupununi and it is a “a hell hole right now,” according to South Rupununi District Council (SRDC) chairman Nicholas Fredericks... Fredericks told the Sunday Stabroek that he does not know whether or not they have permission to mine.”

“Socially and environmentally, it is impacting on the life of the surrounding communities. We are now seeing the impact. All the creeks are polluted. People have a lot more mercury in their system. The miners are back and everything is chaotic,” he said in an interview on Thursday.

“Fredericks, who is also the Chairman of the National Tshaos Council (NTC), explained that just over a year ago, with assistance from the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, residents from four communities Shulinab, Karaudarnau, Aishalton and Para Bara—underwent mercury tests.”

“The results showed that residents from Para Bara village had the highest level of mercury in their systems. ‘They are contaminated from the mines in Wakadanawa which flows into Kuyuwini River and also from waterways from Marudi Mountain, which flows into Kuyuwini. The water in Kuyuwini is red right now. They have no savannahs around them, so they depend heavily on the creeks for fish. Morning, noon and night, they eat fish. That is why they are so high in mercury intake,’ he said.”

Please refer to the full article for more on this distressing issue.

(La Rose, 2019)

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February

In Paraguay, Rapid Deforestation Is the Price of an Economic Boom

Published on the 1st of February, 2019

(Deforestation/Reforestation)

“Paraguay’s main opposition party recently introduced a bill offering conscription-age youth an alternative to mandatory military service: [replanting trees in depleted forests](#). The reforestation proposal highlights the seriousness of environmental degradation in Paraguay, mainly driven by the clearing of forests for agriculture, which has sustained one of Latin America’s highest economic growth rates. In an interview with WPR, Joel E. Correia, an assistant professor of Latin American studies and core faculty member in the University of Florida’s Tropical Conservation and Development Program, discusses deforestation in Paraguay and its disproportionate impact on the country’s indigenous peoples.”

“Paraguay has an extremely serious problem with deforestation, mainly driven by agricultural practices like soybean production and cattle ranching. Numerous [studies](#) by academics, NGOs and international development agencies have utilized geospatial analysis and remotely sensed data to determine the extent of [deforestation](#) across the country. In southeastern Paraguay, the Interior-Atlantic Forest once covered 9 million hectares—more than 22 million acres—but by the mid-2000s, [93 percent](#) of it had been cleared for agricultural purposes.

“The expansion of cattle ranches driven by increasing global demand for beef and dairy products is causing extensive deforestation in western Paraguay, a region known as the Chaco. The semi-arid Chaco is the second-largest forest ecosystem in Latin America, with great biological diversity. But it is now the site of some of the world’s fastest rates of deforestation, [losing nearly 250,000 hectares](#) of forest cover annually between 2001 and 2014, or nearly 3.5 million hectares in total.”

For more on these policies, please refer to the cited article.

(WPR, 2019)

Nearly a quarter of Chaco deforestation potentially illegal, says Paraguay enforcement agency

Published on the 15th of February, 2019

(Illegal Deforestation)

“New data released by Paraguay’s environment enforcement agency, INFONA, reveals that nearly a quarter of all deforestation that took place in the Gran Chaco between August 2017 and August 2018 may have been illegal.”

“The Gran Chaco is a diverse biome of humid and semi-arid ecosystems of riverine forests, wetlands and savannas. It is home to several endangered species, including ant-eaters, giant armadillos, crowned eagles and jaguars, as well as several indigenous communities. The Gran Chaco contains the second largest expanse of forest in South America, behind only the Amazon rainforest.”

“According to [INFONA](#), deforestation in the Chaco between August 2017 and August 2018 reached 255,000 hectares, of which 194,000 ha were authorised by land-use change permits.”

“The remaining 61,000 ha, or 24 percent of the total, were possibly cleared illegally as INFONA had not been able to confirm its legality. The agency said it had been analysing the data to determine the precise extent of illegality.”

“If confirmed, this level of illegal deforestation in the Chaco would be a significant increase from 2017 levels, when INFONA could only [detect](#) 10,000 ha of illegal clearings.”

“Most of this deforestation is the result of cattle ranching, according to the [agency](#).”

“Paraguayan law stipulates that any property in the Chaco larger than 20 ha must [preserve](#) between 40 and 45 percent of its native vegetation. But illegalities abound.”

“In January alone, INFONA, in joint enforcement operations with the public prosecutor’s office and the police, detected over 10,000 ha of illegal deforestation at the [Solitario](#), [El Dorado](#) and other [farms](#) in the departments of Boquerón and Alto Paraguay. In some cases, the authorities seized illegal fire arms at the properties.”

(IDM, 2019)

April

Ayoreo indigenous people in Paraguay celebrate land victory

Published on the 1st of April, 2019

(Land Rights)

“[The Ayoreo-Totobiegosode](#), an indigenous people in the heart of South America, has finally secured a key part of its territory after a 26 year struggle.”

“Ayoreo leaders received the ownership papers to 18,000 hectares of their ancestral land.”

“Some of their relatives remain uncontacted, and have been seen in this area. They are the last



[uncontacted indigenous people](#) in the Americas outside of the Amazon, and live in the heart of the Paraguayan Gran Chaco, the forest with the fastest rates of deforestation in the world.”

“Since the 1970s, Survival has campaigned for the return of the Ayoreo’s land. In 1993 they formally claimed title to an area of 550,000 hectares, a small part of their original lands.”

“Much of their territory was sold to companies that have deforested the territory to make way for cattle. These include a Brazilian ranching enterprise and a Paraguayan subsidiary of [Spanish construction company Grupo San José](#)”

(Survival International, 2019)



Ayoreo children Edison, Hugo and Eber play in Totobiegosode community of Arocojnadi. 2019. © X. Clarke / Survival International

Indigenous communities facing landlessness in Paraguay

Published on the 23rd of April, 2019

(Reclaiming Rights in the face of Historical Disposessions)

“The 1,000 hectares of ancestral territory claimed by the Tacuara'i community lie in the district of Corpus Christi in the department of Canindeyú, at under a kilometre from the Brazilian border. According to Óscar Ayala, executive secretary of the Paraguayan Human Rights Coordination Group (CODEHUPY), 'There are documents held by the state itself that demonstrate the presence of the Ava Guaraní at Tacuara'i until the beginning of the eighties.’”

“At that time, which was during the dictatorship, the government forced an arrangement on them that the community was never consulted on and never gave its consent to. They were displaced to other communities. Their claim to receive a title for their lands virtually disappeared and the area became part of the private property of at least two or three businesses’.”

“Given that during the 1954-89 dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner [6,744,005 hectares of land were unscrupulously gifted](#) to friends and political allies of the regime, the theft of the lands at Tacuara'i is neither surprising nor unique.”

“In August 2018, descendants of the expelled families—children and grandchildren—made their way back to Tacuara'i to try to recover the lost territory, now in the hands of Brazilian soya farmers. A [series of violent responses](#) followed from the farmers, including the forced disappearance of a young man named Isidoro Barrios; [members of the community claim that they saw him tortured and executed.](#)”

“On 28th October, [gunmen stormed the newly re-established settlement](#), burning possessions and forcing the community out under threats. With nowhere else to turn, the indigenous group made the journey to Asunción in search of support from authorities, setting up camp in the Plaza de Armas, which sits within metres of the Legislative Palace—the building where both the Paraguayan Congress and Senate sit.”

“From a legal perspective, as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has established, as long as the community maintains links to a place, the fact that land in question is in the hands of another person does not mean the state is not obliged to handle their claim’... [Paraguayan national law](#) also firmly establishes the right to the communal ownership and use of indigenous territories... Despite these legal obligations, as well as the continuous attempts by the community to establish a dialogue, the six months spent in the plaza were characterised by silence from the government.”

For more on the ongoing struggle of the Ava Guaraní Chiripá people, please refer to the cited article. (Costa, 2019)

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On the **08/01/2019**, in the early morning, a group of police officers arrived at the Yavi Yavi peasant community to “unblock” the mining corridor blocked by 300 Fuerabamba community peasants. Locals claim there was no protest at the time the police arrived. 8 community members and 6 police were injured. Of the 8, a woman and child are in critical condition. Conflict has arisen ever since mining company, MMG Limited, came to a relocation and compensation agreement with some of the effected villagers. Villagers were subsequently relocated and, without prior consultation, the ministry of transport and MMG built a road through the villagers’ new settlement ^(1.).

On the **05/02/2019** a group of organizations representing the Morococha community organized a news conference to denounce harassment and threats from the Chinese mining giant Chinalco and demanded it refrained from destroying the Old City of Morococha. Chinalco operates the copper mining project Toromocho. Chinalco has started the process of demolition of the Old City of Morococha after acquiring the land through a questionable process. The land was expropriated by the government, using a law that makes it illegal to be in possession of property in areas of risk of a natural disaster. The law prohibits the sale of such lands, but Chinalco was allowed to purchase the 34 expropriated hectares. Chinalco built a new town to resettle the community of Morococha, sixty-five original residents remained in the old town and have been harassed by Chinalco. Chinalco has hired private security and police to facilitate the demolition of the old town. It must be noted there is also the presence of toxic metals in the environment due to the tailings deposit. The former vice minister of Mines, Ricardo Labó, previously worked until 2014 in Río Tinto, a mining group with Chinese capitals of Chinalco. Ricardo Labó was the one who requested, to the Superintendency of National Assets (SBN), that 34 hectares of land, in the Municipality of Morococha, be transferred to the state company Activos Mineros. operated by Chinalco ^(2.).



Peru

January

**MAAP #96: Gold Mining Deforestation at Record High Levels in Southern Peruvian Amazon
Published on the 8th of January, 2019
(Deforestation)**

“Gold mining deforestation has been at record high levels in both 2017 and 2018 in the southern Peruvian Amazon.”

“Based on an analysis of nearly 500 high-resolution satellite images (from Planet and DigitalGlobe), we estimate the deforestation of 18,440 hectares across southern Peru during these last two years. That is equivalent to 45,560 acres (or 34,400 American football fields) in just two years.”

He subsequently resigned and, after resigning from the viceministry of mines, he assumed the chairmanship of the board of Activos Mineros SAC. In this position he assigned these lands to the mining expansion project of Toromocho On the **21/03/2019**, the president of the Fuerabamba Peasant Community, Gregorio Rojas Paniura, was arrested with the community vice president Edinson Vargas Huamanga, the secretary Nohemi Portilla Vargas and his legal counselors. The charges against them were extortion and organized crime to the detriment of the Peruvian State and the Chinese mining company MMG Las Bambas. They were released 8 days later ^(3.).

On the **02/04/2019** activist, environmentalist and catholic missionary, Brother Paul Mcauley (71), was found by his students burning in a fire by a school for indigenous children he had founded. He came to the world's attention in 2010 when Peru ordered his expulsion for helping Amazon tribes to fight against the onslaught of oil and gas companies invading the rainforest. The head forensic doctor concluded he was dead before he was burnt ^(4.).

On the **22/04/2019**, armed land invaders attacked 6 Kukama and Uranina indigenous peoples. Cristian Java Rios (22) was killed while Robles Pisco Torres had to undergo surgery as he was shot in the thorax. Weyder Java Rios, Royer Garcia Yuimachi, Andres Sandi Taricuarima and Angel Ocmin Flore were all hospitalised however are in a stable condition. As guardians of their territory, their native community La Petrolera located in the Uraninas district in Loreto, they face constant risk as the invasion of lands has been a common occurrence in the region. The indigenous community members of La Petrolera report receiving threats from the invaders who entered their territories with shotguns to deforest, the police were warned, but they did not take action ^(5.).

Please review the cited website for data and maps on Peruvian deforestation.
(MAAP, 2019a)

The Forest Avengers
Published on the 17th of January, 2019
(Deforestation)

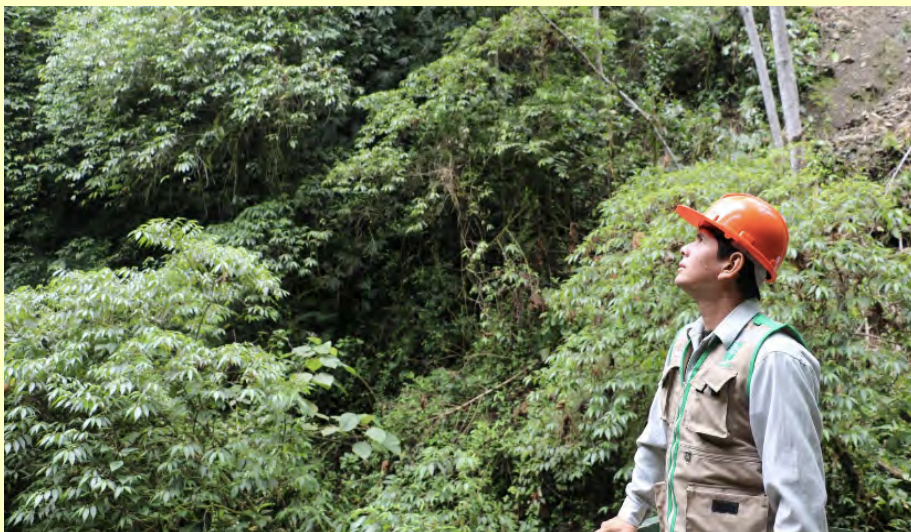
“Our [Global Witness's] new analysis reveals that illegal logging in Peru's forests is still widespread and systematic, contributing towards the degradation of the Amazon.”

“Update: 10th April 2019 - In a dramatic U-turn, the Peruvian government published a decree that restores the independence of OSINFOR. This comes just a few months after its independence had been seriously undermined by placing it under ministerial control. But there is much more that needs to be done - including extending and strengthening OSINFOR's powers. Read more on exactly what below.”

“Despite the rampant levels of illegal logging, the Peruvian government made alarming moves to weaken its forest watchdog - the Organismo de Supervisión de los Recursos Forestales y de Fauna Silvestre (OSINFOR) - even though it has been the only state agency effectively tackling the problem.”

“Global Witness is issuing an urgent call on the Peruvian government and international donors to step up their efforts to conserve the globally important forest from rampant crime, by protecting and expanding the powers of this vital agency.”

For more on this issue; please refer to the cited report by Global Witness.
(Furones, 2019a)



OSINFOR Agent in the Amazon. ©
OSINFOR
(Furones, 2019a)

PRESS NOTE: Indigenous Peoples in Peruvian Amazon and new report call on Government to declare a moratorium on new land concessions in Amazonian regions
Published on the 30th of January, 2019
(Deforestation & Indigenous Organisations)

"*Pucallpa*. On the eve of a public forum on deforestation and threats to human rights defenders in the city of Pucallpa, representatives of indigenous peoples' communities and organisations from across the Amazonian regions of Ucayali and San Martin issued an [Urgent Declaration](#) calling on the Peruvian Government to implement immediate measures to resolve the escalating land grab of indigenous territories and the resulting destruction of forests and threats to human rights and land defenders in the Peruvian Amazon."

"The 'Declaration of Yarinacocha', signed by 16 indigenous communities and 4 indigenous organisations including the Federation of the native communities of Ucayali (FECONAU), the ethnic council of the Kichwa peoples of the Peruvian Amazon (CEPKA), the federation of Kichwa peoples of the Lower Huallaga of San Martin (FEPIKBHSAM) and the Coordinator for the development and defense of the indigenous peoples of San Martin (CODEPISAM) echoes the findings of a new report: ["The Dynamics of Dispossession: Drivers of Violence and Deforestation in the Peruvian Amazon"](#) released by the Institute of Legal Defense (IDL), the Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), CEPKA and FECONAU to coincide with today's public forum."

"The report's central message is that the Government is responsible for the widespread land conflicts in indigenous territories in the Peruvian Amazon, as a result of its ongoing failure to recognise indigenous land rights and the widespread practices of issuing land certificates, individual land titles and forest concessions in indigenous peoples' traditional lands to third parties. In addition to being the main driver of increasing deforestation in the Amazon region, in turn these land conflicts are behind the threats and violence towards leaders and communities who dare to defy forest destroyers."

For more please refer to the cited article.
(FPP, 2019)

March

MAAP #98: Deforestation Hotspots in the Peruvian Amazon, 2018
Published on the 1st of March, 2019
(Deforestation)

"Thanks to early warning forest loss alerts,* we are able to make an initial assessment of the **2018 deforestation hotspots** in the Peruvian Amazon."

Please review the cited website for data and maps on Peruvian deforestation.
(MAAP, 2019b)

GeoPark Fomenting Social Conflicts in Peru's Amazon
Published on the 7th of March, 2019
(Oil Exploration and Indigenous Rights)

"A detailed new report published by the non-governmental organization Center for Public Policy and Human Rights (Equidad Perú) identifies the oil company GeoPark as responsible for dangerous divide-and-conquer strategies in the Peruvian Amazon. The company is also facing related criticisms of downplaying environmental concerns in their Environmental Impact Study and entering into a close relationship with Peru's security forces, even using a military encampment as their base of operations."

"The report, titled *Block 64, A World of Conflicts – Risk of violation of the rights of Achuar and Wampis indigenous peoples by oil companies GeoPark and PetroPerú*, explains that "Peru's oil concession called Block 64 has a long history of conflicts created by the Peruvian government's attempts to impose an oil extraction and transportation project, which the Achuar and Wampis indigenous peoples have consistently rejected over more than two decades." (English executive summary available [here](#), full Spanish report available [here](#))"

"Holding interests in Block 64 since 2014, GeoPark has publicly stated their intention to initiate oil production by the end 2019. Quarterly investor reports to date have been upbeat, entirely failing to recognize the growing indigenous resistance and [delays around the project](#)."
(Amazon Watch, 2019)

Protection but no prevention? Inputs to the Ministry of Justice’s Protocol on Human Rights Defenders in Peru

Published on the 29th of March, 2019
(Protecting HRD)

“This submission to the ongoing process to create a Protocol to Guarantee the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, led by the General Directorate for Human Rights within the Peruvian Ministry of Justice, emphasises the need to address the underlying structural drivers of criminalisation and violence towards human rights and land defenders in Peru, as well as the importance of designing protection mechanisms in a way which supports Indigenous Peoples’ efforts to defend and exercise their collective rights over their territories.”

"[In this position paper](#), IDL and FPP call upon the Peruvian Government to work proactively to promote the valuable work undertaken by human rights defenders, with particular emphasis on Indigenous Peoples’ defence of their collective rights, including the rights to free, prior and informed consent, autonomy and self-determination. This paper and a [parallel report](#) submitted to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) in March 2018 highlights that Peru is still failing to take adequate measures to address and prevent the land conflicts which underpin threats to indigenous land defenders in the Peruvian amazon.”

“The authors also emphasise the need to provide public resources to support Indigenous Peoples’ ability to administer justice within their own territories and provide collective forms of protection through community-based systems for early warning, prevention and protection.”

“Amongst the structural drivers which allow for the criminalisation of human rights defenders by the State, IDL and FPP also highlight the existence of at least [150 contracts](#) between the National Police and extractive companies, the government’s frequent declaration of ‘states of emergency’ to enforce the activities of extractive industries and laws which enable the criminalisation of social protest.”

For more on this issue please refer to the intent links and the cited link.
(FPP & IDL, 2019)

April

Peru’s forest inspection agency regains independence

Published on the 10th of April, 2019
(Press Release OSINFOR)

“In a dramatic U-turn, the Peruvian government yesterday published a decree that restores the independence of OSINFOR, the agency in charge of inspecting and sanctioning illegal logging crimes in the Peruvian Amazon. This comes just a few months after its independence had been seriously undermined by placing it under ministerial control.”
(Furones, 2019b)

RSPO complaint filed as Amazonian community fights on over lands destroyed by ‘sustainable’ palm oil

Published on the 17th of April, 2019
(RSPO)

“In the Peruvian Amazon, the battle between ‘sustainable’ palm oil and industrial-scale deforestation continues. The global body charged with certifying palm oil as sustainable, RSPO, was notified for a second time in March 2019 by the indigenous community Santa Clara de Uchunya that their lands, lives and livelihoods remain under threat.”

“The [Shipibo community](#), located on the banks of the river Aguaytia in the Ucayali region, has filed a second set of complaints with the sustainable palm oil body RSPO against **Alicorp S.A.A.** and **Oleaginosas del Peru S.A. (OLPESA)**. The community hopes to secure redress from these two companies who are profiting from the known destruction and conversion of their traditional forests to oil palm plantations.”

“Around 7,000 hectares of the community’s forests were destroyed for oil palm plantations by former RSPO member company, Plantaciones de Pucallpa. The destroyed forests included areas which the community used for hunting, fishing and gathering, as well as an important source of medicinal plants and materials for construction. Environmental impacts include the destruction and contamination of

water sources and vital habitats for wildlife. Community leaders and members who have stood up to the operations have faced multiple attempts on their lives, threats and intimidation.”

“The company, Plantaciones de Pucallpa, engaged in a series of tactics to evade responsibility following [an initial RSPO complaint](#) filed by the community and allies in December 2015. These evasive actions included [an auction](#) of company assets in July 2016, when the plantations were transferred to their current operator, Ocho Sur P, as well as [ultimately withdrawing](#) from the RSPO membership to avoid sanction.”

Please refer to the work of Forest Peoples Programme for more information on this matter.
(Vasquez & Younger, 2019)

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Venezuela

March

Venezuelan army opens fire on Pemon tribe, Venezuela

Published on the 1st of March, 2019

(Military Violence on Indigenous Peoples)

“Soldiers have opened fire on a group of Pemon Indians, killing a woman and wounding at least 25 people. Four more Pemon have since died from wounds sustained in the attack. It is reported that some Pemon have been arrested and detained by the authorities.”

"The shooting took place on 22 February near the border with Brazil. The Pemon of Kumarakapay community (also known as San Francisco de Yuruaní) had set up a road blockade to prevent army troops from reaching the frontier. President Maduro had ordered the border closed to prevent humanitarian aid from Brazil entering the country.”

“Hundreds of Pemon families have sought refuge in the surrounding forest and hills. A Pemon leader managed to send out a recording as she fled declaring: ‘This is a war taking place here. They have orders to shoot anyone. Persecution of the capitanes generales [council of Pemon leaders] has started. They came through my community shooting with rifles’.”

(Survival International, 2019)

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Central America & the Caribbean



March

Progress in Maya Land Tenure Policy
Published on the 15th of March, 2019
(Land Tenure)

“It’s been three years since the Caribbean Court of Justice handed down a decision against the government in favour of communal land rights of the Maya people in thirty-eight indigenous communities in southern Belize. The C.C.J. ordered a number of measures to be taken in the administration of land use and tenure. Today, the Maya Leaders Alliance was back before the court with an update on mediation proceedings that have been ongoing between the Toledo Maya Land Rights Commission and the MLA on the draft land tenure policy. MLA Programme Coordinator Pablo Mis says that it is the first time that they have been able to report progress to the court.”

Pablo Mis, Programme Coordinator, MLA:

“In December of last year, we were able to agree on the steps that ought to be taken to fully implement the decision of the high court. So today we were able to report on how we have advanced on some elements of that agreement. Primarily we have been able to develop a Maya Land Tenure Policy. We have been able to properly consult on that on the ground; it is now before the government to consider that. That’s going to be an important prerequisite that will set out the roadmap or the implementation for the other elements that involves the delimitation, development of legislation and ultimately the goal is titling and protection of the Maya people’s property in law consistent with the constitution of Belize.”

“Both parties are currently working on drafting a methodology for the delimitation that will need both the Maya people and the government to verify the results of the process. Government has also appointed Professor Dena Shelton to lead a dispute resolution mechanism.”

(Channel5Belize, 2019)

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On the **18/03/2019** Bribri Indigenous leader and defender of land rights Sergio Rojas was shot and killed in an apparent assassination attempt at his home in the indigenous territory of Salitre. He survived at least a previous attempt on his life in 2015 when he was shot 6 times ⁽¹⁾.

February

48% of Forests in Central America Are Defended by Indigenous Peoples
Published on the 8th of February, 2019
(Indigenous Protected Forests)

“[Indigenous peoples](#) occupy vast tracts of [Central American territory](#), including more than half of the region’s forests and many of its waterways. This, together with their understanding of nature and their mechanisms of community organization, makes them in the guardians of the most important ecosystems of the region. The above is affirmed with a map prepared by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, the largest and most diverse environmental network in the world.”

“Among the main findings of the study carried out by IUCN is that Central America is inhabited by 63 indigenous groups located in an area of 202,017 square kilometers on land and 80,308 in water, especially in the Caribbean. Also, the forest area of the region is 211,793 square kilometers, of which 48% are located in areas of use and occupation of indigenous peoples.”

“37% of the Central American forest area is classified as a protected area, which in total covers an area of 165,716 square kilometers, according to the study. Also, 32% of the marine protected areas, which add up to a total of 92,114 square kilometers, are inhabited by indigenous peoples.”

For more on the data obtained, please refer to the cited article.
(TCRN Staff, 2019)

March

In context: Costa Rica’s struggles with indigenous land rights

North America

Published on the 19th of March, 2019

(Land Dispute)



Farmers, angered in a land dispute, burned down the home of an indigenous family in Salitre, a Bribri indigenous reserve in south-central Costa Rica, on Saturday, July 5, 2014.
(Lindsay Fendt/The Tico Times)

“Sergio Rojas, a leader of the Bribri community in Costa Rica, was murdered Monday night in the indigenous territory of Salitre.”

“Costa Rica has for years struggled to mediate land-right disputes between indigenous and non-indigenous people. In 2012, Rojas was shot at six times in an apparent assassination attempt near the reserve.”

“The problem [...] has its roots in the 1977 Indigenous Law that gave the Bribri and the Teribe rights to 11,700 hectares of land but did not provide for funds to compensate farmers who already occupied the land.”

“In the interim, the population has grown to more than 3,200 non-indigenous people, including those who have been on the land for decades and those who are more recent arrivals and bought the land with nothing more than an illegal bill of sale.”

“Mora said removing those families from the reserve without compensating them would create its own set of social and humanitarian problems.”

“According to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, in the Salitre area about 60 percent of the Bribri land has been taken over by outsiders, and between 80 and 88 percent of land belonging to the Teribe.”

“The non-indigenous “owners” of the land consider the indigenous to be the invaders. In August 2012, the Buenos Aires municipal council declared Rojas persona non grata.”

“While the 1977 law unquestionably supports indigenous re-occupation, non-indigenous farmers argue that their rights to possess property have been violated.”

“The non-indigenous farmers — who illegally occupy territory in the Bribri indigenous reserve located outside Buenos Aires, Puntarenas — mounted the attack seven days after members of the Bribri community reoccupied land where they had built farms. According to Bribri residents in the area, approximately 80 farmers attacked the settlement with rocks and guns, forcing the indigenous residents to flee into the mountains.”

(The Tico Times, 2019)

Bribri women commemorate Sergio Rojas and vow to keep his fight alive

Published on the 24th of March, 2019

(Response to Murder)

“About 30 indigenous leaders, friends and family of Sergio Rojas gathered in the indigenous Bribri community of Shiroles, about 20 km west of Puerto Viejo, to commemorate Rojas’s life and struggle on Friday night.”

“Rojas was [shot to death at his home on March 18](#). While the murder of the outspoken leader is still under investigation, Rojas had survived a previous assassination attempt. [Faustina Torres, an organizer of the event and president of the Association of Indigenous Women of Talamanca (ACOMUITA)] and other members of the Bribri community say they have no doubt his work led to his death.”

“Torres also states that negligence on behalf of the state led to Rojas’s death. [A 1977 law returned large areas of land to indigenous Costa Ricans](#), but it did not compensate non-indigenous people who were occupying the land. Since then, there have been clashes of violence as non-indigenous Costa Ricans have fought to retake the land.”

“An estimated 85 percent of land allocated to indigenous Costa Ricans is now in the hands of non-indigenous people.”

(Villegas, 2019)

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Guatemala

January

On the **21/01/2019** indigenous leader and member of CODECA, Delfino Agustín Vidal, was killed ^(1.).

On the **01/02/2019** indigenous lands and rights defender and rural leader of the Comité Campesino del Altiplano (Ccda), Édgar Rene Pop Yaxca, was arbitrarily detained in Cobán. He is accused of aggravated usurpation and crime of coercion. It is alleged that Édgar Rene was detained as part of a campaign to intimidate and harass indigenous peoples so they move out from their territories. Édgar Rene is a verbal defender, demanding rights for his peoples and a vocal opponent of large landowners growing monoculture and extractive megaprojects projects in the region, which damage food sovereignty ^(2.).

On the **15/02/2019** Justino Xollim, member a rural farmers organisation and the community La Primavera in San Cristóbal Verapaz, was detained while and directivo de UVOC, was arrested while en route to the Public Prosecutor's Office to denounce the logging done by Mr. Sebastián Cal, worker of the company Maderas Fillips Diaz. The poqomchi communities have been trying to denounce the logging of primary forests in their territory, yet noting is being done ^(3.).

On the **17/03/2019** Willy René de Paz Bojorquez (42) was shot three times in the head and killed. He was member of the Municipal Executive Committee of the Movement for the Liberation of communities (*Comité Ejecutivo Municipal del Movimiento para la Liberación de los Pueblos, MLP*), yand a member of CODECA ^(4.).

On the **22/03/2019** Claudia Samayoa and José Manuel Martínez were denounced to the Prosecutor's Office Against Corruption (Fiscalía Contra la Corrupción) for allegedly committing theft, deviation of correspondence and trafficking of influence. The accusation against the human rights defenders was referred to the Prosecutor's Office by the President of the Supreme Court

Killings Of Guatemala's Indigenous Activists Raise Specter Of Human Rights Crisis Published on the 22nd of January, 2018 (Killings)



Mayan indigenous people protest against the government of Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales on the day he gives an address to Congress in Guatemala City, Monday. Santiago Billy/AP

“For three days last week, thousands of Guatemalans blocked roads and major highways to protest the Central American country's slide toward a constitutional crisis. The protest organizers included groups that have long demanded justice: indigenous communities and *campesinos*, as rural and farm workers are called.”

“Indigenous citizens, many dressed in colorful traditional clothing, came out partly to protest the Guatemalan president's recent expulsion of a United Nations-backed commission investigating corruption in the country. Since 2007, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, known by its Spanish initials CICIG and funded by the U.N., the United States and the European Union, has worked with Guatemalan justice agencies to target corrupt officials.”

“In the highly unequal society that is Guatemala, many Maya believe any strengthening of the justice system will protect indigenous rights granted under the country's constitution and peace accords.”

“The country's indigenous people therefore have a strong motivation to lobby for the rule of law. Maya communities bore the brunt of almost four decades of a civil war that ended in 1996, leaving over 200,000 casualties, the majority indigenous Guatemalans, according to the United Nations. Now the mostly Maya organizations and many human rights groups worry that the violence is making a comeback: In just the last year, 26 members of mostly indigenous *campesino* organizations have

of Justice, Nester Mauricio Vásquez Pimental, and is connected to their participation on a previous judicial complaint against eleven members of the Supreme Court of Justice, on 17 January 2019 ^(6.).

On the **08/04/2019** Leonel Nájera (42), activist with the Peasant Development Committee (Codeca) and promoter of the Movement for the Liberation of Peoples (MLP), was assassinated. CODECA, an organisation of rural land workers and Indigenous peoples, has been very active in the fight against the abusive electricity tariffs charged by Energuate, amongst other important issues ^(6.).

On the **26/04/2019** the High Risk Court A of Guatemala (Juzgado de Mayor Riesgo A de Guatemala) fully absolved Abelino Chub Caal from charges of aggravated usurpation, arson and illicit association. This ruling put an end to his pretrial detention, which had lasted for over two years since 4 February 2017. As part of his human rights work, Abelino Chub Caal accompanies 29 communities in Sierra Santa Cruz, Izabal, whose land, environmental and cultural rights are threatened by mining interests, particularly the operations of the Compañía Guatemalteca de Níquel (CGN), and ranchers, despite a ruling in favour of the communities' land rights from the Constitutional Court ^(7.).

been killed.”

For more on this topic please refer to the cited article.
(Martin, 2019)

Guatemalan community feminists seek end to violence against the land and women

Published on the 23rd of January, 2019
(Land & Woman's Rights)

“The [TZK'AT](#) Network of Ancestral Healers of Community Feminism from Ixmulew in Guatemala was formed in October 2015 to defend Indigenous women's rights and the land. Many of its members are healers, midwives, and herbalists.”

"An article in *La Agroecología* [notes](#) (in Spanish) that TZK'AT analyzes from a feminist and historical perspective how territorial dispossession has taken place.”

“The *La Agroecología* article explains, ‘They say that the original ancestral patriarchy consisted in the appropriation of the bodies of women as trophies of war... The original ancestral patriarchy was mixed in the invasion with the patriarchy of the western world’.”

“It provides the example that, ‘The Spaniards who invaded violently brought a whole structure to justify that men could take the lives of women, as well as ‘conquered’ the lands of indigenous peoples’.”

"The article also notes, ‘There are multiple dimensions of violence brought by the patriarchal connection, community feminists in Guatemala call it territorial femicide, which is the systematic persecution and murder of human rights defenders, women's rights and territories, as was the murder of Berta Cáceres on March 3, 2016 in Honduras’.”

“A recent article posted by the World Rainforest Movement [says](#), “Guatemalan community feminists have proposed the category body-land territory.”

“That category highlights ‘that the struggle for the defense of the land against extractivism must be simultaneous and inseparable from the struggle for women in such territories to live a life free from violence and the exploitation of their bodies’.”

“That article adds, ‘Extractivism is based on and exacerbates

the patriarchal culture, which has a particular affect on women's way of life’.”

For more on this topic please follow the links or refer to the cited article.

(Patterson, 2019)

February

RSPO should suspend membership of groups undermining Guatemala's anti-impunity commission (commentary)

Published on the 6th of February, 2019
(Palm Oil & the RSPO)

“In the coming weeks and months, a number of Guatemalan palm oil producers are expecting to receive memberships in the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) — a move that would secure them a certain green credibility and improve the reputation of Guatemalan palm oil production in the international market.”

"Within the industry, it is generally understood that RSPO membership can serve as an “onramp” to what, in corporate social responsibility jargon, is known as the “journey toward sustainability.” But the journey toward sustainability must begin from a baseline of proven ethical intent — and a number of recent signs raise serious doubts about the ethical intent of a wide swath of industry players in

Guatemala.”

For more on this issue, please refer to the cited article.
(Hertzler & Conant, 2019)



Oil palms surround the Guatemalan community of Sechaj, Raxruhá on three sides. Photo credit: Fabio Erdos/ActionAid.

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Honduras

Since **08/01/2019** Afro-Colombian rights defender, Danelly Estupiñán, as reported several instances of being followed and her movements monitored by men. This is not the first way of such incidents she has faced. As a member of the Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN), and a community leader in Buenaventura, she is a strong voice in denouncing the violence, harassment and expansion of the Port into Buenaventura. Her colleague and defender of ocean territories, Leyla Arroyo, have received similar threats and intimidations in recent days ⁽¹⁾.

On the **16/01/2019** military personnel intercepted a vehicle in which defender and OFRANEH Coordinator, Miriam Miranda, was traveling along with other members of the organization. They were subsequently threatened and harassed by the military agents. It is important to note that these acts took place just outside Guapinol, home of the Afro-Caribbean Garifuna who has been subjected to State repression due to their work in the defense of water. Miriam has dedicated much of her life aiding the struggles of these peoples. This is not the first time she has faced repression and harassment due to her work ⁽²⁾.

On the **29/1/2019** María Luisa Borjas was found guilty, by a judge, of the defamation and slandering of a powerful local banker, Camilo Atala. The Atala family is one of the most powerful in the country and linked to the company DESA, as a result, linked to the death of Breta Cáceres ⁽³⁾.

On the **07/02/2019** members of the "Comité Municipal de Defensa de los Bienes Comunes y Públicos of Tocoa" denounced threats, harassment and the defamation of its members. These are Juan López, Juana Esquivel, Adilia Castro, Esly Banegas, Gregorio Vásquez, Leonel George and Reynaldo Domínguez, however, however there are others. The members of the Comité have consistently denounced the State of Honduras for violating the Economic, Social, Cultural and Environmental Rights of the communities of the Municipality by delivering six mining projects in the area of the Carlos Escaleras Mejía Mountain Botaderos National Park. If carried out, these projects will destroy the rivers Tocoa, Guapinol and San Pedro that supply water to 70% of a population of 105 thousand inhabitants in the Municipality ⁽⁴⁾.

On the morning of the **25/02/2019** Jovita Tzul Tzul, a lawyer of Bufete de Pueblos Indígenas, was stopped outside her work by the police who attempted to arbitrarily arrest her. Her colleague, Juan Castro, came to her aid. She was subsequently released when no warrant for Jovita could be presented. Jovita represents people and communities that face serious threats of to their lives and livelihoods due to the imposition of extractive projects in their territory ⁽⁵⁾.

On the **29/04/2019**, Rosalina Dominguez, Arnold Sánchez, Fredi Sánchez, Amos Sánchez, Leonidas Sánchez, Salomé Rodríguez and Cornelia González, among other members of Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras (COPINH) received death threats while they were preparing land for cultivation. COPINH works in defense of natural resources and territory against the imposition of economic projects. Rosalinda and colleagues have been cultivating land that the energy company DESA has wanted to buy for their project Agua Zarca ^(7.).

On the **26/02/2019** two Tolupeño indigenous peoples - father and son duo Salomón Matute and Juan Samuel Matute - were shot and killed in their hometown of Yoro. These forest and rights defenders were members of the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y la Justicia -MADJ) in Honduras ^(6.).

January

Visit to Honduras - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (A/HRC/40/60/Add.2)

Published on the 11th of January, 2019
(Human Rights Council)

“The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mr. Michel Forst, visited Honduras from 29 April to 12 May 2018. The main objective of his visit was to assess the situation of human rights defenders in the country and to determine how it may have changed since his predecessor, Ms. Margaret Sekaggya, visited the country in 2012. That assessment was conducted in the light of the obligations and commitments assumed by the State under international human rights law, including the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.”

“He analyses the legal and institutional framework for the protection of human rights defenders and the environment in which they are working. He finds that human rights defenders in Honduras are operating in a civic space that is under siege and subject to serious violations and restrictions of civil and political rights. He also finds that rights defenders are attacked with total impunity and are criminalized, delegitimized and disparaged because of the work they do in promoting and defending human rights.”

(UN Human Rights Council, 2019)

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Mexico

On the **04/01/2019** human rights defender and activist, Sinar Corzo Esquinca, was shot by men of motorcycles. He was mostly known for his work on the right to clean water ^(1.).

On the **18/01/2019** Noé Jiménez Pablo and José Santiago Gómez Álvarez, both beneficiaries of the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, were disappeared and found dead in Chiapas. Both were members of the Movimiento por la Paz, la Justicia y el Bien Común de Amatlán ^(2.).

On the **20/01/2019** Gustavo Cruz Mendoza, member of the Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca (CIPO-RFM) in the Municipality of Santiago Jocotepec, was assassinated ^(3.).

On the **20/01/2019** indigenous leader and human rights defender Carlos Mendoza Ramos was violently abducted from his home in the Cerro Caliente community, Oaxaca, by a local armed group. He was found two days later (22nd) lightly wounded due to the killing attempt that he was able to escape from. Carlos Mendoza Ramos is one of the leaders of the Unión Campesina e Indígena Nacional (National Peasant and Indigenous Union, NICU) and a human rights defender in the Chinanteca region, in Oaxaca. He assumed the leadership of NICU in 2015, after his brother Jeremías Mendoza Ramos was killed, and played a key role in demanding justice for the case ^(4.).

On the **21/01/2019** Bernardino García Hernández was found dead in the fields where he had ponds and fed fish. He was a representative of the local committee in Zimatlán de Lázaro Cárdenas, in the Mixtec region, which is trying to find a solution to the land conflict between two local communities through dialogue ^(5.).

On the **23/01/2019** Estelina López Gómez (43) was shot twice, once in the stomach and once in the head, by paramilitaries. She was a defender of the right to land, and a member of Luz y Fuerza del Pueblo ^(6.).

On the **11/02/2019** indigenous peoples' rights defender and member of the Comité de Defensa de los Pueblos Indígenas (Committee for the Defence of Indigenous Peoples – CODEDI), Froylán González, was illegally detained. He had been taking part in a peaceful protest by the Santiago Xanica indigenous community regarding their right to self-determination. CODEDI works on exposing illegal logging of trees, as well as violations of indigenous people's rights regarding the implementation of tourism and extractive projects in the Costa and Sierra Sur regions ^(7.).

On the **12/02/2019** "Mexican Indigenous human rights defenders, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel and Hilario Cornelio Castro disappeared while traveling through Guerrero state, southwest Mexico. They were both members of the Organization of Indigenous Mepha'a People (OPIM, Organización del Pueblo Indígena Mepha'a). Since 2009, due to their human rights work, Obtilia Eugenio and other OPIM members have received several attacks and threats, including death threats. Obtilia Eugenio was recently elected member of the Indigenous Municipal Council of the Ayutla de los Libres town (Guerrero state). Their fate or whereabouts are unknown. Authorities must urgently search for them and bring those responsible to justice" ^(8.).

On the **20/02/2019** environmental activist Samir Flores Soberanes was murdered before participating in a referendum on a controversial thermal-electric plant and pipeline that he opposed. He opposed the Proyecto Integral Morelos (the integral project for Morelos) – which includes the plant and pipeline ^(9.).

On the **20/02/2019** Dominga González Martínez, Lorenzo Sánchez Berriozabal and Marco Antonio Pérez González, Náhuatl indigenous human rights defenders who were imprisoned for 11 years on the “Tlanixco 6” case, were released. The remaining 3 indigenous rights defenders, Rómulo Arias Mireles, Teófilo Pérez González and Pedro Sánchez Berriozabal were released on the **05/04/2019** after 16 years in prison. These Náhuatl indigenous human rights defenders worked to guarantee the Tlanixco indigenous community’s access to water ^(10. & 11.).

On the **25/03/2019** indigenous and land rights defender, Eulodia Lilia Díaz Ortiz, was murdered. She was member of the Consejo Indígena de Trueque (CIT), in the Mexican municipality of Santiago Tianguistenco ^(12.).

On the **30/03/2019** academic and activist, Abiram Hernández Fernández (37), was killed by a blow to the head. He was a lawyer and psychologist and was known in Veracruz for his constant support to the families of missing persons in the state and defender of human rights ^(13.).

On the **11/04/2019** Luis Armando Fuentes Aquino (35), community defender and member of the political and social organization Corriente del Pueblo ‘Sol Rojo’ in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec region, was shot and killed. As an active member of the community Luis was a defender of land and territory amongst being a member in other local movements ^(14.).

On the **19/04/2019** Héctor Armando Domínguez, an artist and environmental activist, was shot and killed by armed men in his home. This was the second attack on his life in recent months. His father, Aureliano Domínguez, and brother, Julio Emmanuel Domínguez Rodríguez, were also killed in the attack ^(15.).

February

Resistance to solar projects in the Yucatan Peninsula bodes badly for Maya Train Project

Published on the 7th of February, 2019

(FPIC)

“The Yucatan peninsula, dividing the Gulf of Mexico from the Caribbean, is among Mexico’s top destinations for renewable energy firms thanks to its strong winds and sunny climate. Home to bustling tourist resorts such as Cancun, the area is also a big energy consumer.”

“But some of its Mayan indigenous communities are resisting rapid development of \$1.1 billion of renewable energy projects and preparing to fight a plan to build a railway across the peninsula.”

“President-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who takes office on Saturday, wants to fast track the construction of the tourist and freight line.”

“In the communities, there is concern that their opinion will not be taken into account once again with this project,” said Carlos Escoffié, lawyer for the Collective of Mayan Communities in the Chenes region. (Yucatan Times, 2019)

March

'No to the mine' - Mexico's Indians fight to stop mining on ancestral land

Published on the 3rd of March, 2019

(Extractive Industry and Indigenous Rights)

“After nearly 20 years of wrangling, a group of Nahua Indian villagers could make legal history in Mexico this month when a court rules on a land dispute involving a Canadian miner.”

“After nearly 20 years of wrangling, a group of Nahua Indian villagers could make legal history in Mexico this month when a court rules on a land dispute involving a Canadian miner.”

“A lawyer for villagers of Tecoltemi in the central Mexican state of Puebla said it was the first time a court would rule on whether the country’s mining law - which gives priority to mining activities over other

land use - was constitutional.”

“Previous cases had only recognized indigenous people’s right to prior consultation, said Itzel Silva of the Fundar Center for Analysis and Research, a non-profit in Mexico.”

“That’s why this case is so important,” said Silva.

“For a century Mexico has granted indigenous people legal title to ancestral lands, but many have seen mining firms given rights to that land after the government prioritized mining over other land use in the 1990s, lawyers said.”

“The case, to be heard in a federal court in Puebla, concerns two concessions awarded to Minera Gorrion, a local subsidiary of Canada’s Almaden Minerals, which has caused divisions among villagers while pitting some against the company.”

(Mendes, 2019)

The struggle continues for land and water defenders opposed to La Parota dam in Mexico

Published on the 5th of March, 2019

(Energy Sector and Indigenous Rights)

“More than six years after a controversial dam in Mexico was officially cancelled, community activists who opposed the megaproject face continued criminalization.”

“The Ejidos and Communities Council Opposed to La Parota Dam (CECOP) was formed to stop the proposed La Parota dam on the Papagayo River in the southwestern Mexican state of Guerrero.”

For more on this ongoing issue, please refer to the article by Brent Patterson.

(Patterson, 2019)

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Nicaragua

On the **23/01/2019** Camilo Frank Lopez was shot in the head as he left a bar with his cousin. Camilo was the current Tuahka Indigenous Territorial Government Prosecutor at the time of his death ⁽¹⁾.

February

Oil palm expansion in Nicaragua threatening local communities and forest conservation

Published on the 11th of February, 2019

(Oil Palm Expansion)

“In southeast Nicaragua a palm oil company has allegedly expanded its oil palm cultivations without the necessary environmental permits and driven local farmers to occupy lands at a protected area.”

“In January [Mongabay](#) Latam and [Onda Local](#), a Nicaraguan news platform, reported that small farmers who have felt compelled to sell their plots to a palm oil company to pay off their debts have been moving into the Indio Maíz Biological Reserve in southeast Nicaragua, causing environmental damage to the reserve’s forests.”

“Farmers who have stayed on their lands told Mongabay and Onda Local that those who have sold their plots have been left without options, with many migrating to Costa Rica or settling in the reserve, which extends for 4,500 square kilometres and is one of the best preserved forests in Nicaragua.”

“At the root of the problem is an expansionist drive by Palmares de El Castillo S.A. (PALCASA), the company in question, over the past 12 years that has displaced local communities and allegedly committed violations of environmental law.”

“In 2006 PALCASA obtained permits from Nicaragua’s Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (*MARENA*) to cultivate 3,600 hectares of oil palm in the municipality of El Castillo, department of Río San Juan.”

“However, by 2009 PALCASA had been cultivating palm in an area extending for 5,463 ha, which is 1,863 ha more than the area authorised by MARENA in 2006. A 2017 [study](#) conducted by Amaru Ruiz,

president of Fundación del Río, a conservation NGO, and Julio Lopez, claimed that by 2013 the company's monocultures covered 6,000 ha. Samuel Polanco Centeno, a local conservationist who spoke with Mongabay and Onda Local, estimates that PALCASA's plantations now extend for over 7,000 ha."

For more on this ongoing issue, please refer to the cited article.
(IDM, 2019)

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On the **02/01/2019** Ligia Arreaga, woman human rights defender, Coordinator of the Alianza por un Mejor Darién (AMEDAR - Association for a Better Darien) and an investigative freelance journalist focused on issues of environmental and land dispossession, was arrested. She was arrested for her investigative work regarding food producers in Barú lands, and the process of being granted permission to sell produce in the area ⁽¹⁾.

On the **15/01/2019** human rights defender Marvin Wilcox, alongside four other producers, who had been trying to sell their fruit and vegetable produce in the Bar, were detained. Marvin is a member of the Comité en Defensa de la Tierra de Barú (Barú Land Defence Committee) and "Unidos por el Agro". The Barú Land Defence Committee is a group of rural producers seeking to protect their lands from concession to multinational companies. Since October 2018, more than 400 rural producers of the Barú municipality have faced government-led dispossession attempts, due to the approval of the Contract-Law 36-17, which is supported by the Legislative Assembly of Panama. The Contract-

Law grants the use of 6,000 hectares of land for 20 years for the mass production of bananas by the private company Banana Piña, a subsidiary of the multinational Del Monte Fresh. The Contract-Law has a clause that refers to the rural producers, who have occupied the land for over 20 years, as invaders ⁽¹⁾.

would have to be consulted regarding these and any other interventions."

"Andrés Jiménez, the community's Justice of Peace and a student of Plutarco [a Naso elder]... is angry that the President, from his luxurious home in Panama City, has labeled the Naso a threat to conservation."



Panama

February

The Naso are determined to protect their rainforest and their way of life

Published on the 26th of February, 2019

(Conservation, Indigenous Rights & Energy)

"The Boynic hydro-electric dam project has bulldozed the jungle, emptied the Tjër Di River of fish and fresh water shrimp and displaced families."

"Despite utopian promises to the community, the project has brought nothing to the Naso—not even electricity."

"Five of the seven Indigenous Peoples of Panama already have their territories recognized as Comarcas. In October 2017, the Naso came close to having theirs. The Legislative Assembly unanimously passed Law 656 for the Naso Comarca; but [President Varela vetoed it](#) because the territory they claimed falls within two protected areas – the UNESCO World Heritage Site La Amistad International Park (PILA) and the Protected Forest of Palo Seco. The President said the Naso could not have their territory recognized because the country has international commitments regarding these protected areas."

"There is serious concern that rare and endangered species such as Harpy Eagles, Tapirs and Jaguars as well as up to 16 species of migratory fish and shrimp have been affected by the dam. And despite this, rumors abound that there are plans to continue to open up tributaries of the Tjër-Di river to four more hydro projects. This, surely, is the real reason behind the Presidential Veto; if the Comarca is created, the Naso

"To Jiménez and all the Naso it is clear – the biggest threat to the environment is the Government itself. "The Government does absolutely nothing to protect the environment. Anything it does related to conservation has been due to outside pressure."

"Such has been the disastrous social and environmental impact of the Boynic dam; the PILA park could be declared a UNESCO World Heritage site 'in danger'. But there is still hope. The Legislative Assembly asserted a Constitutional Right to approve Law 656 to create the Naso Comarca by insistence on Feb 20. President Varela can now either approve it or send it to the Supreme Court for a final decision. [An international campaign has just been launched to pressure Varela to ratify the law.](#)" (Cregan, 2019)

April

Panamanian indigenous people act to protect the forest from invading loggers

Published on the 2nd of April, 2019

(Community led Resistance)

"There is a land at the center of the Americas that is said to remain in the wild. It is the only place on the entire three-continent landmass where the 30,000-kilometer (19,000 mile) Pan-American Highway is interrupted, a distinction that gives the place its name: the Darién Gap."

"But despite the seeming indifference of the outside world, some among the Darién's original inhabitants — perhaps 35,000 people in Panama belonging to the Kuna, Emberá and Wounaan indigenous ethnicities — are working to reverse this situation. Mappers, a drone pilot, a lawyer, bird-watchers, a journalist and reforesters are carrying out ambitious projects to stop the degradation of the Darién Gap."

"Today it is subject to a chilling spate of deforestation as timber colonists and entrepreneurs advance across the region. The Darién's mythical wilderness is giving way to chainsaws and bulldozers. Even the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Darién National Park is at risk."

"In the last 15 years, deforestation in the Darién has spread quickly. While the Panamanian public is continually surprised by news articles describing bloody conflicts between indigenous people and timber colonists, wood entrepreneurs continue to open roads and bring heavy machinery into the forest at will with little scrutiny. The forest is cut down, the wood is sold, and the land is burned to make way for livestock ranching."



A small deforested site in Darién. Illegal loggers reach remote areas like this one by river. Micro devastations, which reach into Darién National Park, add up to real deforestation.

Image by David Mesa for Mongabay.

"Many Panamanians regard this expansion of the agricultural frontier into the forest as progress. Indeed, the National Assembly has incentivized the livestock and agriculture industries. The Panamanian government regards deforestation as an improved use of the land. If a farmer wants to secure title to a piece of forest, the government will deny his request. But if he chops down trees and builds a house, the government gives him title to the land for a few dollars. This policy of massive land

titling was promoted by the creation of the National Authority of Land Management (ANATI in its Spanish initials) through Law 59 of 2010.”

“For their part, the indigenous people living on some of this land, largely in entrenched poverty and neglected by the government, are vulnerable to various forces. In the absence of the state, they end up dependent on the loggers for resources such as generators, fuel for their boats, building materials for their houses. The loggers even act as moneylenders. And wood, sooner or later, becomes the coin of the realm.”

“But despite the seeming indifference of the outside world, some among the Darién’s original inhabitants — perhaps 35,000 people in Panama belonging to the Kuna, Emberá and Wounaan indigenous ethnicities — are working to reverse this situation. Mappers, a drone pilot, a lawyer, bird-watchers, a journalist and reforesters are carrying out ambitious projects to stop the degradation of the Darién Gap.”

This is a brief introduction to the dynamics of power that have interest in the Darién and how communities resist these dynamics. For more please refer to the cited article.

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North America



Canada

On the **07/01/2019** 14 Wet’suwet’en land defenders, from the Gidimt’en camp, who oppose construction of the Coastal Gaslink oil and gas pipelines in Wet’suwet’en territory, were arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) ⁽¹⁾.

January

14 arrested as RCMP break gate at Gidimt'en camp checkpoint set up to stop pipeline company access

Published on the 7th of January, 2019

(Imprisonment of Indigenous Rights Activists)

“The RCMP have arrested 14 people and entered a fortified checkpoint on a forest service road in northern B.C. where people at the Gidimt'en camp were barring a pipeline company from access.”

“The Mounties announced Monday they were going to enforce a court injunction to allow Coastal GasLink access to the road and bridge near Houston, B.C.”

“The Coastal GasLink pipeline is meant to transport natural gas from northeastern B.C. to the coast where an LNG Canada facility is scheduled for construction.”

“Members of the Wet'suwet'en Nation have been preventing company workers from getting through their checkpoints, asserting they can only pass if they have consent from hereditary leaders.”

“An injunction was issued last month ordering people to stop preventing the company from gaining access to the area.”

(Bellrichard & Ghossou, 2019)



Tensions over a proposed pipeline on disputed Indigenous land led to fourteen arrests in January. (Chantelle Bellrichard/CBC)

United Nations instructs Canada to suspend Site C dam construction over Indigenous rights violations
Published on the 9th of January, 2019
(Site C Dam and International Pressure)



North bank, looking downstream (October 2018) Photo: [BC Hydro](#)

“In a rare rebuke, the United Nations has instructed Canada to suspend construction of the [Site C dam](#) on B.C.’s Peace River until the project obtains the “free, prior and informed consent” of Indigenous peoples.”

“Canada has until April 8 to report back to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination outlining steps it has taken to halt construction of the hydro project, which would flood 128 kilometres of the Peace River and its tributaries in the heart of Treaty 8 traditional territory.”

“The unusual request from one of the world’s top human rights bodies was made by committee chair Nouredine Amir in a [December 14 letter](#) to Canada’s UN Ambassador Rosemary McCarney.”

“It comes as Canada vies for a coveted seat on the UN Security Council and two Treaty 8 First

Nations await a court date to determine if the Site C project unjustifiably infringes on their constitutionally protected treaty rights, as they claim in [civil actions](#) filed last January.”
(Cox, 2019)

Daphne Bramham: Hereditary chiefs demand their court-ordered right to be consulted
Published on the 10th of January, 2019
(Free, Prior and Informed Consent)



Todd Nelson and Christy Brown from the Nisga'a Nation arrive on Wednesday in support of the Unist'ot'en camp and Wet'suwet'en First Nation gather at a campfire off a logging road near Houston, B.C. CHAD HIPOLITO / THE CANADIAN PRESS

“For most of the last 50 years, Indigenous people have tried to negotiate, litigate and protest their way to a new relationship with Canada.”

“In the past 21 years, they have won landmark rulings upholding their title to traditional territories, and their inherent rights including the right to self-government. Repeatedly, the Supreme Court has ruled that neither colonial policies nor post-Confederation legislation has extinguished any of those rights.”

“Those rights are enshrined in the Canadian constitution, and both B.C. and Canada have promised to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.”

“But what’s proving problematic is translating those rights into practice. Beyond saying sorry, reconciliation has yet to consistently result in the kinds of meaningful consultation envisaged by the court.”

“It has delayed construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline from Alberta to Burnaby. Now, it’s garnering international attention because of blockades in northern B.C. along the route of the \$6.2-million natural gas pipeline planned by a TransCanada subsidiary to fuel a \$40-billion liquefied natural gas plant in Kitimat.”

“The company... has contracts worth \$620 million signed by elected chiefs and councillors from along the 670-kilometre route, was granted the injunction in December by the B.C. Supreme Court.”

“Among the key decisions behind this clash are the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada decision on the Delgamuukw/Gisday'wa case and, more recently, rulings involving the Haida and Tsilhqot'in (Chilcotin).

Those rulings determined that Indigenous people retain title to all of their traditional territories (except where the land has been ceded to the Crown).”

“The court has recognized the continued existence of traditional forms of government, which on the West Coast means a clan system with hereditary chiefs. And it has urged governments to reconcile with Indigenous people by negotiating with them on a nation-to-nation basis through meaningful consultation and accommodation.”

“Based on those rulings, all of the Wetsu’we’ten hereditary chiefs and many other Indigenous leaders insist that elected band councils have no authority to negotiate or sign land-use agreements, even if the resulting contracts provide substantial benefits.”

(Bramham, 2019)

TransCanada's pipeline plans in BC may have just killed reconciliation with First Nations
Published on the 13th of January, 2019
(Reconciliation & Oil)

“For many Canadians, the idea of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples died last week when the RCMP sent heavily-armed police to break up the Unist’ot’en protest camp that has been blocking pipeline plans for a decade in northern BC”.

“The [proposed pipeline](#) starts in the fracked gas fields of northeastern British Columbia and will snake through more than 670 kilometres of rugged mountain to Kitimat, where a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Plant will compress the methane into a super-cooled liquid for shipping.”

“The purpose of the pipeline and the \$40 billion LNG facility is to enable five multinationals based in Korea, Holland, Malaysia, China and Japan to ship BC’s gas reserves in tankers through its coastal fjords post-haste and onto an increasingly iffy global petroleum market.”

“But what happens to those who refuse to sign on to last century’s vision of energy and employment? Or to those who have a deep history and connection to the surrounding landscape, whose stewardship doesn’t line up with the ambitions of governments and multinational corporations.”

“The Canadian public found out on January 7 when the RCMP sent heavily armed police to break up the Unist’ot’en clan’s protest camp in unceded Wet’suwet’en territory.”

“The Unist’ot’en established a checkpoint in the path of several proposed pipelines by a bridge that is the only access to the area in 2009. They’ve held off construction ever since, building a community at the camp with a permaculture garden and a healing centre.”

Freda Huson of the Unist’ot’en says, “All Wet’suwet’en clans have rejected the pipeline because our medicines, our food and our water are all here and not replaceable.”

For more on this ongoing issue, please read the cited article.
(O’Rourke, 2019)

Corporations don't seem to understand Indigenous jurisdiction
Published on the 16th of January, 2019
(Gaslink pipeline & Indigenous Chiefs)



The Coastal GasLink route map. The Tyee

In reference to the arrests made at the Wet'suwet'en check point "Coastal GasLink president Rick Gateman [said in a statement](#): 'Our fully approved and permitted project has the support of the communities and all 20 elected Indigenous bands along the route, as well as many hereditary chiefs.'"

"The statement echoes [TransCanada's refrain](#) about Indigenous jurisdiction and reveals either ignorance or obfuscation."

"There are meaningful differences between band leadership and traditional leadership, as well as between Indigenous nations. Those differences have consequences for the viability of TransCanada's project. From a risk management perspective, either ignorance or obfuscation is a huge failure."

"The hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en unanimously reject the pipeline. The opinions of chiefs from other nations pertain to *their* lands, not Wet'suwet'en lands."

"The differences between band leadership and traditional leadership have jurisdictional consequences. The authority of the bands comes from Canada's [Indian Act](#), which many Indigenous people reject. Conversely, the authority of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary leadership predates European contact."

"Band leadership has authority over reserve lands. Conversely, traditional leadership has authority over a nation's traditional territory, which subsumes and exceeds reserve lands. That authority has been acknowledged and upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada."

"[Delgamuukw v. British Columbia](#) is one of the most important Supreme Court of Canada decisions regarding Indigenous rights. The justices ruled the Wet'suwet'en and the Gitksan demonstrated land title right to their respective territories. In a later ruling, [Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia](#), the court recognized that the nation — not the band — holds title to their lands."

"Although the Delgamuukw decision recognized Wet'suwet'en rights and title, the Supreme Court did not rule on jurisdiction, saying a new court case would be required. Ryerson University Prof. Shiri

Pasternak notes the ruling presumes underlying Crown title and “[shifts legislative authority over resources away from Indigenous peoples](#).” The justices in the case identified “the general economic development of the interior of British Columbia” as a reason Indigenous title could be infringed.”

“Jennifer Wickham, a member of the Wet’suwet’en nation, addressed the shortcomings of the Delgamuukw ruling and the entire court process: “[Even when we follow their Western law, it doesn’t do us any good](#).” Such sentiments express why the Wet’suwet’en, and other Indigenous nations, are turning to the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (UNDRIP), as well as land defence strategies.”

For more on this issue, please refer to the cited article and other articles cited in this ‘Canada’ section of the Bulletin.

(Cochrane, 2019)

Canada versus First Nations: Whose land is it anyway?

Published on the 19th of January, 2019

(Unceded Indigenous Land)

“News of the RCMP’s dismantling a First Nations camp blocking the construction of a liquified natural gas (LNG) pipeline in northern B.C. went mainstream last week.”

“Dozens of solidarity rallies in support of members of the Wet’suwet’en First Nation took place across the country following 14 arrests by the RCMP on Monday, January 7. The RCMP were enforcing a December provincial court injunction ordering TC Energy (formerly TransCanada) and Coastal GasLink access to Wet’suwet’en territory.”

“After the arrests, the hereditary chiefs of the Unist’ot’en and Gidimt’en clans agreed to allow TC Energy construction crews access to the territory to conduct preliminary work on the proposed pipeline. In a post on the camp’s website, the chiefs say the decision was made to prevent further arrests, and that it does not mean they consent to the pipeline.”

“The Unist’ot’en are one of two groups that make up the Gilseyhu Clan which, together with the Gidimt’en Clan, comprise two of the five clans that make up the [Wet’suwet’en First Nation](#).”

This article comprises a detailed historical review of treaties between first nations and European settlers/colonisers. Through this historical account the article provides a detailed overview on the contemporary conflicts between B.C. oil exploration and first nations in the region. For those interested in this topic, it is recommended that you address this article for references and information.

(Keogh, 2019)

Report Finds 11 Banks Increased Financing to TransCanada Subsidiary Building Coastal GasLink Pipeline, Despite Wet’suwet’en Opposition

Published on the 23rd of January, 2019

(Banks Financing Oil in Indigenous Lands)

“A [white paper](#) released today by Rainforest Action Network (RAN) reveals that in spite of Wet’suwet’en opposition to TransCanada’s Coastal GasLink pipeline, at least 11 banks notably increased financing to the company behind the USD \$4.5 billion pipeline. Last December, those banks participated in two new loans, led by JPMorgan Chase, which replaced \$1.5 billion in credit, with a staggering \$5.5 billion — making for a two-thirds increase in TransCanada’s total available credit.”

“The white paper highlights four banks in particular — JPMorgan Chase, Bank of Montreal, Deutsche Bank, and Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce — as the leading bankers of the Coastal GasLink pipeline, in virtue of their leading roles on the two December 2018 loans, two older loans, nine recent bond issuances, and a key asset sale.”

(Greenberg, 2019)

February

Land and Justice

Published on the 1st of February, 2019

(Recommended read)

“*The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy* is a crucial read for all people interested in decolonization and in ending colonial genocide in Canada. Arthur Manuel relies on family

history, experiential knowledge, legal training, and his love for his family and the land to share with the public insights he gained as a son, father, grandfather, First Nation Chief, and as an international advocate. His Manifesto is 312 pages. Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson wrote the introduction and afterword; Naomi Klein wrote the preface. Through the storytelling approach, chapters are short and void of the technicalities of references. In this review I share four crucial lessons to reflect on.”

These comments regarding Arthur Manuel’s book, *‘The Reconciliation Manifesto: Recovering the Land, Rebuilding the Economy’* was written by Lynn Gehl, PhD, who is an Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe, an advocate, artist, outspoken critic of colonial law and policies, and author of [Claiming Anishinaabe: Decolonizing the Human Spirit](#). (Gehl, 2019)

Conviction of Cree man for selling fish an infringement of treaty rights, say First Nation leaders
Published on the 6th of February, 2019
(Statement from Indigenous Leaders)

“Indigenous leaders in Saskatchewan are calling the recent government sting of a Canoe Lake Cree First Nation man who sold fish a ‘waste of [government] resources to fight First Nations exercising their Inherent and Treaty Rights’.”

“In a statement released Wednesday, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Chief Bobby Cameron says the provincial government’s undercover sting operation that resulted in the conviction of Donald Iron, a Canoe Lake band member, last month shows government is more interested in ignoring treaty rights than dealing with more serious issues.”

“Hunting and fishing is a fundamental Treaty and Inherent Right and it was common for First Nations people to barter and exchange their resources,” Cameron said.

“Iron was charged with three counts of illegally marketing fish after a conservation officer bartered tobacco for fish with the Cree man, and then made multiple purchases from Iron for white fish totalling \$90.”

(Brake, 2019)

B.C. commits to being 1st province in Canada to put UNDRIP into legislation
Published on the 13th of February, 2019
(UNDRIP)

“The B.C. government says it will introduce legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), [among plans announced in Tuesday’s throne speech](#).”

“The goal is to table legislation sometime this year. If passed, it will make B.C. the first province in Canada to legislate its endorsement of the declaration.”

“Premier John Horgan told reporters on Tuesday he’s unsure what implementation will look like — if a single bill will do the job or if several pieces of legislation will need to be rewritten. He said legislative councils are working on the details and will be reporting back with their findings.”

“I know it will be more than symbolic,” Horgan said.
(Bellrichard, 2019a)

ANWR process violates indigenous rights
Published on the 15th of February, 2019
(Violation of Indigenous Agreements & Oil Exploration)

Rochelle Adams (Gwich’in), who writes this article, is an Alaska Native cultural advisor, linguist, artist and cultural bearer from the rural villages of Fort Yukon and Beaver.

“Let’s talk about the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the oil and gas leasing program of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge’s coastal plain. Why? Because it’s flawed for many reasons. The information in the rushed DEIS is extremely one sided — containing little to no knowledge from previous public hearings. This infringes upon our rights to public process and ignores the voices of the most impacted people, it breaks international treaty agreements, and it violates the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which causes concerns that need to be addressed.”

“The EIS process and Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act section 810 were established in order to ensure that the people had a voice and input throughout. These are required for any action to withdraw, reserve, lease, or otherwise permit the use, occupancy, or disposition of public lands in

Alaska under any provision of law authorizing such actions. Yet, this is not happening. The Bureau of Land Management has not meaningfully consulted with every Gwich'in community, and they must do so, because we all will be impacted. We have our own systems and agencies with a direct accountability to this land that have to be involved, as required by law. We have ecological, sociological and economic concerns that need to be addressed."

"All of our villages — including those in Canada — are strategically placed in relation to the migration route of the Porcupine River caribou herd. First Nations Gwich'in communities must be aware that the international responsibilities established in the agreement between the government of Canada and the government of the United States of America on the conservation of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, that was signed in 1987, is being broken. This directly establishes the responsibilities of both parties and their obligation to maintain the conservation of the Porcupine River Caribou Herd. Oil and gas exploration in this area will go directly against this agreement."

For more on this please refer to the cited article, and, further work by Rochelle Adams.
(Adams, 2019)

People are dying because of Canadian mines. It's time for the killing to stop
Published on the 19th of February, 2019
(Canadian Mining Practice)

"Most [people] don't associate Canadian businesses with assault and murder. But between 2000 and 2015, 44 people died as a result of violence surrounding Canadian-owned mines in Latin America. The stories behind those killings, some of which are documented in a 2016 study by Shin Imai, a professor at York University's Osgoode Hall Law School, are harrowing."

"According to his report, mine protesters in Guatemala have reportedly been beaten, arrested, kidnapped and shot. Women living in communities surrounding the mines have been raped. In 2009, a political activist who opposed a Canadian mine in El Salvador was found dead in a well, his fingernails removed."

"People are dying because of Canadian mines. It's time for the killing to stop."
(Hood, 2019)

March

The Worsening Housing Crisis Plaguing Canada's First Nations Population
Published on the 11th of March, 2019
(First Nations Housing, Land Rights & Institutional Violence)

"Currently, in southern Manitoba's Sandy Bay First Nation—a place where winter temperatures often dip below negative 40 degrees Fahrenheit—people are living in rat-infested homes [without heat or reliable electricity](#). [Rampant mold](#) in northern Ontario's Cat Lake First Nation is seriously damaging people's health. In Attawapiskat, some people live in [uninsulated sheds](#). Neskantaga First Nation has had a boil-water advisory for [25 years](#). In Nunavut, tuberculosis infection rates among Inuit are [26 times the national average](#) due to overcrowded housing. Most people can't afford to do better; 80 percent of reserves have median incomes below [Canada's poverty line](#)."

"Not all indigenous people in Canada live on reserves; many have separate land treaties and settlement agreements, while others have yet to reclaim their land. Still, housing shortages are a common problem across most First Nations, Métis, and Inuit territories. This article speaks mainly about First Nations reserves."

"In 1876, the [Indian Act](#) "reserved" Crown-held land for First Nations and took the rest for itself, thus creating a reservation system that to this day prohibits First Nations people from owning land. On-reserve housing policies in the decades that followed further entrenched a welfare system that ultimately [keeps people poor](#)."

"[T]he federal government doesn't really know how to help because housing—like health care and education—is a provincial dossier for non-indigenous Canadians. After years of failed federal projects, First Nations people are clamoring for [greater autonomy](#) and more concrete solutions. Many believe that starts with individual land rights."

"Because First Nations [can't own land](#), they have no assets against which to secure mortgages. That means people who want to build on-reserve homes need to front 100 percent of their building costs—

costs that can surpass normal market value due to the remoteness of many reserves.”

For more on this historically laden issue, please refer to the cited article.
(Lindeman, 2019)



Stanley Park Totem Poles, Vancouver, British Columbia (Photo: Michoff/Pixabay).

What this NDP private member’s bill could mean for Indigenous people in Ontario
Published on the 20th of March, 2019
(Indigenous Rights in Legislation)

“Bill 76 calls for Ontario law to be in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It’s unlikely to pass — but according to these Indigenous experts, the bill serves as an important test for Doug Ford’s government.”

“Ontario’s legislative assembly will consider a familiar question this month: How can we best respect Indigenous rights? On March 6, NDP Indigenous relations and reconciliation critic Sol Mamakwa introduced a private member’s bill — [Bill 76 — which calls for laws in Ontario](#) to be in line with the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). On Thursday, the bill will go to second reading. If it passes, it will then head to committee. (Like the vast majority of private member’s bills, however, Bill 76 is very unlikely to pass.”
(Lewis, 2019)

Push is on to pass Indigenous human rights law before fall election
Published on the 26th of March, 2019
(UNDRIP)

“A proposed new law that would clearly outline the rights of Canada’s Indigenous Peoples is making its way through the senate — and the MP behind the private member’s bill came to Winnipeg Tuesday, hoping to garner support.”

“Bill C-262 would require the federal government to ensure all laws are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or UNDRIP.”

“The declaration recognizes Indigenous Peoples’ basic human rights, as well as rights to self-determination, language, equality and land, among others.”

“In 2016, Canada [officially adopted the declaration](#), almost a decade after it was adopted by the UN General Assembly.”

“Bill C-262 would solidify Canada’s responsibility to follow through on the declaration.”

“The bill has already made it through the House of Commons. If it passes a second reading in the Senate, [Bill C-262](#) will head to a committee, before a final vote in the Senate would make it law.”
(von Stackelberg, 2019)

April

UNDRIP's fundamental flaw

Published on the 2nd of April, 2019

(UNDRIP)

"What to do about the Indians? This question in Canada is as old as this country. Since even before Confederation, colonists have been trying to figure out how to contain and/or reconcile with First Nation people, Metis and Inuit. Given mountains of evidence and corresponding prescriptions of decades of deliberation, there is an irony in the failure by successive Canadian governments and citizens to take any of it seriously."

"The most notable example may be the 440 recommendations of the 1996 [Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#). After more than 20 years, almost none of that groundbreaking, prescriptive work has been implemented (though we did get a National Aboriginal Day out of it)."

"Late last summer, *The Globe and Mail* [reported](#) that since 2015 very few of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action — emerging from another comprehensive study — have been accomplished."

"Then there is the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)."

"Later this year, the declaration — what many consider the pinnacle of Indigenous rights activism in international politics — will turn 12. While it was indeed a significant accomplishment — and still is — the necessary implementation by states, and Canada in particular, follows the stubborn trend of neglecting progressive policy prescriptions regarding relationships with Indigenous people."

"Eleven and a half years and the only real thing we can say about Canada's progress is a remarkable ability to find excuses for its lack of implementation. Consider the conflict at the Unis'tot'en Healing Centre and Gitimt'en Camp, where the RCMP served an injunction supporting the construction of a pipeline on Aboriginal title lands amid the resistance of the Wet'suwet'en hereditary leaders. Where is the concept of free, prior and informed consent — so central to UNDRIP — in this case? It is lost in prime ministerial invocations of "the rule of law."

Hayden King brings forth a strong article addressing the power of the UNDRIP on the global and state levels, while also discussing the power that influenced the creation of the UNDRIP. For more please refer to the full article where King also discusses the history of the UNDRIP.

(King, 2019)

Wet'suwet'en hereditary leaders level human rights complaint during speeches at United Nations forum

Published on the 26th of April, 2019

(GasLink & the United Nations)

"Hereditary chief Na'moks and FredaHuson, longtime spokesperson and resident at the Unist'ot'en camp in Wet'suwet'en territory, made statements to the special rapporteur at the meeting of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York."

"They expressed concern over how tensions between their leadership, Canadian institutions and industry have been playing out in recent years, asking for the UN to take specific action."

"We are troubled by the ongoing trend in Canada that the interests of corporations for natural resource extraction are superseding the rights of Indigenous people on our lands and territories," Na'moks told the rapporteur.

"Na'moks asked the UN to emphasize to Canada the need to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and that states need to recognize the human right of people to peacefully express dissent to activity in their territories without being criminalized."

"The Wet'suwet'en hereditary leadership has long maintained it does not consent to pipelines being built through the traditional territory." (Bellirichard, 2019b).



Members of the RCMP move in to enforce an injunction against Wet'suwet'en people and their supporters on a forest service road in the nation's traditional territory in northern B.C. on Jan. 7, 2019. (Chantelle Bellrichard/CBC)

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United States of America

On the **25/04/2019** Holden Dometrius was arrested in a nonviolent civil disobedience action aimed at stopping the Mountain Valley Pipeline and is facing a felony terrorism charge and other misdemeanors. Since February, activists have been occupying trees in the path of the pipeline route in West Virginia's Jefferson National Forest, where the Mountain Valley Pipeline Company hopes to drill through a mountain directly underneath the Appalachian Trail ⁽¹⁾.

February

Native Hawaiians Divided on Federal Recognition

Published on the 8th of February, 2019

(Recognition)

"The U.S. government acknowledges Native Hawaiians as "a distinct and unique indigenous people with a historical continuity to the original inhabitants" of Hawaii. But Congress has never formally recognized them as it has 573 Native American tribes and nations, and Native Hawaiians have never established a formal government."

"Native Hawaiians today, like Native Americans on the continent, are politically and economically marginalized. Prior to the arrival of Europeans, they numbered up to a million. Today, they represent only about 20 percent of the state's population and experience discrimination, high rates of poverty and homelessness, and disparities in health and longevity."

"The U.S. Civil Rights Commission recently [recommended](#) Congress officially recognize Native Hawaiians, making them eligible for the same government-to-government relationship and benefits given to hundreds of Native American tribes... But many Native Hawaiians reject that idea and say they won't settle for anything less than complete independence and control of more than a million acres of land."

For more on this issue, please refer to the full-length article cited here.

(Hilleary, 2019)

March

For Native Americans, US-Mexico border is an ‘imaginary line’

Published on the 19th of March, 2019

(Freedom of Movement)

“Immigration restrictions were making life difficult for Native Americans who live along – and across – the U.S.-Mexico border even before President Donald Trump [declared a national emergency](#) to build his border wall.”

“The traditional homelands of 36 [federally recognized tribes](#) – including the Kumeyaay, Pai, Cocopah, O’odham, Yaqui, Apache and Kickapoo peoples – were split in two by the [1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo](#) and 1853 [Gadsden Purchase](#), which carved modern-day California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas out of northern Mexico.”

“Today, tens of thousands of people belonging to U.S. Native tribes live in the Mexican states of [Baja California, Sonora, Coahuila and Chihuahua](#), my research estimates. The Mexican government does not recognize indigenous peoples in Mexico as nations as the U.S. does, so there is no enrollment system there.”

“Still, many Native people in Mexico routinely cross the U.S.-Mexico border to participate in cultural events, visit religious sites, attend burials, go to school or visit family. Like other “non-resident aliens,” they must pass through [rigorous security checkpoints](#), where they are subject to interrogation, inspection and [rejection or delay](#).”

“Many Native Americans I’ve interviewed for [anthropological research on indigenous activism](#) call the U.S.-Mexico border “the imaginary line” – an invisible boundary created by colonial powers that [claim sovereign indigenous territories](#) as their own.”

“A [border wall would further separate Native peoples](#) from friends, relatives and tribal resources that span the U.S.-Mexico border.”

For more on this topic refer to the cited article.

(Leza, 2019)



Verlon Jose, vice-chairman of the Tohono O’odham Nation, at the border barrier that traverses the Tohono O’odham reservation in Chukut Kuk, Ariz., in 2017. [Reuters/Rick Wilking](#)

April

Push to Drill in Nevada, a Failure to Consult Native Peoples

Published not he 3rd of April, 2019

(Oil & Mining in Sacred Mountains)

“Plans to lease oil and gas drilling rights near the Ruby Mountains threaten Te-Moak tribe's culture and tradition along with local ecosystems.”

“The Ruby Mountains are a prime summertime destination for anglers and hikers, but for the Te-Moak Tribe of the Western Shoshone, who have called the area home for tens of thousands of years, these are the Duka-Doyamountains.”

“This June the Nevada Bureau of Land Management plans to auction oil and gas leasing rights on 934,244 acres of public lands in the Ruby Mountains area. Long in the works, the lease parcels were formally announced on Feb. 19. In Elko the BLM will offer 49 parcels, comprising 75,005 acres. In the nearby Battle Mountain district, it will lease 123 parcels, amounting to 264,075 acres. The Ely district will see the largest amount leased: 291 parcels totaling 604,164 acres.”

“According to Holley [a tribal chairman], lands included for possible leasing are both within and adjoining the South Fork Band reservation at the foothills of the Ruby Mountains. (The Te-Moak have four bands: the South Fork, Wells, Battle Mountain and Elko colonies.)”

For more on this, please refer to the cited article.

(Higgins, 2019)

Indigenous Peoples of Hawai'i Request Urgent Action from Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Published on the 10th of April, 2019

(Sacred Site)

“Many Kanaka Maoli (Indigenous Peoples of Hawai'i or Native Hawaiians) believe that Mauna Kea, also referred to as Maunakea and Mauna a Wākea (Mountain of the Sky Father), is a sacred structure that functions as a piko (umbilical cord) connecting the Creator to the people of Hawai'i. Mauna Kea is the meeting place of Wākea (Sky Father) and Papahānaumoku (Earth Mother) and thus serves as the convergence point of heaven and earth.”

“[However, a]s of October 30, 2018, Mauna Kea is officially the development site for the [TMT International Observatory Corporation's Thirty Meter Telescope](#). Expected to stand 180 ft (54.9m) high with a diameter of 98 ft (30m) the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) has spurred heated contention from Native Hawaiians who believe the creation of the telescope encroaches on the vitality of the mountain, violates their land rights, will initiate environmental degradation, and severely dismisses Mauna Kea's cultural and religious significance.”

“A combination of litigation, protest, and domestic and international media attention resulted in the Hawai'i Supreme Court's nullification of the 2013 permit on December 2, 2015. Construction of the telescope, which had been impeded throughout the year by protests, legally came to a halt until a new hearing could be scheduled to evaluate the issuance of a new permit. The high court concluded [“BLNR put the cart before the horse when it approved the permit before the contested case hearing.”](#)

“This victory was temporary, however, as October 30, 2018, marked the day that the Hawai'i Supreme Court voted 4-1 in favor of the TMT and permitted the reopening of the site on Mauna Kea for construction. In response to this ruling Scott Ishikawa, a spokesman for TMT [told Hawai'i News Now](#) ‘I think the lesson out of all this is Mauna Kea is everyone's mountain. Everyone wants to keep it special I think and everyone has responsibility for taking care of it’.”

“The Hawai'i Supreme Court's decision also prompted Cultural Survival to assist a coalition of Native Hawaiian organizers to request Early Warning Measures and Urgent Action Procedures by submitting a [report](#) on March 22, 2019, to the United States of America's 98th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) detailing “the discrimination that Native Hawaiians have faced from the State of Hawai'i and the United States of America” as well as the “persistent violations of multiple provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.” Cultural Survival calls for the United States to take immediate action to end this ongoing discrimination in compliance with the declarations established under CERD and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).”

(Martichenko, 2019)

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The Middle East



Palestine

On the **12/01/2019** Nasser Nawaj'ah, a human rights defender and B'Tselem field researcher, was assaulted by an Israeli settler. That morning, Palestinian farmer rang Nasser Nawaj'ah to ask him to accompany him while he ploughed his land in Khirbet Umm al-'Amed, north of a-Samu' and close to the settlement of Otniel. The farmer specifically asked the human rights defender to come to document any possible attacks by settlers. When Nasser Nawaj'ah arrived in Khirbet Umm al-'Amed, he found approximately twenty members of the security forces, these left after approximately 30 minutes. However around midday a man approached him, from the settlement of Otniel, with three dogs which he unmuzzled and had attack Nasser ⁽¹⁾.

On the **07/04/2019**, human rights defender Issa Amro attended the Israeli Military Court in Ofer, where for nearly 7 hours he answered questions regarding the 18 security-related charges pressed against him. The next hearing, for which more witnesses are to be summoned, is scheduled for 26 June 2019. The next day, on 8 April 2019, the human rights defender was arrested by Israeli police for insulting an army commander on social media by posting the conversation that took place between them. During the conversation, the military official accused Issa Amro of "making troubles". The human rights defender was later released on bail pending a court hearing due to take place on 8 April 2020. Issa Amro is a prominent human rights defender and founding member of many non-violent organisations in Hebron who work peacefully against Israeli occupation of the West Bank ⁽²⁾.

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Europe, Turkey & the Russian Federation



Belarus

On the **09/01/2019** Aliaksandr Liauchuk and Milana Kharytonava were fined \$ 1,200 for filming the pigeon feeding in the central square of Bereza. The journalists have been tried several times for filming protests. This time the journalists were tried for covering the protest against the construction of the battery plant. A Chinese corporation is building the battery plant near the city in the free economic zone, Bereza. The iPower company commissioned the project. It is planned that the plant will have a full cycle of production of lead-acid batteries. Residents of the city and surrounding villages believe that the production would harmfully impact their health and the environment. Last year, Liauchuk and Kharytonava were tried six times each; their total fine was over \$ 5,500 ^(1.).

On the **30/01/2019** Yuliya Nichyparuk, one of the protesters protesting against the construction of a battery factory in the city of Bereza, was found guilty of violating the organization of mass events and fined. The city authorities do not authorize protests, therefore the protestors do not make speeches or chant any slogans – they simply feed pigeons or carry balloons. Yuliya was fined for making snowmen; this act was labeled as ‘picketing’ due to the nature of the snowman’s sticker ^(2.).

On the **16/02/2019** environmental activist Vitaly Kazak was arbitrary detained accused of “organizing an unauthorized mass event in an inappropriate location involving a citizen of a foreign state” (Article 23.34 of the Code). The court found him guilty and fined him. In connection to this, and on **the same day**, environmental rights defender and member of the Human Rights Center “Viasna” (HRC “Viasna”), Vladimir Velichkin, was also arrested and harassed. Vladimir was in attendance of the protest and gave an interview to a blogger. The court deemed his interview spread “negativity towards the authorities and attracted the attention of citizens”. It should be noted this is the same protest against the battery plant in Bereza ^(3.).

The next day, on the **16/02/2019**, activist and blogger Alexander Kabanov was arrested at the Bereza railway station, as he was going to join the Sunday’s rally against the battery plant. It has been suggested that his arrest was an attempt to prevent him from joining the rally. Mr. Alexander Kabanov posted on his Facebook page that he was arrested for participating in a rally in Bereza on February 10, 2019. He was brought to Bereza police department and released after questioning on the February 10, 2019 events. The Observatory emphasises that the Belarusian legislation violates the right to peaceful assembly by unjustifiably prohibiting citizens to hold peaceful assemblies without authorisation. In Belarus, the authorities routinely reject requests to hold peaceful assemblies related to practically any human rights or other societal issue, either without providing adequate reason or by referring to the law that requires organisers to ensure first medical aid during the event and to subsequently clean the event venue ^(3.).

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Belgium

January

[Open Letter] Protection International adds its name to the Environmental Defenders Declaration for South East Asia

Published on the 8th of January, 2019

(Protection of Environmental Defenders)

“In August 2018, [Earth Rights Defenders](#), [Not1More \(N1M\)](#) and [Cambodian Youth Network](#) hosted the Forest Defenders Conference in Chiang Mai, Thailand, with more than 90 defenders and allies in attendance.”

“This conference came together as a response to the closing of political space and the growth of impunity in South East Asia. The conference also reflects the frustrations felt by civilians and civil society organisations as defenders in the region face criminalization, violence and threats.”

“The result of this conference was the [Environmental Defenders Declaration for South East Asia](#), a declaration which offers concrete recommendations to governments, the private sector, UN, international finance institutions, and civil society to address the crisis of violence against civilians who take action or resist evictions and dispossession of their lands, forests, seas and rivers.”

“By adding our name to this Declaration, we support the protection of defenders in South East Asia as they campaign to safeguard their communities and environment.”

(Protection International, 2019)

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Finland

January

Finnish gov pulls bill to ratify UN declaration on Indigenous peoples rights

Published on the 25th of January, 2019

(Indigenous Rights)

“The cabinet said on Thursday in a letter to the Parliament that it would withdraw a 2014 bill [intended to ratify an international agreement](#) on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples.”

“Finland has debated the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for roughly 30 years. Lawmakers have been looking at draft legislation to ratify the convention since 2014, but did not get around to debating it before the 2015 parliamentary elections.”

“Progress on the bill has stalled over the contentious issue of Sámi land rights.”

“On Thursday the government justified pulling the draft legislation by saying that it contains outdated provisions, for example, relating to the role of the forestry management agency Metsähallitus. Parliament’s Constitutional Law Committee has already provided a statement on the bill, so it will not be possible to incorporate possible changes before another general election due in April.”

“Once a new government takes office later this year, it will have to work with the Sámi Parliament to revise the previous legislative proposal.”

(YLE News, 2019a)

February

UN Committee blasts Finland over electorate ruling for Sami Parliament

Published on the 2nd of February, 2019

(Sami Rights Ignored)

“A complaint was lodged with the United Nations Human Rights Committee by Tiina Sanila-Aikio, President of the Sami Parliament. She argued that the addition of 93 people to the register in 2015 violated the rights of the Sami as an indigenous people to decide who is a member of their community.”

“The committee agreed, stating in its ruling that the Supreme Administrative Court ‘infringed on the capacity of the Sami people, through its Parliament, to exercise a key dimension of Sami self-determination in determining who is a Sami’.”

“The committee recommended that Finland change the Sami Parliament law to ensure Sami self-determination is fully respected, and that Finland take action to ensure that similar violations don’t occur in the future.”

(YLE News, 2019b)

March

Contesting the Arctic railway

Published on the 13th of March, 2019

(Indigenous Rights & Development)

“The Arctic railway would have opened up the Arctic trade routes and allowed Finland to have a direct connection to central Europe for transport of raw materials. However, a [recent report](#) has brought the project's commercial and ethical viability into question.”

“The report concluded that: ‘A railway project this size is so complex and involves so many stakeholders and factors that in the time and resources given it has not been possible to properly assess all of the issues regarding the Arctic railway project’.”

“The report argues that more planning is needed regarding funding and respecting the rights of the Indigenous people (the Sami) whose land the railway would have to traverse across.”

For more on this topic please refer to the cited documents.

(Waller, 2019)

April

Lapland authorities plan zones for controversial rail line

Published on the 30th of April

(Sami Land Rights)

“The Regional Council, which represents 21 member municipalities, decided to indicate future use of the route, even though at present there are no plans for constructing the rail line, and consultants for Finland’s Ministry of Transport and Communications have [deemed the project economically unviable](#).”

“As envisaged, the line would cut through traditional lands of Finland’s indigenous Sámi people and their northern reindeer herding areas. It has aroused opposition from both the Sámi Parliament and reindeer herding associations along the route.”

“Although the Regional Council of Lapland took into consideration some of the details of Sámi reaction to the idea, it did not drop the Arctic rail line, or the northern route to Kirkenes from land use planning.”

“Referencing a position statement on the issue by the Sámi Parliament, the Regional Council of Lapland pointed out that the Sámi do not have a veto on land use planning, and discussions with the Sámi are not required to lead to agreements or recommendations.”

(YLE News, 2019c)



Five alternative routes were examined in the original Arctic rail line concept study. Map: Yle Uutisgrafiikka

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February

For Christophe Yanuwana Pierre, France must “recognise the distinctive nature of the indigenous peoples of French Guiana”

**Published on the 22nd of February, 2019
(Colonialism & Mining)**

“Twenty-five-year-old Christophe is one of the most media savvy and charismatic figures of the indigenous movement of French Guiana, one of France’s overseas department. Like him, thousands of indigenous people live on this territory on the Caribbean coast, between Suriname (in the west) and Brazil (in the south), controlled by France since its colonisation in the 17th century. Creoles, *Bushinangés*, metropolitans, Cambodians and other communities complete this human mosaic that shook the central

power of Paris during [an historic strike and blockade in the spring of 2017](#). For nearly a month, French Guiana was paralysed as protestors questioned the state and denounced its neglect of public services and infrastructure in the region.”

“As founder and spokesperson of the Native Youth of Guiana (JAG), founded in 2017, mainly active in Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni, west of the department, Christophe Pierre and his companions took part in the protest movement. As well as joining other communities in their global struggles, the young man also has his own battle to fight: for the recognition of his people. Amerindians represent less than 5 per cent (between 6,000 and 10,000 people) of the population of French Guiana. Constantly active, the JAG is currently challenging the Russo-Canadian consortium Nordgold-Columbus (two multinational mining companies) which plans to mine the land where Native American people live. In January, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [called on France](#) to withhold the project while the consent of the indigenous people was collected ‘in accordance with their own institutions and decision-making processes’.”

This is a historical, ongoing, issue. It is recommended that interested parties refer to the full, cited, article and that of similar articles if they show interest in this topic.
(Ramirez, 2019)

April

Historic legal win against corporate bullying in Paris

Published on the 10th of April, 2019

(SOCFIN Bully Loses in Court)

“On 27 March 2019, French corporation [Bolloré lost, on appeal, its defamation case](#) against media outlet France Télévisions, an important win for those who would stand up to corporate bullying. Bolloré initiated proceedings in response to an [award-winning 2016 documentary](#) about Vincent Bolloré, one of the key shareholders of SOCFIN, a European palm oil and rubber company reputed for land-grabbing and violating the rights of communities living near plantations.”

“The documentary revealed the poor living conditions of workers and child labour in the plantations of SOCAPALM, a subsidiary of SOCFIN and the biggest palm oil company in Cameroon. Bolloré claimed the documentary was defamatory and demanded that France Télévisions pay the exorbitant sum of EUR 50 million in damages. Bolloré lost in first instance (TGI de Nanterre, 5 June 2018) in [proceedings that journalists and news outlets claimed were initiated to silence their voices \(FW 232\)](#).”

“The Court of Appeal in Paris (Pôle 2, ch. 7, n° 18/15647) has now agreed, condemning Bolloré for initiating [“abusive proceedings”](#) and ordering EUR 10,000 in damages to the television company.”

“This historic case does more than send a strong signal supporting freedom of the press: it is a notable recognition of the reality on the ground in Cameroon. For nearly a decade villagers living in the shade of SOCAPALM plantations or working for the company have struggled for their rights, urging the company to [respect social and environmental justice and to return their land](#). Synaparcam, a community coalition representing more than 1,200 villagers asks SOCAPALM for inclusive dialogue to address serious concerns about land-grabbing and violations of community rights that often [victimise women](#). A Synaparcam leader testified in Paris both in 2018 and 2019, a courageous act: [his movements were monitored and he was followed](#). Another court case filed by Bolloré in Cameroon is still pending.”

(FERN, 2019)

French retailers failing to comply with due diligence law for soy imports, NGOs say

Published on the 11th of April, 2019

(Soy Production Due Diligence)

“Mighty Earth and French NGOs Nature Environnement and Sherpa have [published the report](#) [in French], which comes two years after the country’s Devoir de Vigilance (duty of vigilance) law was introduced, rating due diligence practices of 20 of the largest soy-consuming companies in France.”

“Carrefour, Danone and Casino were also among those included in the study, which found that several firms had “major gaps in the identification and prevention of risks” in their Latin America supply chains for soy production.”

“Most of the soy imported by European countries is used as livestock feed for meat and dairy production while. Large supermarket chains that sell these products to consumers also bear responsibility for the environmental and social risks present in soy supply chains under the new law.”

“The Devoir de Vigilance, passed in February 2017 and seen as a significant step in strengthening corporate action against deforestation, requires large companies in France to identify and mitigate risks to human rights and the environment in their global supply chains.”

“None of the firms surveyed are conducting satisfactory levels of due diligence when it comes to sourcing soy from countries plagued by high levels of forest loss linked to the commodity, especially Brazil and Paraguay, according to the report.”
(IDM, 2019)

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The Kingdom of the Netherlands

At the beginning of the year the Municipality of the City of Amsterdam forcefully displaced a cultural minority group from their home of 21 years “kick[ing] out the 125 residents of ADM from their homes”. In the events leading up to the eviction the communities lawyer Ms. Electra Leda Koutra, wrote to the Petitions and Inquiries Section of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) describing the case and the relocation plans. There were, and still are, grave concerns over the safety of the area the community has been relocated to. The name itself evokes concern. The terrain, called the sludge-fields, is located in the north of Amsterdam and was an old sewage treatment pool that seems to have been covered by sand.

In response to this concern the OHCHR wrote an interim measure, on the 26th of December 2018, requesting the eviction be delayed by two months to gather more data. The municipal government responded quickly with the decision to go ahead with the eviction. This was followed by another letter, on the 28th of December 2018, reiterating the OHCHR’s recommendation that the eviction be postponed for more dialog and a more suitable alternative to be found. Evidence supports the claims of the ADM residences that the provided terrain is not suitable for living, nor suitable to support the culture and activities of the community. The unique claim to this culture can be found in the academic literature of Dimitris Dalakoglou, Professor of Social Anthropology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. In his work Dalakoglou claims that through the eviction “the destruction of part of the most important tangible heritage of Amsterdam’s counter-cultural living history and ADM’s -as a distinct community of that history” was caused.

The destruction of both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage created by the ADM community could have been avoided if Amsterdam’s municipal government would have only followed the recommendations made by the OHCHR.

The disregard of United Nations interim measures is of concern to CALG. CALG focuses on instances of land grabbing and human rights abuses that stem from land grabbing. Too often do we observe and document governments acting in their own interests or in the interests of businesses. What is often the case in the events documented by CALG is that minority groups are denied rights, land rights, identity rights, and so forth, by governments who act against the recommendations and pleas from the academic community, rights defenders, peace keepers, advocacy groups and the United Nations.

Respect and dialogue between nation states and rights organisations is essential in upholding the rule of law or addressing flaws within the rule of law. By ignoring two interim measures one begins to question whether the Kingdom of the Netherlands, home to the U.N.’s International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court, “takes its obligations under international human instruments very seriously and... highly values the supervisory mechanisms under these instruments.” in regards to housing the ICC and the UN’s International Court of Justice, the Kingdom of the Netherlands should act

as an example to the world and respect the interim measures presented to it.

As a consequence of their actions, “[t]hrough the violent eviction of squatters,... the local authorities... are suppressing social minorities who are not considered culturally and socially mainstream. In so doing they are also destroying the city’s tangible and intangible heritage. These same authorities appear to consider the city’s value in purely economic and monetary terms.” “[T]he set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of... a social group” were destroyed. It is in light of this that CALG has added these events to this edition of the bulletin.

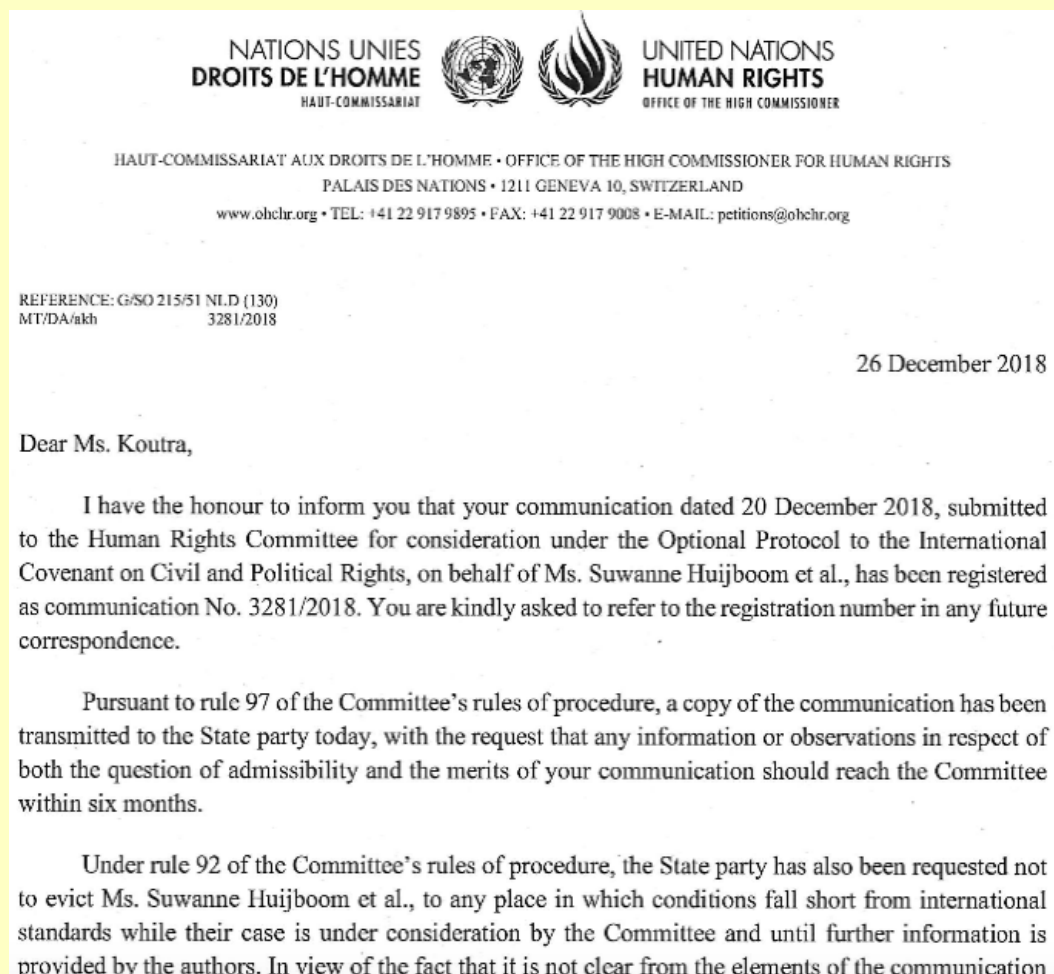
December 2018

**First interim Measure Letter Reference: G/SO 215/51 NLD (130),
Communication: MY/DA/akh 3281/2019
Received on the 26th of December, 2018
(Interim Measure to Prostopone Eviction of Community)**

“Under rule 92 of the Committee’s rules of procedure, the State party has also been requested not to evict Ms. Suwanne Huijboom et al., to any place in which conditions fall short from international standards while their case is under consideration by the Committee and until further information is provided by the authorities.”

Human Rights Committee Special Rapporteurs on new communications and interim measures, Sarah H. Cleveland & Olivier de Frouville, signed the letter.
(OHCHR, 2019)

A snapshot of the original letter sent to the lawyer of ADM.



**To the 60 ADM Residents and users who have seized the UN HCR under the ICCPR and the Optional Protocol
Published on the 28th of December, 2018**

In response to the first Interim measure sent on the 26 December 2019 “the Municipality of Amsterdam declared to [the ADM community] and the press that it is not willing to honour the HRC’s request not to evict the ADM under the circumstances and that it seems to consider the conditions of [the ADM communities] pre-announced treatment as ‘compliant to the international safeguards’.” As a result of this, the communities Human Rights lawyer Ms. Koutra “received another letter from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, by which [they were] informed that the HRC has just reiterated its request for interim measures to the Netherlands, after also having earlier today [28th of December 2018] asked for concrete clarifications within a specified deadline of 2 months.

The exact wording of the aforementioned letter addressed to Ms. Koutra has as follows:

“Dear Madam,

The Petitions Section would like to acknowledge receipt of the additional information you provided which has been shared with the Human Rights Committee. On that basis, the request for interim measures sent on 26 December has just been reiterated. In a correspondence sent a while ago, the Committee is requesting the authorities of the Netherlands to provide it with clarification about the compatibility of the planned evacuation to the sludge fields, at this time of the year, with international standards, addressing in particular concerns raised about soil contamination, lack of adequate heating, the existing capacity of the sanitary infrastructure, the impossibility for those currently living on boats to move them to the new site and the safeguards afforded to unregistered residents. The Committee gave 2 months to the State party to submit this clarification.

In the meantime, the State party was again requested not to evict the authors to the sludge fields or to anyplace else in which conditions fall short of international standards, especially with respect to vulnerable individuals.

Best regards,

Petitions and Inquiries Section

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights”

(ADM Amsterdam, 2018)

**Re CCPR Communication No.3281/2018 Suwanne HUIJNOOM et al. v. the Kingdom of the Netherlands
On the 31st of December, 2018
(Email response from the Kingdom of the Netherlands)**

The Legal Affairs Department International Law Division of the Kingdom of the Netherlands responded to the two interim measures sent forth by the Secretary General (High Commissioner for Human Rights). Stating amongst other things;

“...[T]o the note of the Secretary General (High Commissioner for Human Rights) of 28 December 2018 concerning the above communication, and further to my email of 27 December 2018 to the Petition and Inquiry Section, I have the honour to inform the Committee as follows in response to the request of the Special Rapporteur on New Communications and Interim Measures not to evict the authors to the sludge fields or to any place else in which conditions fall short of international standards, especially with respect to vulnerable individuals.”

“...[T]he Government wishes to emphasize that it takes its obligations under international human instruments very seriously and that it highly values the supervisory mechanisms under these instruments. In the present case before the Committee, however, the Government has difficulty complying with the request of the Special Rapporteur to suspend the eviction of the authors from the ADM-premises for at least two months...”

“Since the municipality takes the interests of the inhabitants of the ADM-premises seriously, In view of the very specific housing situation on the ADM-premises, several alternative locations were discussed and the current location in northern Amsterdam was among those proposed by the inhabitants themselves. In the end, this location was the only option available for the purpose of a two year transition period.”

“Subsequently, the municipality drew up a sanitation plan. The contamination was dealt with in accordance with applicable environmental requirements. Further, the municipality took care of raising the terrain and of services for electricity, water and sanitation, thereby providing as much as possible for comparable (outdoor) conditions.”

(Adhin, 2018)

January

ADM eviction: Amsterdam ignores UN request

Published on the 4th of January, 2019

(Enforced Eviction)

“According to the ADM website, currently the local government officials visit the squatters on daily basis, trying to gain access: so far without luck. The municipality has offered a relocation to a sludge fields, however, this offer was rejected.”

In contrast to the statements made by the Legal Affairs Department International Law Division, the ADM community responded with the following;

“The city claims that the ADM agrees with the forced relocation to the sludge fields, this is a lie”, ADM’s statement reads, “The sludge fields is the only option that the city put on the table. This so called alternative is too small, inaccessible, inadequate and we have to behave like normal peoples. There is no place for the boats. We think that the soil is polluted and is for sure not strong enough, the trailers and other objects are literally sinking in the sludge. The offer of the sludge fields was also never accepted by the ADM. Because of the threat of an eviction, a portion of the ADM residents felt forced to move their belongings to the sludge fields. So the sludge fields are not a voluntary alternative but a forced relocation.”

(Freedom News, 2019)



A member of the ADM community faces the municipal police during the eviction of the unique cultural space.
(Freedom News, 2019)

[Amsterdam] ADM is vandaag ontruimd

Published on the 7th of January, 2019

(Eviction)

On the 7th of January 2019, the Municipal governments of the city of Amsterdam continued with plans to evict the ADM site, which has been occupied for 21 years. 11 people were arrested in an eviction that took almost five and a half hours to complete. 50 people were evacuated from the area.

This eviction took place regardless of the two interim measures, asking the government to postpone the eviction by two months, sent by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human

Rights.

The Municipal government therefore chose to ignore the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteurs and the Secretary General (High Commissioner for Human Rights). (Vriej Bond, 2019)

February

Evicting Amsterdam: Preliminary Report on the Eviction of ADM community and their tangible and intangible heritage
Published February, 2019
(Cultural Heritage Case Against the Eviction of ADM)

“The ADM community is one of the last examples of the vanishing socio-cultural minority of Amsterdam squatters and their unique and endangered free-spaces (vrijplaats), DIY culture and material culture... The political, social and cultural contribution of squatters to the life and the history of Amsterdam cannot be stressed enough, however, since 2010 when squatting was criminalised by the Dutch authorities several police campaigns have systematically persecuted the community and its practices and the size of the group has decreased enormously. Despite all this it is not yet extinct completely”.

“Within the context of their DIY and non-profit cultural principles, ADM and the squatters’ community enrich the life of the fast changing and increasingly commercialised city. In support of the argument about the rapid and ongoing gentrification of Amsterdam, it is perhaps enough to mention that the cost of housing in Amsterdam over the last 5 years has increased by 63,3%. Thus it is safe to assume that entire low-income groups have been and continue to be priced out of the city.”

“The events surrounding the eviction in January 2019 were dramatic on many different levels. Despite the agreements between the community and the authorities to the opposite, the ADM community was not given the time to remove their belongings and the large and heavy art installations, which were swiftly destroyed by bulldozers. Police physically and literally kicked out the 125 residents of ADM from their homes and bulldozers entered immediately destroying the thousands of trees that ADMers had planted, demolished homes and gardens, workshops and facilities and destroyed dozens of large artistic installations that involved years of work and had iconic value for the community and in several cases for the entire city. Thus, in January 2019 during the eviction we witnessed the destruction of part of the most important tangible heritage of Amsterdam’s counter-cultural living history and ADM’s - as a distinct community of that history.”

As Dalakoglou’s “ethnographic work’s initial evidence suggest, the grounds offered as an alternative relocation place (and only for 2 years) can hardly be described as appropriate for human habitation. Certainly, the new location of sludge-fields is not a place the community could possibly keep their distinct material and intangible culture that comprise their identity and help to maintain their daily relationships and activities that binds the community together. It is not a place where they can rebuild a life informed by their shared cultural and social cosmology maintaining their everyday life’s practices and lifestyle in any way similar to the one they had in their previous location. Setting aside the evident environmental hazard that the sludge-field poses to the health and wellbeing of the members of the community, the entire relocation ignores completely the distinct culture and lifestyle of the group and the cultural logics that they represent.”

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity defines culture as “[T]he set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs.”

The Article 2(1) of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (“2003 ICH Convention”) provides the following definition for “intangible culture”:

“[T]he practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”

Dalakoglou concludes that, “Through the violent eviction of squatters, the local authorities in Amsterdam’s recent history are suppressing social minorities who are not considered culturally and



socially mainstream. In so doing they are also destroying the city's tangible and intangible heritage. These same authorities appear to consider the city's value in purely economic and monetary terms. Concessions are made to property developers and speculators and more and more public housing is privatised and commodified."

Please refer to the rest of his work in this regard and his previous work (Dalakoglou, 2018), both of which are cited below.

(Dalakoglou, 2019)

Infrastructure of domestic solidarity: squatting as spatial practice

Published on the 8th of February, 2019

(Eviction & Ignoring the UN Human Rights Council)

"The cultural free-haven ADM (Amsterdamse Droggok Maatschappij), one of the last largest Amsterdam-based self-organised communities with about 100 people of all ages and nationalities, was evicted on 7 January 2019."

"Despite the efforts of their seven lawyers, and all the individuals and organisations who supported their struggle through more than 20 court cases, the last sentence of summer 2018 led to their eviction. The right to property has, this time, prevailed over human rights, environmental protection, and even the series of investigations of corruption associated with the property's owners."

(Verzier, 2019)



Inside one of the unique living spaces in ADM, before the eviction destroyed everything.
Photo: Johannes Schwartz

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Norway

February

Norway's wealth fund ditches 33 palm oil firms over deforestation

Published on the 28th of February, 2019

(Palm Oil)

"Norway's US\$1 trillion (RM4 trillion) sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, has pulled out of more than 33 palm oil companies over deforestation risks over the last seven years, a green group said today."

"Norway's Government Pension Fund Global (GPF), which released its annual report yesterday, sold stakes in more than 60 companies due to deforestation — including 33 firms involved in palm oil — Rainforest Foundation Norway said."

(FMT, 2019)

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The Russian Federation

February

Reindeer under fire in Sámi lands

Published on the 19th of February, 2019

(Indigenous Rights)

"The Sámi, an indigenous people living in the Murmansk region, have made an appeal to the Russian president to protect its ancestral lands from VIP hunters. A telegram was sent to the Kremlin on January 28 and a copy went to the regional governor. Residents of the villages of Krasnoshchele and

Kanevka are complaining about the regional ministry of nature for basically donating the traditional migration grounds of the domestic reindeer herds for use as a hunting ground for Belgorod entrepreneur Alexander Orlov, owner of the “Yasni Zory” brand and numerous other hunting grounds. Orlov, known as the “Chicken King” is ranked 198th in the Forbes Russian rating and his fortune last year was estimated at half a billion dollars.”

“The disputed 727 sq/km territory is in the southern part of the Lovozero region along the Ponoï River and borders with the regional nature reserve. This is where the Sámi and Komi-Izhmians live in close proximity. On January 16, the ministry leased the land to the non-commercial partnership “BEZRK Hunting Club” for 30 years. The founder of the club is Orlov and the club is registered in the Vvedensky Belgorod region.”

“According to local residents, Orlov is a frequent hunting guest in the region and has allegedly been sited for poaching. There are no official confirmations for this such as any official written protocols but according to the local residents’ version of the story, this is probably because the Ministry of Nature and for the hunting inspectorate have always accompanied Mr. Orlov on his hunting trips.”

For more on this topic please refer to the cited article.

(Britskaya, 2019)

April

Indigenous Arctic Population Accuses Russian Authorities of Rights Violations

Published on the 1st of April, 2019

(Land Conflict & Hunting)

“An indigenous population of Russia’s Far North has appealed to the United Nations with claims that Russian authorities violated their rights by giving their historic land to a hunting club.”

“In a letter to the UN, the Sami people accused the Murmansk region’s administration of violating their indigenous rights by giving away land that is traditionally used for reindeer pastures, the investigative Novaya Gazeta newspaper [reported](#) on Friday.”

“The indigenous group invited experts from the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to visit their district and help establish a dialogue between the Sami and local authorities, Interfax [reported](#) on Monday.”

“The Sami had unsuccessfully lobbied President Vladimir Putin to intervene in the land transfer, Novaya Gazeta [reported](#) in February.”

(The Moscow Times, 2019)

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Scandinavia

April

Scandinavia's Sami struggle with suicide, worsened by climate change

Published on the 7th of April, 2019

(Suicide Rate amongst Indigenous Sami)

“Sami people, like other Arctic indigenous populations, have long struggled with high suicide rates, but the impact of global warming is worsening the problem, young Sami members said on Friday at a meeting of indigenous youth hosted by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).”

“The traditional way of life herding reindeer is under pressure, as rising temperatures threaten the



size of the herds and cause financial woes, they said.”

"Adding to the money troubles, the fear of being the last bearers of a fading culture has instilled pessimism in many young Sami," said Ida Ophaug, a 26-year-old a member of Scandinavia's indigenous Sami people. "You have the weight of the heritage that you are carrying after your parents and grandparents,... Many people feel the pressure of that".

"An estimated 80,000 Sami live in the northern lands of Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia, where reindeer herding has been the cornerstone of their culture and livelihood."

"But less chilly winters mean less snow and more rain that can freeze into ice, making it harder for reindeer to reach the plants they need to eat. Some reindeer starve, and females often give birth to stunted young."

Please refer to the full article for more.

(Bacchi, 2019)

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Turkey

On **12/02/2019**, Istanbul's 29th High Criminal Court sentenced Hanifi Barış to 1 year and 8 months in prison on the charge of "terrorist propaganda." His sentence was suspended and he will not be given a criminal record provided that he is not convicted of another crime within the next five years. The human rights defender remains under a travel ban ^(1.).

On the **21/02/2019**, the 7th Criminal Court of First Instance of Diyarbakır acquitted Nurcan Baysal of "inciting the public to hatred and enmity" charge. The acquittal decision is final. Nurcan Baysal was facing up to three years in prison on a charge of "inciting people to hatred and enmity" for her anti-war tweets about Turkey's military offensive in Afrin, Syria, based on the Article 216 of the Turkish Penal Code ^(2.).

On the **25/02/2019** Prof. Zübeyde Füsün Üstel's 1 year and 3 months prison sentence was upheld. The human rights defender was convicted based on charges of disseminating "terrorist propaganda" for signing a petition drafted in January 2016 by Academics for Peace, calling for a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the mostly Kurdish-populated southeastern provinces ^(3.).

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The United Kingdom

April

Britain's Charity Regulator Is Formally Investigating WWF Over Alleged Human Rights Abuses **Published on the 3rd of April, 2019** **(WWF Crimes Against Humanity)**

In relation to the BuzzFeed articles cited above that investigated and reported on serious abuses committed by WWF funded forces on indigenous peoples.

“The UK Charity Commission has opened a formal investigation into the World Wide Fund for Nature after BuzzFeed News [revealed](#) the charity is implicated in human rights abuses against indigenous people.”

“BuzzFeed News [reported](#) in March that WWF funds, equips, and works directly with paramilitary forces that have been accused of beating, torturing, sexually assaulting, and murdering scores of people.”

“A spokesperson for the Charity Commission said that, “following reports relating to World Wide Fund for Nature International, we opened a regulatory compliance case” into the charity’s UK branch.”

“The investigation will examine whether WWF UK conducts proper due diligence to ensure that the grant money it sends overseas does not contribute to violence.”

(Warren & Baker, 2019)

Ahead of Supreme Court ruling in human rights case against mining company, UK NGOs and unions call for new law to curb multinationals’ global abuses **Published on the 10th of April, 2019** **(UK Multinationals Evade Responsibility)**

“Campaigners are calling on the UK government to close legal loopholes that allow British multinationals to evade responsibility for human rights abuses and environmental damage linked to their international subsidiaries and supply chains.”

“21 human rights, environmental and development NGOs, the UK’s biggest union and the TUC are calling for legislation to require firms to take action to prevent abusive practices and environmental damage, and to make it easier to hold them to account in court when they fail to act.

8. [Read the full campaign statement](#)

“The call for action comes as the UK’s highest court issues its ruling in a human rights case brought by 1,800 Zambian villagers against mining giant Vedanta. The villagers claim that a copper mine operated by the firm’s Zambian subsidiary has contaminated their water and land, causing them to fall sick and lose their crops. The Supreme Court will rule on whether the UK parent company can arguably be held responsible for the harm caused by the operations of its subsidiaries.”

The court case is ongoing and the Supreme Courts Decision
(FPP, 2019)

UK Supreme Court clarifies issues on parent company liability in Lungowe v Vedanta **Published in April, 2019** **(Supreme Court Decision)**

“**Case reference:** Vedanta Resources Plc and Konkola Copper Mines Plc (Appellants) v Lungowe and Ors. (Respondents) [2019] UKSC 20”

“This landmark judgment from the UK Supreme Court means that the claim brought by 1,826 Zambian villagers against UK-based Vedanta and its Zambian subsidiary KCM can proceed to a trial of the substantive issues in the English courts. One of the issues that now falls to be examined is the controversial question of whether a parent company can be liable for the operations of its subsidiary, in the English courts.”

Please refer to the cited link for more information on the landmark case.
(Cowley, Stebbing, Neely & Kennedy, 2019)



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