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Honduras: Indigenous Organizations declare themselves on Alert and ready to Mobilize

- Call a Constituent Assembly of Indigenous and Black Peoples.
- Demand the immediate legal recognition of their land

Servindi, October 10, 2010 - Indigenous organizations of the Tuluapanes, Pech, Miskitos, Maya-Chortis, Lencas and Garífunas peoples signed a declaration indicating that they are on alert and ready to mobilize to defend their land, rejecting the river concessions and reaffirming their world view.

"Given the persistent opinion that we, the indigenous peoples, are opposed to development, we would like to state that this is totally false and that the environmental crisis, which our planet is facing, requires immediate discussions to be held regarding the development model imposed and the consequences of the excessive use of hydrocarbons," as per the representatives of the seven indigenous organizations.

The meeting held on October 2 and 3 in the community of Sambo Creek brought together members of the Honduran Black Fraternal Organization, the Maya Chorti Indigenous Council of Honduras, the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras, among others.

The indigenous representatives accused the nation-state and the Honduran elite of carrying out a constant offensive against their peoples as of the coup that took place on June 28, 2009, "with the objective of strengthening the Panama Puebla Plan (renamed the Mesoamerica Project) and the Mérida Initiative (local version of the Colombia Plan)."

According to leaders, these measures constitute strategies implemented by international bodies to take over rivers, forests and energy resources that form part of their habitats.

"The recent concession of forty-one river basins for the construction of dams, on which the communities were not consulted, serves as proof," according to the Association of Indigenous Tribes of Montaña de la Flor, the Federation of Pech Tribes of Honduras, the Organization of Miskitas Women and the Federation of the Miskito People, which also signed the declaration.

Violation of Basic Rights

The document signed by the seven indigenous organizations of Honduras seriously questions the lack of respect for human rights on the part of government entities, which causes detriment to indigenous peoples.

"The violation of the right to consultation of the indigenous peoples has been denied by the state of Honduras, which signed and ratified Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, legal instruments that give us such right," they indicate.

Furthermore, they consider the following initiatives to be excluding and detrimental: the National Plan of the current administration, the concession of river basins granted by the Honduran Congress, the creation of the "Secretariat for the Development of Indigenous and Afro-Honduran Affairs" and the displacement due to territorial pressures.



Indigenous leaders indicated the following: "We emphasize our status as indigenous peoples and not as ethnic minorities as we are referred to by the nation-state and the media, a stereotype that denies our historical rights as peoples, converting us into simple ethnic minorities without any rights."

Mobilization and Legal Recognition

Indigenous representatives told their peoples "to be on the alert and ready to mobilize" in order to demand the restoration of their rights such as the legal recognition of their territories and access to land titles.

They agreed not only to promote coordination with indigenous women in order to generate the proposal of the popular constituent, but to also encourage a national meeting with indigenous and black women in March and May 2011.

Likewise, the creation of an Indigenous and Black Peoples Watch of Honduras, which will ensure the defense and enjoyment of their basic rights, is also expected.

Traducción para Servindi de Sylvia Fisher

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