

Swiss Mining Corporations in Flagrant Violation of Human Rights - Swiss Government Complicit

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Violent attacks have been carried out by the copper mining giant Glencore's security forces and Glencore-contracted national police on defenseless women and even children, on the poorest of the poor segment of Peru's population. Glencore, is a Swiss registered Anglo-Swiss mining corporation, exploiting mineral resources in developing countries around the globe, where they pay almost no taxes, as their profit center is in Switzerland, in Baar, Canton Zug, one of the Cantons, that has the lowest tax rates in Switzerland.

In addition, none of the socioenvironmental standards, to protect the environment and the local communities, are generally applied in developing countries. In the specific case of Peru, local laws are totally ignored. In fact, never mind Peruvian laws, they are like non-existent for the corporate world; they are simply bought. Never mind Glencore's own "Due Diligence" rules, they are not respected in a country so corrupt, where laws, judges, lawyers, police, politicians – and even medical facilities are bought.

Above Espinar, on about 4,000 to 4,200 m elevation, Glencore operates open pit copper mining complexes, Tintaya and Antapaccay ("Antapaccay" was a Peruvian mining company bought by Glencore in 2013). The mine is also yielding gold (copper and gold usually go together), at the tune of some 221,000 tons of copper and 115,000 Troy ounces of gold per year (Troy ounce = 31.1 grams). Both figures are for 2016. To do so, Glencore moves some 80,000 to 100,000 tons of earth and rock per day.



Source: www.glencoreperu.pe

An adjacent new mining area, Coroccohuayco, is being explored for continuous exploitation as the current mine is approaching its end. The capacity of this mining complex is estimated at 20 to 30 years, about two and a half generations of rural dwellers will be exposed to this horrendous Glencore atrocities and injustice, if nobody takes actions in their defense. Plus, after the mine is fully exploited, the miners usually packs up and leave – leaving an environmental disaster of poisoned soil and water – what's left of it – behind. Restauration of such huge areas of mining ruins can take hundreds, if not thousands of years.

Glencore, with a total production of 1.23 million tons (2016) is the world's third largest copper producer, employing some 55,000 people in 30 countries. According to *MarketWatch*, Glencore's profit for 2017 registered a massive increase to \$5.78 billion, from \$1.38 billion in 2016 (compared to the Swiss food Giant, Nestlé, with CHF 8.3 billion, or US\$ 8.6 billion, equivalent – 2017).

Glencore would have no shortfall of money to respect socioenvironmental laws, which includes compensating local communities for confiscated land and water, for avoiding deadly contamination of water and soil, spreading into human and animal bodies, causing countless deaths. They have plenty of means to take such protective measures. But it's obviously cheaper and less cumbersome to corrupt Peruvian authorities, so that nobody dares opening their mouth and speaking up in front of such abuse. Local authorities are all afraid or bought, or both.

Anti-mining riots in 2012, when the new pits "Antapaccay" opened, caused 3 deaths and more than 100 injured. The mayor, who supported the protesting campesinos was temporarily jailed. Peruvian central government authorities have taken full position in favor of the mining corporations; and this throughout the country, where similar disasters are repeated – no respect for local communities, force-expropriating them, poisoning their waters and soil with toxic heavy metals – mercury, cyanite, cadmium, arsenic and others, causing slowly countless deaths and destroying the landscape, water and soil.



Source: EJAtlas

Arriving in Espinar in the early morning hours of 4 April, we were hit by the news of violent physical aggressions having been perpetuated by Glencore's security forces and hired national police, on destitute defenseless, unarmed women around noon the day before, 3 April. This happened when the men were out working either at the mine or in the fields, eking out a modest living for their families.

The mine is surrounded by some 6 mountain communities of an average of 1,200 people. None of them have running water or electricity. They are extremely poor and would fall way below the World Bank standard of extreme poverty (less than US\$ 1 / day). The community that was attacked has a well and a close-by small river which the mine wants for refining purposes and for diversion to other mining communities where water had already been stolen. There was not even an attempt of negotiating compensations. A local leader, advised about the violence, reached the community towards the end of the assault and took video testimonies of the beaten women.

In an exercise of intimidation, the assault was executed by some 30 to 50 Glencore security forces and hired police. The police were equipped with government provided riot gear. They were beating down on the totally vulnerable women with their typical police batons. In one case, four men grabbing a 65-year-old woman, beating her almost to death. A bulldozer was ready to destroy their modest stone shacks. While one house was already destroyed about two weeks ago, thanks to the protesting women and the village men that eventually came to their rescue, it didn't happen this time.

We met with activists, including the former mayor of Espinar. They all confirmed the Glencore assault. Then we went to the mining area, surrounded by small impoverished farmer communities. We met with the women who told us in tears what happened, showing their bruises all over their bodies – crying. The elderly 65-year-old woman was so badly beaten, she almost died. She was laying in her rickety stone hut that was earlier demolished and shakily rebuilt, moaning from pain, possibly with several broken ribs, no medication and no medical attention. Her situation is highly precarious. In addition to her state of health, her stone hut could collapse at any moment from the tremors of the daily mining explosions.

This bullying campaign is by no means new. It's a common practice, as was confirmed by former mine workers and farm laborers of the area. Glencore wants to expropriate the peasants without compensation, because they want their water. Mining needs a huge amount of water to the detriment of the population – and Glencore doesn't pay a penny for the water they consume and pollute with toxic heavy metals. Glencore doesn't even offer the peasants alternative housing and living areas. – The women attempted to file complaints with the local police – but the police refused to even hear them. Of course, they are paid and fully under Glencore's control.

Other leaders and activists told us about their health situation. How people die like flies from cancer around them and living in the vicinity of the mine – even if they are not directly working for the mine – water, earth and vapor contamination of the air they breathe, is so toxic, affecting every living being in the surrounding area, eventually dying a slow death.

Corruption is almost unimaginable. Glencore buys literally not only all police, lawyers, judges, politicians, but also medical doctors, clinics, laboratories in the vicinity. Two community inhabitants told us how already three months ago they were giving blood and urine samples to be tested for heavy metals. The analysis results have not been returned yet – and will probably never be handed out to the victims, as they would reveal the heavy intoxication. One of them said under tears that he had lost one of his sons (31) to mine-induced cancer.



Source: teleSUR

According to them, a similar fate afflicts a number of other inhabitants living in the zone. Some 1,200 victims suffer from various heavy-metal related diseases, mostly in their lungs and joints, extreme tiredness, memory loss and lack of concentration. Heavy metals accumulate in the body and are known to affect the nervous system. Several of the people interviewed said they and many of their neighbors and friends were resigned to simply die without any help.

Not only does Glencore not provide for medical assistance, but mine workers are hired from other regions of Peru. When they get sick, protest or die they are immediately 'repatriated' to their home region, so as not to cause havoc in the Espinar vicinity. Hence, it follows Glencore's unethical logic: They pay doctors, clinics and labs not to reveal the level of toxins

they discover in the victims' bodies.

According to testimonies from several inhabitants of the region, including the ex-mayor of Espinar, mental retardation of children and other birth defects are increasing exponentially since Glencore first started operating in 2006 under Xstrata which later merged with Glencore.

The Swiss Government is fully aware of and consequently complicit with these corporate crimes. They know what is going on outside the Swiss borders – inside of which the same corporations would have to adhere to strict rules and follow the rule of law. About four years ago, a Swiss parliamentary delegation visited the Glencore site in Espinar. The visit was announced much in advance, so that Glencore had plenty of time to “clean up”, getting rid of potentially protesting voices. The delegation met with the then mayor, who worked in defense of the people and who gave the Swiss parliamentarians a dose of reality. Nevertheless, the delegation was wined and dined during two days by Glencore. The report back to Parliament was accordingly benign.

When recently approached on another case of flagrant mining abuse, including child work, prostitution and drug trafficking – in this case goldmining related to Metalor in Rinconada, near Puno, Peru – representatives of the Swiss Foreign Ministry's Ethics Office simply said they had nothing to do with this case. Each one of these companies observed their “Due Diligence” and the government trusts them to adhere to their own standards. In case they wouldn't, it was up to the host government where they work, i.e. Peru, to hold them responsible. Period.

That's the noble stand of the Swiss authorities, who know very well that in Peru, like in many other countries where these Swiss-registered corporations operate, corruption is so rampant, that they buy themselves out of every crime, including homicide caused by intoxication of heavy metals from their mining operations. After all, Switzerland like other countries, have diplomatic representations in almost all countries, reporting back home on the state of their host country.

It is not widespread knowledge among the Swiss people, that the highest echelons of the Swiss Government meet regularly with CEOs of key corporations to discuss Switzerland's future finance and economic policies. This may be common practice also in Germany, France and other EU countries – typical for neoliberal economies, that big business decide on the economic fate of the people.

Switzerland is the only OECD country where parliamentarians are allowed to sit in as many Boards of Directors of the business and finance sectors as they please. It is a virtually built-in lobby. This accepted inherent conflict of interest is diagonally opposed to the democratic principles of which Switzerland boasts itself as being a model.

Switzerland has long seized being the Switzerland where I was born. I feel deep pain for the peasant women living in the area of the Glencore exploited mine, the victims of Glencore's abject and shameless human rights abuses, and for other sufferers of unethical corporate misconduct.

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