
BACKGROUND

Mining companies are being welcomed into Central America by the governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua for the economic opportunities they seem to offer. However, the Ellacurians tell us they and other citizens fear for their communities, their land, their farms, their water supply and their environment in general.



A report from Oxfam America by Al Gedicks tells us that the most profitable method used to extract gold and other metals is through open pit mining. This is an environmentally disastrous technique where large quantities of rock are blasted, bulldozed, and pulverized so that the metals can be extracted using cyanide and other toxic chemicals. Then a heap leaching process involves open air spraying of ores, sometimes piled 200 feet high over several hundred acres, with cyanide solution. The solution dissolves the metals as it seeps through on its way to a collection pond. The resulting cyanide pollution is extremely poisonous for people, plants, and wildlife.

The Ellacurians and other local farmers fear that the result of the process will pollute local water supplies with arsenic and cyanide and devastate local agriculture and fisheries as cyanide-based gold mining has already done in neighboring Guatemala and Honduras.

ACTION

Our sisters and brothers in Ellacuria ask that we join them in objecting to the extraction of gold and other metals from their land and around Chalatenango, where Ellacuria is located. They ask us to advocate by contacting our government representatives and the Salvadoran Government.

(See sample letter on reverse side.)



SAMPLE LETTER (Write or call any one or a combination of the following)

<p>President Bush The White House Washington, D.C. 20500 Phone: (202) 456-1414 Fax: (202) 456-2461</p>	<p>Senator Kohl 330 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510-4903 Phone: (202) 224-5653 Fax: (202) 224-9787</p>	<p>Senator Feingold 506 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510-4904 Phone: (202) 224-5323 Fax: (202) 224-2725</p>	<p>Representative Sensenbrenner 2449 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515-4905 Phone: (202) 225-5101 Fax: (202) 225-3190</p>
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Dear _____

I am writing to express my concern that metallic mineral mining in El Salvador will do irreparable damage to the land, the people, and to other vital development plans such as agriculture and ecotourism. Mining activities are being promoted by the Salvadoran government particularly in the northern region including the states of Santa Ana, Chalatenango, Cabanas, San Miguel, Morazan and La Union.

Through a sister community in Chalatenango, I have learned that there is a strong groundswell of local opposition to these mining incursions. Debris from planned open pit mines, as well as cyanide and other toxic chemicals used in leaching out the metals, will directly threaten homes and property, pollute water supplies, contribute to deforestation, and devastate local agriculture and fisheries. The people of those threatened areas have registered their opposition in peaceful ways.

I want you to know of my concern, and I ask you to communicate with President Antonio Saca, as well as with Yolanda Mayora de Gavidia, Ministra de Economia de El Salvador, and Hugo Barrera, Ministro de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales. Encourage them to listen to their citizens in that area and stop the granting of licenses to mine gold and other minerals.

It seems to me this is a matter of human rights as well as human development for the people in that area, including our friends in Chalatenango. Thank you.

Name, address and phone.

You may also fax your messages to:

Antonio Saca, Presidente de El Salvador - Fax: (011) 503-2243-7857 OR (011) 503-2243-9930;
 Yolanda Mayora de Gavidia, Ministra de Economia de El Salvador, Fax: 011-503-2221-2797
 OR mdsoriano@minec.gob.sv., and Hugo Barrera, Ministro de Media Ambiente y Recursos
 Naturales, Fax: 011-503-2267-9420 OR comunicaciones@marn.gob.sv.)