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“We don’t need oil companies here in our communities”

Photo: Goldamn Environmental Prize.

- Indigenous leader Ruth Buendia, Goldman Environmental Prize winner, speaks loud and clear.

Servindi, 18 February, 2015.- Although Pluspetrol announced its withdrawal of the Pichanaqui district in the central jungle, there are some voices to take into account when analyzing the case. One of those is Ruth Buendia, president of the Central Ashaninka of Rio Ene (CARE), who once again expressed her opposition to the presence of oil companies in lot 108.

Speaking to Servindi, the leader said that the lot was concessioned without complying with prior consultation as provided by ILO Convention 169 and ratified by Peru.

“The Ashaninka people of the Ene River disagrees with the bidding process of the Lot 108, and have always said that the lot has not been consulted”, she affirmed.

On Monday, February 9th, there were violent clashes between residents and police officers in Pichanaqui, west of Satipo, Chanchamayo province, Junin Department.

The clashes left one dead and dozens seriously injured. The protests were called by the Environmental Defense Front of Pichanaqui.

In this regard, the leader explained that she did not support the protest because of the fear that there were members of the political movement who call themselves "etnocacerista" behind it.

On the other hand, Buendia disagreed with some of the actions taken by the protesters, such as blocking roads and bridges.

“We have to be careful. It is true that we have an anti-oil position, but that does not mean we agree with the groups who have acted in the protest”, she stated.

The rainforest does not have to rely on oil

Ruth Buendia, an indigenous leader recognized with several awards for her work in defense of the environment, said that the central jungle does not have to depend on the oil industry.

“There are other ways to achieve development in our communities. There are State programs, local government, regional (...) we don’t need oil companies here in our communities”, she added.

“We just have to invest a little more in the central jungle, supporting agriculture, introducing solar panels, providing safe water (...) promoting tourism. We need to empower our people ... so we can achieve development”, Buendia stated.

She argued that she does not believe in what the company says that it always brings development.

The Ashaninka leader said that she has witnessed how the entry of oil companies into the indigenous communities divides families.

Finally, she expressed her distrust of the indigenous movement organizations that signed



agreements with the oil company Pluspetrol and for that reason cannot oppose to their activities.

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