



"Defending Commons' Land and ICCAs" May/(June first week) 2016 CALG Bulletin



This Nov. 11, 2014 file photo shows a deforested area dotted with blue tarps, marking the area where miners reside, and craters filled with water, caused by illegal gold mining activities, in La Pampa, in Peru's Madre de Dios region. AP Photo/Rodrigo Abd, File

Dear Friends and supporters,

In this May edition we are covering eight Asian and Pacific regions: **Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Taiwan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, and New Zealand**, five Latin America nations: **Peru, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, Argentina**, three African nations: **Kenya, Uganda, Liberia and Ethiopia** and North America (**United States and Canada**).

A selection of interesting articles is found in our **General Topics** section. One of them is an update on the **UN two-week long conference "Indigenous Peoples: Conflict, Peace and Resolution."** in New York on May 20, which ended with a resounding call for greater participation in the United Nations and in UN bodies by some of the world's most neglected minorities who are increasingly victims of armed conflicts, corporate greed and rising economic inequalities. Particularly, these include indigenous people caught in crossfire in

current and past armed conflicts in Colombia, India, Myanmar, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Guatemala and Peru.

Another important article discusses how **Europe's biofuel consumption is hurting the climate, not helping it**. Transport & Environment has [crunched the data](#) from a recent and comprehensive [study](#) on biofuel emissions ordered by the European Commission. It concluded that by 2020, the EU's transport emissions will have increased by 3,5% due to biofuel consumption, not decreased. For example, **biodiesel made from palm oil emits three times as much CO2 as fossil diesel** because it displaces agriculture into tropical forests and peat lands. Ending biofuel mandates would provide a general impetus to the European economy, not harm it.

To begin with, we would like to bring to your attention to **the Philippines**, where human rights issues are being amply discussed, especially with the reference to some recent statement allegedly being made by new incoming President Rodrigo Duterte. Local press agencies have reported that during an interview, Duterte said that many slain journalists in the Philippines had been corrupt and had "done something" to warrant being killed. **"Just because you're a journalist you are not exempted from assassination if you're a son of a bitch,"** said Rodrigo Duterte. Such statements are creating worries amongst civil society, especially in consideration of the fact that the Philippines ranks as the second-deadliest country for journalists. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists: **at least 75 journalists have been killed since 1992**. Only on 27 May another journalist, Alex Balcoba, was [fatally shot](#) in Manila, <http://www.manilatimes.net/sketch-of-journalists-killer-released/265308/>

Negative Human Rights records for Philippines continue to raise serious concerns amongst international organizations. On 18 May 2016, the **UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT)** urged the Philippines to immediately close all "secret places" of detention where people, including **children, are routinely subject to torture**. It also called for the age of criminal responsibility to be kept at 15 years of age, urging the Government to drop a bill aimed at lowering it. However, since the UN review, the newly elected president, Rodrigo Duterte seems to have made public statements at odds with UNCAT recommendations, hence generating concern among human rights activists.

Duterte also wants to push for a **federal system of government**, but according to representatives of the indigenous peoples of the Cordillera, this would not necessarily benefit the indigenous communities. In fact Abigail Anongos, secretary-general of the **Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA)**, said that regional autonomy being pushed by politicians, would be merely "bureaucratic decentralization and devolution of powers." Instead, it would be more desirable to have a genuine regional autonomy under which the IPs in the regions, would get full recognition and respect for their socio-political system.

Moving further south from the Cordillera into the island of Mindanao, abuses against indigenous people continue unabated. A US-based advocacy group has recently asked **Secretary of State John Kerry** to call out the Philippine government for allegedly **abusing laws against human trafficking to harass lumad leaders** and supporters involved in helping indigenous people against military abuses. Furthermore, the **Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)** has expressed deep concern about the very recent **harassment of an indigenous community of Higaonon** by members of the 23rd Infantry Battalion in Agusan

del Norte. Since 28 April 2016, the Higaonon ethnic minority has been harassed due to conflict between the Armed Forces and the rebels.

Only yesterday, June 5, forty-five (45) Higaonon families composed of 217 individuals decided to leave their homes in Sitio Camansi, Brgy. Banglay in Lagonglong, Misamis Oriental due to heavy military presence. We will be circulating a separate alert on this.

Not only upland indigenous communities have found themselves trapped between armed conflicts but also sea-based indigenous groups such as the **Badjao**, generically known as 'sea gypsies'. According to Carlos Conde of Human Rights Watch, **the 2013 armed encounters with government troops and MNLF killed nearly 200 people, and displaced more than 100,000 residents**, destroyed thousands of homes. The authorities, with little or no genuine [consultation](#), forcibly moved the Badjao inland from their homes along the coast, despite their traditional occupation as fishermen.

In the Philippines, mining companies that had been placed on hold due to communities' resistance and advocacy campaigns are now being 'revived'. This is the case of the controversial **Ipilan Nickel**, which might soon resume activities in the forested municipality of **Brooke's Point in Palawan**, with very adverse consequences for the local Pala'wan indigenous communities. The same applies to **Zambales**, where the Supreme Court has reversed the Court of Appeals' issuance of a *writ of kalikasan* or environmental protection against **LNL Archipelago Minerals Inc. (LAMI)**, a metallic ore miner accused of violating mining and forestry laws by leveling a "mountain" to build a port in Sta. Cruz, in 2012. The so-called *writ of kalikasan* is a legal remedy, which generally orders the adverse party to cease and desist from questioned activities and restore the damaged environment.

In nearby **Malaysia**, Comango, a group of 54 NGOs have shown concern over **a regression in human rights standards nation-wide**. In spite of harsh foreign critique of massive expansion of industrial agri-business in the Eastern state of Sarawak, the Minister of Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Economy, Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas, has announced a new master plan for oil palm and rubber industries. **"On oil palm, Sarawak is the new frontier, especially with its huge tract of native Customary Rights (NCR) land,"** he said, adding that by end of last year, some 1.4 million hectares had been cultivated and the target was to extend it to **two million hectares by 2020**. Uggah is also happy to note that the Federal Government had approved a fund of RM456.9 million to the Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority to develop both commodities.

While the Sarawak government seems to be determined to go ahead with its reckless expansion of industrial agribusiness, the sacrifice of local indigenous activists struggling for the remaining forest is being internationally recognized. Recently, **Switzerland has honored two Sarawak activists** with the Bruno Manser Prize for Moral Courage. They were Komeok Joe and Peter Kallang and were chosen for their outstanding commitment in defending indigenous rights.

News from **Indonesia** reveal that, in **Kalimantan**, the Indonesian government is **putting the blame on traditional farmers (mainly indigenous peoples) for some of the fires that have devastated the province**. As a result, the government is launching a two-month pilot project to be led by the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. This will see the direct engagement of agro-industrial companies, which would be training farmers on modern farming techniques and basic fire fighting. The companies will also give them machinery to

clear land. The companies should persuade such communities from abandoning their customary traditional swidden practices through monetary rewards. Villages will get 100 million rupiah towards infrastructure, if they complete a year without any burning. Again, the adverse consequences on this plan on indigenous identity, cultural practices, seed selection and maintenance of traditional crop varieties can be easily predicted.

While this hypocritical project is being launched, a member of the House of Representatives (DPR) has recently revealed that in **Central Kalimantan at least 1.5 million hectares of land owned by three crude palm oil (CPO) producers have been illegally used as palm fields**. Specifically, three companies have been suspected to have illegally converted some 40,000 hectares of forest reserves into palm fields. Daniel said on May 26, 2016. "This can be seen from satellite imagery.

Meanwhile, environmental plunder by oil palm plantations continue unabated in the Indonesian province of West Papua. New research has, in fact, suggested that one of Indonesia's largest conglomerates, the **Salim Group**, has likely acquired four palm oil concessions in West Papua using a complex network of shared directorships and offshore companies. IndoAgri is the third-largest private producer of crude palm oil and while other major producers, such as **Wilmar** and **Sinar Mas**, have cancelled expansion plans in heavily forested Papua, no such pledges have been made yet by the Salim Group.

Meanwhile the ongoing conflict between the indigenous groups of Indonesian Borneo and palm oil companies has become the subject of a new documentary by one of Indonesia's most accomplished directors. **The film depicts the Dayak Iban people of Semunying Jaya's struggle against a subsidiary of the Darmex Agro Group**, whose owner, Surya Darmadi, is one of Indonesia's richest men.

As it is well-known news from **Myanmar** are hard to obtain, but in this bulletin we are including two articles about the region. One reveals that **a deadly landslide has killed 13 people** who were thought to have been scavenging for the valuable mineral in the unstable waste cast off from mining operations. In addition to this, **unknown assailants has blown up the offices of two jade-mining companies** in Hpakant township in northern Myanmar's Kachin state, destroying heavy vehicles, trucks and workers' hostels. **Rights groups have routinely criticized these companies for the detrimental social and environmental impacts of their activities in the largely unregulated industry.**

Some encouraging news come, instead, from **Taiwan** where the Kaohsiung City Government has presented **certificates of land ownership to 60 Aboriginal households** to enable them to recover the rights they once held to traditional tribal lands. It must be pointed out that, previously, Taiwanese indigenous communities could only apply to reclaim lands to which they were entitled if they could produce official documents.

In **Central Bangladesh**, instead, threats of additional displacement of indigenous people are becoming very severe, after **the government has declared their land as a forest reserve**. In a secret gazette circular, the country's Forest and Environment Ministry declared **3,700 hectares of land in Madhupur, Tangail district to be rezoned as a forest reserve**. Although it was passed in February, the declaration didn't come to the notice of the public until last week. **The government's move will affect 13 predominantly indigenous villages** which are home to a mostly Christian population of 15,000 people from various indigenous groups including Garo, Hajong and Koch, who have lived in the area for over a century.

Moving to Central Asia, in [Kazakhstan](#) **hundreds of journalists, activists and demonstrators are detained** after being arrested against a protest against a planned "Land Reform" program. The program would make it easier for foreigners to buy farmland or rent it for 25 years. Protesters fear that the changes would make it easier for large Chinese agribusinesses to take control of vast swaths of farmland.

In this bulleting we are also covering **New Zealand** where local Maori are becoming vigilant about **possible mining operations** on their native land. Rumors have been swirling in the **Waikato settlement of Kawhia** that mining is set to get under way at a 1200-hectare forest wedged between the town and coastal beaches. The area in question is managed by Tainui-Kawhia Inc on behalf of its Maori owners, and ancient sites and burial grounds are known to exist there. It's not the first time that interests in mining has piqued in Kawhia, about 40km from Hamilton. Even more recently, in 2013, New Zealand Petroleum and Minerals awarded Chinese-owned Sinosteel Australia Pty Ltd four five-year exploration permits at locations on the west.

In this May Bulletin the **Latin American** country highlighted is **Peru**. In fact, **in the Madre de Dios region, the devastating consequences of illegal mining and use of mercury seem to have reached a point of no return**. Over many years miners have use liquid mercury to extract gold from soils they explore with suction hoses, and during the purifying process, the mercury is burned off and at best recovered in water if miners have the equipment available. [Mercury](#) pollution contaminates soil, water, and air — and when it enters the human body, it can harm the brain, heart, kidneys, lungs, and immune system. Now some four decades after mining moved into Madre de Dios, **rivers are polluted, fish are toxic, people have elevated levels of mercury running through their blood, and deforestation is rampant**, according to authorities and studies. Local NGOs and indigenous organizations agree that the state of emergency recently enacted by the government for Madre de Dios is unlikely to alleviate a problem that's been years in the making. Experts also agree that balancing the livelihood of informal miners versus the pressing need to end illegal mining will be a lengthy, cumbersome process as regional and national agendas often conflict with each other.

But mining is not the only threat to Peruvian forest. [An analysis](#) of satellite images taken in August 2014 revealed about **12,200 hectares of primary forest in two areas of the Department of Ucayali near the Aguaytía river** (the ancestral land of some Shibibo communities) had been razed. According to the MAAP (Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project), the deforestation is caused by the expansion of **two large-scale plantations of oil palms**. Subsequently, a [report](#) by the environmental website [Mongabay](#) linked these plantations with Czech businessman Dennis Melka, through the Grupo Palmas del Perú (Palms Group of Peru), Plantaciones de Ucayali (Plantations of Ucayali), and Plantaciones de Pucallpa (Plantations of Pucallpa) companies.

In neighboring **Brazil, indigenous Peoples' rights have been going through the worst phase since the end of military rule** in the 1980s: their leaders are murdered and arrested with impunity, demarcation of Indigenous Peoples' lands in the country are at a 30-year low, and hydroelectric plants continue to be planned in indigenous territory despite the controversies surrounding the Belo Monte dam. This may come as a surprise to some, as just a decade ago, Brazil was leading the way in securing rights for Indigenous Peoples. It must also be pointed out that Brazil was one of the first Latin American nations to include protections for indigenous rights in its constitution, and to ratify **International Labour Organization Convention No. 169**, which gives Indigenous Peoples the right to be consulted before the

implementation of any projects that affect their livelihood. **Global Witness** has reported that at least 454 people have been killed for environmental activism and advocacy for Indigenous Peoples' rights in Brazil since 2002. The failure to adequately address this issue is a step backwards for human rights, forest conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Mining expansion is also being resisted in **Mexico. Me'phaa Indigenous communities**, in the state of Guerrero, have recently urged the Supreme Court to set a legal precedent and **declare unconstitutional the mining act**. Accompanied by their advisers from the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre, they encouraged the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional the mining act passed in 1992, arguing it was violating international treaties that Mexico had signed and ratified.

Legal tools to counter mining and deforestation are also being coupled by more technological means. *For instance*, indigenous people in **Panama have begun to use drones as a new weapon to monitor deforestation** on their lands as thousands of hectares disappear every year in one of the world's most biodiverse rainforests. **Indigenous people make up nearly 13 percent of Panama's population of 4 million, with about 200,000 living on autonomous tribal lands**, known as comarcas. The current FAO drone project began in February and is being carried out through the U.N.'s Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Programme (UN-REDD), in partnership with Panama's environment ministry and the non-governmental Rainforest Foundation.

In comparison to Panama, **Argentina has only a 2% percentage of indigenous people in a country of 43 million people**. They belong to 18 different ethno-linguistic group and, as of now, they are largely invisible in society and **are excluded from the country's senate, congress and judiciary**. This is why, recently, U.N. special rapporteur on racism and related intolerance has asked **Argentinean authorities to do more to ensure indigenous groups can defend their land rights and claim title deeds without facing intimidation and violence from security forces**. "Most alarming are the reported trends of repression, in several parts of the country, against the mobilization by indigenous groups to claim their rights; and the reprisals against indigenous civil rights defenders and leaders as well as members of their families," the rapporteur said.

News from North American press (**United States**), suggest that **a linkage exists between poor media attention in First Nations territories and widespread abuse by the US**, state and city governments, as well as by corporations that fund the politicians. The national American Indian news now primarily relies on stay-at-home plagiarizers and re-writers.

In neighboring **Canada**, First Nations people still bitterly complain about the fact that they **were never included in the discussions** when vast tracts of their lands (e.g. in Ontario) were illegally sold to immigrants from Europe in order to pay off debts from the War of 1812. Similarly, they claim that they were never part of the discussions when Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia formed Confederation in 1867 – and as a result, as of now, First Nations communities claim to be subject to a division of powers and not formally welcomed by the federal family on this land – oddly, like an uninvited guest on their own land.

Presently, First Nations are also calling for full partnership in resource development to address **child poverty**. Perhaps most, or at least some, of the ongoing claims by the indigenous peoples of Canada, especially those related to land and resources, will be taken

more seriously into account by the national authorities now that **Canada has finally adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**. It's estimated that [75 percent](#) of the world's mining and exploration companies are based in Canada, and mining is one of Canada's most economically powerful sectors.

Reports we keep receiving from **Africa** are also very gloomy. One press release listed in this bulletin reveals that ***African civil society dissent against massive land grabbing*** by agribusiness firms has now moved to France. On Friday 3 June, African citizens, organizations and unions have attempted to disrupt the shareholder meeting of the Bolloré group at its headquarters in Puteaux, just outside of Paris. The protestors represent a movement composed of thousands of farmers who have been displaced from their lands by industrial oil palm and rubber plantations. This movement has also been occupying factories and plantations in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. **The protesters demand that well-known entrepreneur, Vincent Bolloré, explain why the company Socfin** (of which Bolloré owns a 38.7% share) has failed to comply with [2013 and 2014 commitments](#) intended to resolve conflicts between local communities and Socfin plantations. Parallel to this action in France, affected communities have carried out [demonstrations and blockades](#) at the facilities of Socfin subsidiaries in West Africa: Socapalm in Cameroon, SOGB in Côte d'Ivoire, LAC in Liberia and SAC in Sierra Leone.

Eviction of African communities by oil palm plantations is a more recent phenomenon that just adds more pain to other types of evictions that have occurred in the past decades, especially with reference to the established of national parks and protected areas. According to Charles Geisler, a sociologist at Cornell University Across Africa, **up to 14 million people have been expelled from their land to create protected areas like national parks**. One of such communities, now being turned into "**conservation refugees**", are the **Sengwer of Kenya**. They have been evicted from their ancestral land more than 20 times since it was gazetted as a forest reserve in 1964. Also the **United Nations and the World Bank criticized the KFS in 2014 for forcibly evicting thousands of Sengwer from the forest** by burning their homes, leaving many camped out by the roadside. As a result about **5,000 families are presently living in misery and poverty**. Campaigners are now arguing that the best way for Kenya to protect its forests is to give indigenous communities like the Sengwer ownership of the land on the condition that they conserve it.

Another article in this bulletin narrates about similar stories of **eviction experienced by ethnic groups in Uganda**, also due to narrow-minded measures for environmental protection.

Recently, **three top politicians and a British mining firm** at the center of a massive corruption scandal **have been charged with "economic crimes,"** Liberia's Information Minister Eugene Nagbe said a few days ago. We hope that this statement will turn into concrete actions against the culprits.

Blatant violations of human right and environmental defenders continue to emerge out of **Ethiopia**, a country on which previous CALG bulletins have already focused. Of particular interest here is **the case of Mr. Okello Akway Ochalla**, a naturalized Norwegian citizen who was kidnapped in South Sudan and renditioned to Ethiopia in March 2014. **Charged as a terrorist (his crime is defending indigenous land rights) he has languished in jail for nearly two years**. Mr. Okello is an Anuak leader from Gambella, which has been a key target for forced relocations and land grabbing by the Ethiopian Government.

Since 2009, the **Ethiopian Government has systematically silenced its critics, ruthlessly arresting journalists, bloggers, students, opposition party members, land rights activists**, and more via its notorious [Anti-Terrorism Proclamation](#). Mr. Okello, like thousands of others, languishes in jail because of this law.

For two years, Mr. Okello's case was largely ignored by the international community, including Norway. But in the latest few weeks, his story is finally being heard. On March 1st, a profile of Mr. Okello was included in an [in-depth report](#) produced by the Financial Times. On March 4th, President Barack Obama has received a letter, sent by a group of congressional representatives, led by Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN). The letter will be accompanied by a [petition with nearly 6,000 signatures](#), calling on President Obama to secure Mr. Okello's release.

GENERAL TOPICS

Indigenous Peoples Insist on Equality of All Rights at UN Conference

Since the establishment of a [UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2000](#), and despite a UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by the General Assembly in 2007, indigenous groups have expressed great concern over the growing number of military conflicts affecting them worldwide. The most affected are indigenous people caught in crossfires in current and past armed conflicts in Colombia, India, Myanmar, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Guatemala and Peru, according to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz of the Philippines, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The grave consequences include forced displacement, extra-judicial executions, sexual violence and forced recruitment of child soldiers.

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<http://thewire.in/2016/05/24/indigenous-peoples-insist-on-equality-of-all-rights-at-un-conference-38092/>

Secure land rights and climate change resilience go hand in hand: here's why

Without secure land rights, most people are reluctant to make the kinds of long-term investment and improvements to their land that fosters community environmental resilience.

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<http://news.trust.org/item/20160602085914-nfeqd/>

Scrapping EU biofuels targets is the right thing to do

Work on the EU's post-2020 bioenergy policy has now started in earnest. On 12 May, the European Commission invited stakeholders to a full day meeting to discuss sustainability concerns and started handling the hundreds of contributions it received to its [public consultation](#) on the issue. With the Commission expected to propose new legislation later this year, the biofuel industry is going on the offensive, calling the proposal to drop targets and other support measures for biofuel "[recklessly irresponsible](#)" and "[populist](#)". This name-

calling by the industry should not distract European policy makers from the all-important task of learning the lessons from today's policy failure. The best available science on biofuel emissions shows Europe's consumption of biofuels is harming the climate not helping it. Transport & Environment has [crunched the data](#) from a recent and comprehensive [study](#) on biofuel emissions ordered by the European Commission. It concluded that by 2020, the EU's transport emissions will have increased by 3,5% due to biofuel consumption, not decreased. The cause for this is not only the eye-watering amounts of emissions of imported biofuels and feedstock. Biodiesel made from palm oil for example emits three times as much CO2 as fossil diesel because it displaces agriculture into tropical forests and peatlands.

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<http://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/opinion/scrapping-eu-biofuels-targets-is-the-right-thing-to-do/>

Activists row over bioenergy role in meeting 1.5C climate target

Deep rifts have emerged between climate campaigners over how the world can best limit warming to a newly agreed goal of 1.5C above pre industrial levels. At issue are the assumptions in climate models that large-scale use of energy crops will be needed to prevent dangerous climate disruption. In a media briefing at UN climate talks in Bonn on Thursday ActionAid warned this raised the risk of land grabs and food insecurity, hurting the world's vulnerable. The international charity's Teresa Anderson argued there had to be other ways to meet the inspirational goal agreed at last December's Paris summit. Climate scientist Bill Hare, who spoke before Anderson on the panel and did not have a chance to respond directly to the claims, described that as "bullshit" as he walked out.

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<http://www.climatechangenews.com/2016/05/20/activists-row-over-bioenergy-role-in-meeting-1-5c-climate-target/>

Are renewable energy companies ready to respect human rights?

Earlier this year Berta Cáceres, a prominent indigenous community leader opposing a hydropower project (Agua Zarca) in Honduras, was killed in her home, eliciting an international outcry from government leaders and civil society alike. Investors, including the Dutch development bank FMO, initially emphasized the value of the Agua Zarca dam project in reducing Honduras' reliance on fossil fuels by providing "a clean, low cost and stable source of energy". After weeks of public pressure around security concerns and claims of inadequate consultations, investors including FMO suspended their involvement in the dam project.

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<http://www.businessgreen.com/bg/opinion/2458519/are-renewable-energy-companies-ready-to-respect-human-rights>

Patricia Derian, Diplomat Who Made Human Rights a Priority, Dies at 86

Patricia Derian, a civil rights veteran who tangled with repressive dictators as President Jimmy Carter's chief advocate on behalf of human rights abroad, died on Friday at her home in Chapel Hill, N.C. She was 86. Ms. Derian, who had trained as a registered nurse and admitted on her appointment that she knew little about diplomatic protocols, earned a reputation for angering despots as well as career State Department diplomats, many of whom viewed her as well-meaning but unsophisticated. Nevertheless, by most accounts, thousands of lives may have been spared because of her work.

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http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/21/us/patricia-derian-diplomat-who-made-human-rights-a-priority-dies-at-86.html?_r=0

TOPICS BY REGION

ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Southeast Asian markets to drive coal demand, says Australian mining body

The Australian Minerals Council believes growing Southeast Asian markets will take up the slack of falling demand from China and has released figures showing the country's coal shipments to Thailand increased fourfold in April this year compared to the same month in 2015, and by 20% since January. Greg Evans, executive director coal, said in a statement that developing nations in Southeast Asia required high quality coal to meet increased electricity demand that was being powered by growing urbanization. Australian thermal coal is mostly shipped out of Newcastle, the world's biggest coal exporting port, with the Queensland ports of Gladstone, Hay Point and Abbot Point mainly shifting coking coal for steelmaking. However, even with the rising volumes, prices are at an all time low, and there is increasing pressure from environmental groups and greater competition from alternative energy.

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<http://fairplay.ihs.com/commerce/article/4269246/southeast-asian-markets-to-drive-coal-demand-says-aussie-mining-body#sthash.JP6zilm8.dpuf>

THE PHILIPPINES

Higaonon couple harassed in Agusan del Norte by members of Armed Forces

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) is deeply concerned about the harassment of the indigenous community by members of the 23rd Infantry Battalion in Agusan del Norte. After arbitrarily barging into the home of Circle and Magdalena, the soldiers opened fire and hit Magdalena as the couple ran away from their home in fear. Since 28 April 2016, the Higaonon ethnic minority has been harassed due to conflict between the Armed Forces and the rebels. On 21 May 2016 at 1 p.m., Balud, a male member of the Higaonon ethnic minority, was gathering firewood in Sitio Bulak, Olave village, Buenavista, Agusan del Norte when

members of the 23rd Infantry Battalion (IB) passed by. The military asked Balud to guide them to the center of Sitio Bulak. Upon reaching the center of Sitio Bulak, Balud ran away in fear of what else the military will have him do or will do once their operation is done. Chasing Balud, the military came upon the home of Circle Binungkusan and barged into it, shocking Circle and his wife Magdalena. The military asked who else was in the house, and Circle answered that they were all civilians there.

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<http://www.humanrights.asia/news/urgent-appeals/AHRC-UAC-060-2016>

PLEASE TAKE ACTION

<http://www.urgentappeals.net/support.php?ua=AHRC-UAC-060-2016>

PH abusing anti-trafficking laws to harass Lumad, US group tells Kerry

A US-based advocacy group has asked Secretary of State John Kerry to call out the Philippine government for allegedly abusing laws against human trafficking to harass *lumad* leaders and supporters involved in helping indigenous people against military abuses in Mindanao. "The Philippine government and its armed forces are pressing baseless, unwarranted criminal human trafficking charges against dozens of leaders from indigenous peoples' communities, church workers and others working for civil society organizations in the conflict zones of Mindanao," Brian Campbell, legal advisor to the US Ecumenical Advocacy Network on the Philippines in a statement. The EANP's May 18 letter to Kerry draws in part from the experience of Josephine Pagalan, one of three *lumad* leaders who recently visited Washington and met with State Department and Congress officials on their plight. Pagalan is from Lianga, Surigao del Sur and is one of the hundreds of *lumad* who witnessed the execution of Manobo leaders Dionel Campos and Datu Bello Sinzo on September 1 last year by the military-backed *Magahat Bagani* militia, who also murdered Emerito Samarca, administrator of the award-winning Alternative Learning Center for Agricultural and Livelihood Development. The Lianga murders triggered the exodus of thousands of *lumad* and farmers from several Surigao del Sur towns. More than 2,000 of them remain at the sports center in Tandag City, the provincial capital.

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<http://interaksyon.com/article/128227/ph-abusing-anti-trafficking-laws-to-harass-lumad-us-group-tells-kerry>

Viral photo of Badjao girl portrays tribe's displacement - HRW

The photo of the Badjao girl that has gone viral on the internet is not merely a picture of a Morena beauty. The photo of Rita Gaviola, 13, begging in the streets of Lucban town, in Quezon province went viral after photographer, Topher Quinto Burgos, posted it on social media. The photo was taken during the Pahiyas Festival on May 15. Netizens even created Facebook pages for Gaviola. The page "Badjao Girl" already has 58,672 likes, while Rita Gaviola "Badjao Girl" has 19,748 as of Saturday, May 28. But for the Human Rights Watch, the image of Gaviola is a picture of a tribe "who were displaced and forced into destitution following the armed confrontation between government forces and rebels from the Moro

National Liberation Front in September 2013.” Carlos Conde, Philippines researcher for HRW, said the reports about Gaviola their plight as a “neglected tribe”.

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<http://davaotoday.com/main/human-rights/viral-photo-of-badjao-girl-portrays-tribes-displacement-hrw/>

Dispatches: The Philippine Picture of Badjao Displacement

The striking [image](#) of a Filipino girl – a member of the indigenous Badjao tribe – begging in the streets of Lucban, a town in Quezon province south of Manila, has gone viral in the Philippines and [prompted](#) a flood of public concern and support for her and her impoverished family. A photographer spotted the child, later [identified](#) as 13-year-old Rita Gaviola from Zamboanga City on the southern island of Mindanao. Tweets and Facebook posts and media [coverage](#) celebrated the girl’s beauty and her [dream](#) to become a teacher. Evacuees stay at makeshift shelters in a sports stadium turned into an evacuation centre for residents displaced during fighting between government soldiers and Muslim rebels of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), in Zamboanga city in southern Philippines on September 20, 2013 Those reports don’t mention that there are thousands of other residents of Zamboanga City, including many Badjao, who were displaced and forced into destitution following the [armed confrontation](#) between government forces and rebels from the Moro National Liberation Front in September 2013. That violence killed nearly 200 people, displaced more than 100,000 residents, and destroyed thousands of homes.

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<https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/image/2014/04/21/2013-philippines-zamboanga-idp>

Ipilan Nickel authorized to develop part of Palawan exploration area

GLOBAL Ferronickel Holdings, Inc. said its Palawan-based affiliate Ipilan Nickel Corp. (INC) received approval for its feasibility study from the Mines and Geosciences Bureau and is cleared to start operations for part of its exploration area. The company said in a disclosure to the bourse on Wednesday that INC “is now ready to operate with the granting by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) of its Partial Declaration of Mine Project Feasibility covering a 343.3 hectare parcel of Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) No. 017-93-IV.” The remaining area of more than 2,000 hectares, however, shall still be subject to further exploration.

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<http://www.bworldonline.com/content.php?section=Corporate&title=ipilan-nickel-authorized-to-develop-part-of-palawan-exploration-area&id=127734>

SC lifts writ of kalikasan against mining firm in Zambales

MANILA — The Supreme Court has reversed the Court of Appeals’ issuance of a writ of kalikasan or environmental protection against LNL Archipelago Minerals Inc. (LAMI), a metallic ore miner accused of violating mining and forestry laws by leveling a “mountain” to

build a port in Sta. Cruz, Zambales, in 2012. In a 26-page decision dated Apr. 12 and released last week, the the court en banc, voting 14-0, said the petitioner, former Agham Party-list Rep. Angelo Palmones, failed to show evidence that LAMI caused any environmental damage that prejudiced the life, health or property of the inhabitants of Sta. Cruz and nearby towns in the adjacent province of Pangasinan. "Agham, as the party that has the burden to prove requirements for the issuance of the privilege of the writ of kalikasan failed to prove the environmental laws allegedly violated by LAMI, and the magnitude of the environmental damage allegedly caused by LAMI in the construction of [its] port facility in Barangay Bolitoc, Sta. Cruz, and its surrounding area. Thus the petition must be denied," stated the decision written by Justice Antonio Carpio.

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<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/788091/sc-lifts-writ-of-kalikasan-against-mining-firm-in-zambales#ixzz4AM5XYphW>

Philippines' president-to-be endorses killing journalists

Philippine president-elect Rodrigo Duterte said Tuesday that "corrupt" journalists were legitimate targets for assassination (extra-judicial killing). The president-elect endorsed the extra-judicial killing of journalists as he amped up his controversial anti-crime crusade with offers of rewards for killing drug traffickers.

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<http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/advanced/999353/philippines-president-to-be-endorses-killing-journalists>

Philippines: United Nations experts express concern over torture of children in secret detention facilities and lowering age of criminal responsibility

The UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) urged the Philippines to immediately close all "secret places" of detention where people, including children, are routinely subject to torture. It also called for the age of criminal responsibility to be kept at 15 years of age, urging the Government to drop a bill aimed at lowering it.

The UNCAT, a group of human rights experts in charge of assessing countries' application of the Convention Against Torture, last Friday announced its [concluding observations](#) with regard to the Philippines' over the last seven years. It expressed concern about children deprived of liberty in unofficial detention centres. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) had beforehand submitted a [report](#) to the UNCAT providing evidence of the existence of a "secret facility" run by the Malabon Bayan Police, in Metro Manila, where children – some of whom had not even committed crimes, or only minor non-violent offenses – had been electrocuted, heavily beaten, and arbitrarily detained for lengthy periods.

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<http://www.omct.org/monitoring-protection-mechanisms/statements/philippines/2016/05/d23766/>

Human rights compliance in question under new Filipino Government

Since this UN review, the Philippines has elected a new President, Rodrigo Duterte, who has indeed made public statements at odds with UNCAT recommendations, generating concern among human rights activists about the future compliance of the country with international human rights commitments, including the UN Convention Against Torture. Lowering the age of criminal liability is against international standards and not seen as an effective measure to reduce criminality by most experts. Worse, it is believed it can only increase overcrowdedness and the risk of children being tortured. The UNCAT during the session also highlighted the routine impunity in the country, which counts only one conviction for torture, in spite of a six-year-old Anti-torture Act. The Filipino Government, which became a party to the Convention in 1986, has one year to report to the UNCAT on actions it will take to address the issues of pre-trial detention, overcrowding in prisons, torture and ill-treatment and steps taken to close all “secret places” of detention.

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<http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/788091/sc-lifts-writ-of-kalikasan-against-mining-firm-in-zambales#ixzz4AM5JDoah>

Duterte to CHR: Shut up!

Incoming president Rodrigo Duterte on Wednesday slammed the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) for saying that he had violated a law when he delivered the much-criticized rape joke about an Australian missionary. Duterte said the CHR was “naive” and “too simplistic” when it made a big deal about his narration of an event. “(CHR) wasting the money of the Filipino people. Tell them ‘Shut up,’” Duterte said.

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<http://www.philstar.com/headlines/2016/05/26/1587209/duterte-to-chr-shut-up----->

PANAP lauds appointment of peasant leader Rafael “Ka Paeng” Mariano as Philippine agrarian reform chief

The PAN Asia Pacific (PANAP) joins the peasant movement in the Philippines in welcoming the appointment of Rafael “Ka Mariano as the new Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) by incoming President Rodrigo Duterte. Ka Paeng’s appointment is certainly a very positive development for advocates of genuine agrarian reform. As a long-time leader of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines or KMP), Ka Paeng has a solid track record in defending the rights of farmers over land and other productive resources. As one of our most reliable partners in the campaign against land grabbing and promotion of people’s food sovereignty, we have witnessed how KMP led by Ka Paeng and other peasant leaders has tirelessly worked to advance the interests and welfare of small and poor farmers, including the landless, not only in the Philippines but in the region as well.

READ MORE

<http://www.farmlandgrab.org/post/view/26183#sthash.70lzBPv2.dpuf>

The Philippines' New Strongman

Rodrigo Duterte's authoritarian neoliberalism isn't the answer to poverty and political abuse in the Philippines. He's known for his profanity-laden speeches, misogynistic jokes, and promises to give the police a free hand to murder suspects. But he also proclaims himself to be a socialist and the [first leftist president](#) of the Philippines. What does his success represent? Is his rise really anything like the change that he promises? And what does it mean for the Philippine left?

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<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/05/philippines-duterte-populism-marcos-neoliberalism/>

Philippines: Federalism not enough, Cordilleras need genuine autonomy, says indigenous peoples' group

A federal system of government, which President-elect Rodrigo Duterte vowed to push for, would not be enough to free the indigenous peoples (IPs) of the Cordilleras from oppression by multinational mining and energy firms working in cahoots with corrupt government officials and the military, Abigail Anongos, secretary-general of the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), said on Monday (May 30). The regional autonomy being pushed by politicians, she said, would be merely "bureaucratic decentralization and devolution of powers." "It is empty and bogus if it does not address the current problems which are the manifestations of national oppression that violate the right to self determination," she said.

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<http://iva.aippnet.org/philippines-federalism-not-enough-cordilleras-need-genuine-autonomy-says-indigenous-peoples-group/>

MALAYSIA

NGOs concerned over regressing human rights

At a press conference on its midterm Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process report, the group, made up of 54 NGOs, revealed its assessment of 60 measurable recommendations out of the 113 recommendations accepted by Malaysia in 2014. The UPR report details United Nations member state's performance in relation to the implementation of human rights recommendations it has accepted based on recommendations of other countries. In its midterm report, Comango revealed that only 20% of the 60 recommendations had been fully implemented, while 57% of the recommendations have seen a regressing situation.

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<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/05/20/ngos-concerned-over-regressing-human-rights/>

Uggah to come up with master plans for oil palm, rubber

Sarawak Minister of Modernisation of Agriculture and Rural Economy Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas will come up with master plans for oil palm and rubber industries in the State. Uggah, who is also one of three Sarawak Deputy Chief Ministers, said the master plans were for their more systematic and sustainable developments. He was speaking to the media here Thursday after taking over the responsibilities of the State Land Development Ministry from its former Minister, Tan Sri Dr James Jemut Masing. "On oil palm, Sarawak is the new frontier, especially with its huge tract of native Customary Rights (NCR) land," he said, adding that by end of last year, some 1.4 million hectares had been cultivated and the target was to extend it to two million hectares by 2020.

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<http://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news.cfm?NewsID=110157>

Switzerland honors Sarawak activists

Switzerland has honored two Sarawak activists with the Bruno Manser Prize for Moral Courage. They were Komeok Joe and Peter Kallang, the Bruno Manser Fund announced in a statement today. The prize is named after rainforest activist Bruno Manser and honours personalities who have proven moral courage in defending the environment and human rights. Komeok Joe and Peter Kallang are the first to receive the new award and were chosen for their outstanding commitment in defending indigenous rights in Sarawak, the press release said. Komeok Joe, member of Malaysia's indigenous peoples network Joas, was honoured for his struggle to defend the rights of the Penan.

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<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/05/26/switzerland-honours-sarawak-activists/>

INDONESIA

In bid to cut haze, Indonesia persuades farmers against slash-and-burn

The Indonesian Government has tied up with the country's largest agro companies to sway farmers against burning forests to clear land. The two-month pilot project led by the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs will see companies train farmers on modern farming techniques and basic fire fighting. The companies will also give them machinery to clear land. Farmers have been clearing land for cultivation by burning because that is the cheapest method available to them, Leni Rosylin, head of the Ministry's Forest Management Division told GovInsider. The companies will persuade them against such practices through monetary rewards. Villages will get 100 million rupiah towards infrastructure, if they complete a year without any burning, Rosylin said. The Ministry this week signed agreements with five companies on the pilot project. Among them is Asia Pulp and Paper, one of the world's largest pulp and paper companies, and its competitor Riau Andalan Pulp and Paper. The other three companies are palm oil producers SMART, Asian Agri and Triputra Agro Persada.

READ MORE

<https://govinsider.asia/inclusive-gov/in-bid-to-cut-haze-indonesia-persuades-farmers-against-slash-and-burn/>

Central Kalimantan`s Forests Misused as Illegal Palm Fields

Daniel Johan, member of the House of Representatives (DPR) Commission IV overseeing agriculture, food, forestry, plantation, fishery and maritime affairs, revealed that at least 1.5 million hectares of land owned by three crude palm oil (CPO) producers in Central Kalimantan have been illegally used as palm fields. Therefore, the Forestry Commission has formed a Working Commission on the Conversion of Forest Reserves. "This is the first case that we've handled, and it all began from citizen reports. Three companies have been suspected to have illegally converted some 40.000 hectares of forest reserves into palm fields," Daniel said on Thursday, May 26, 2016. "This can be seen from satellite imagery. Their fields have been somehow expanded into areas designated as productive forest." According to Johan, the Working Commission will immediately survey and map the area to prove and confirm the reports. If proven, then the Working Commission will file legal actions against the violators. "If reforestation [of the affected areas] is still possible, then it will be done," said Johan. "We will also examine the current Provincial Zoning Master Plan (RTRWP). But rest assured, there will be legal sanctions or fines to cover the cost of the damages that they have caused."

READ MORE

<http://en.tempo.co/read/news/2016/05/27/307774706/Central-Kalimantans-Forests-Misused-as-Illegal-Palm>

Indonesia's Salim Group linked to 'secret' palm oil concessions in West Papua

One of Indonesia's largest conglomerates, the Salim Group, has likely acquired four palm oil concessions in West Papua using a complex network of shared directorships and offshore companies, new research suggests. Online watchdog awas MIFEE reported in May it had uncovered [evidence](#) that the four plantations — PT Rimbun Sawit Papua, PT Subur Karunia Raya, PT Bintuni Agro Prima Perkasa and PT Menara Wasior — were under the Salim Group's control after discovering directorship and shareholding links that are not declared in the Salim Group's stock exchange filings. The organization said the use of shell companies and offshore mechanisms appeared to be an attempt to distance the Salim Group from association with contentious projects and maintain a veneer of responsibility while quietly flouting [its own sustainability guidelines](#), which include a ban on converting ecologically important High Conservation Value areas.

READ MORE

<https://news.mongabay.com/2016/06/indonesias-salim-group-linked-to-secret-palm-oil-concessions-in-papua/>

Indigenous Dayak tribe pitted against palm oil giant in new film

A conflict between an indigenous group in Borneo and a major palm oil company is the subject of a new documentary by one of Indonesia's most accomplished directors. The film depicts the Dayak Iban people of Semunying Jaya's struggle against a subsidiary of the Darmex Agro Group, whose owner, Surya Darmadi, is one of Indonesia's richest men. The case was one of those featured in the National Human Rights Commission's [inquiry into land conflicts affecting indigenous peoples](#). The community has separately sued the company for grabbing its land. Late last year, the lawsuit was dismissed on the grounds that there was no evidence the community was indigenous, a decision the plaintiffs have appealed.

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<http://www.eco-business.com/news/indigenous-dayak-tribe-pitted-against-palm-oil-giant-in-new-film/>

MYANMAR

Pit collapse kills at least 13 in Myanmar jade-mining district

A collapse at an illegal mine killed at least 13 people in Myanmar's northern Kachin State, a resident involved in rescue efforts said on Tuesday, the latest in a series of deadly accidents to hit the jade-mining area. The wall of the pit in Weikha Village in Hpakant, the center of the opaque jade industry, collapsed on Monday after heavy rain, according to Naw Li, who was assisting in rescue efforts. "We've found a total of 13 bodies while 14 injured people have come to the hospital for treatment," he said. Naw Li said that only two people were officially listed as missing and it was unclear how many people could still be buried. Khin Maung Myint, an lawmaker from the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) from Hpakant, said workers were digging illegally in the abandoned mine when the wall gave way.

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<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-landslide-idUSKCN0YFOXW>

12 dead, 50 injured in jade mining landslide in Myanmar

A landslide in northern Myanmar's jade mining region Tuesday killed at least 12 people and injured about 50 others, witnesses and officials said. Volunteer rescuer Naw Li told The Associated Press by telephone that 12 bodies have been recovered "but we don't know how many are buried." He said 15 of the injured people have been sent to a hospital. The landslide occurred on a mountain of waste from jade mines in Hpakant region, the epicenter of the money-spinning industry in Kachin state. Massive chunks of the precious stone are mined with heavy machines, but small pieces get left behind in the waste, which is then piled up in huge mountains outside the mines. Villagers routinely scavenge through these unstable piles of dirt and rocks to look for the small pieces, but often become victims of landslides. Police officer Tun Tun Lin confirmed the landslide in Waikha village but had no information about casualties. Hpakant is 950 kilometers (600 miles) north of Yangon, Myanmar's biggest city.

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<http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/other/12-dead-50-injured-in-jade-mining-landslide-in-myanmar/ar-BBtoTvL>

TAIWAN

Aborigines given landowner papers to traditional land

The Kaohsiung City Government on Saturday presented certificates of land ownership to 60 Aboriginal households to enable them to recover the rights they once held to traditional tribal lands. Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊) handed out the certificates for 110 plots covering 100 hectares during a ceremony held for the Aboriginal households. Over the past 70 years, many of the lands reserved for Aborigines that were passed down from their ancestors have been administered by the National Property Administration or the Forestry Bureau, Chen said. Aboriginal communities previously could only apply to reclaim lands to which they were entitled if they could produce official documents, Chen added.

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<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/05/30/2003647469>

Kaohsiung City Government moves to return lands to 60 indigenous households

Kaohsiung City Government on Saturday presented certificates of land ownership to 60 aboriginal households to enable them to recover the rights they once held to traditional tribal lands. Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊) handed out the certificates for 110 plots of land covering 100 hectares during a ceremony held for aboriginal households to help them restore their land ownership rights. Over the past 70 years, lands preserved for indigenous peoples that were passed down from their ancestors have been administered by the National Property Administration or the Forestry Bureau, Chen said, adding that indigenous peoples previously could only apply to reclaim the lands to which they were entitled if they could produce official documents.

READ MORE

<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/local/kaohsiung/2016/05/29/467652/Kaohsiung-City.htm>

BANGLADESH

Indigenous people in central Bangladesh fear eviction

Indigenous people in central Bangladesh are fearful they could be evicted from land they have inhabited for over a century because the government has declared it as forest reserve. In a secret gazette circular, the country's Forest and Environment Ministry declared 3,700 hectares of land in Madhupur, Tangail district to be rezoned as a forest reserve. Although it was passed in February, the declaration didn't come to the notice of the public until last week. "The law virtually restricts living, movement, cultivation and even the grazing of cattle in the area, and it also gives the authorities the right to evict people from the area at will. We are really worried about the future," Garo tribal leader Eugene Nokrek, president of the Joenshahi Adivasi Development Council, told ucanews.com. The declaration, made under Section 20 of the 1927 Forest Act, makes it illegal to live in and use resources from the reserve. It also stipulates punishment of up to five years jail and a 50,000 Taka (U.S. \$636) fine for violating the declaration's directives.

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<http://www.ucanews.com/news/indigenous-people-in-central-bangladesh-fear-eviction/76115>

Indigenous people struggle to protect land rights, way of life in Bangladesh

Indigenous people in Bangladesh face threats to their way of life because the government is ignoring long-standing land ownership rights, two advocates said during a visit to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Oblate Fr. Joseph Gomes of the Sylhet diocese, in northeastern Bangladesh, and Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum based in the capital of Dhaka, said indigenous people are being forced from the rural lands their ancestors have lived on and farmed for centuries to make way for the majority Bengali population. The indigenous have been relegated to "second-class" status by the government, allowing for their removal from areas in northern provinces and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the southeast, Gomes said.

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<http://ncronline.org/blogs/eco-catholic/indigenous-people-struggle-protect-land-rights-way-life-bangladesh>

KAZAKHSTAN

Authorities in Kazakhstan reacted harshly to protests announced for Saturday by detaining possibly hundreds of journalists, activists and demonstrators. Police in full riot gear broke up the protests on Saturday, and dozens more were arrested in cities across the country. They're protesting against a planned "Land Reform" program. The program would make it easier for foreigners to buy farmland or rent it for 25 years. Protesters fear that the changes would make it easier for large Chinese agribusinesses to take control of vast swaths of farmland. According to one protester, "We can't give land to the Chinese. If they come then they won't leave!" China shares a lengthy border with Kazakhstan and has been heavily investing in its energy sector and infrastructure. The new law was approved in November, but only comes into effect on July 1. In the last round of protests, on April 27, there were one or two thousand people in each city, which is quite serious for Kazakhstan where no dissent is tolerated. Authorities fear a repeat of the huge protests in 2011, when oil workers went on strike, and 14 people were killed by police gunfire.

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<http://www.farmlandgrab.org/post/view/26166#sthash.W81Z2Uu0.dpuf>

NEW ZEALAND**Concerns raised by mineral investigation at seaside Waikato village**

Rumours have been swirling in the Waikato settlement of Kawhia that mining is set to get under way at a 1200-hectare forest wedged between the town and coastal beaches, local environmental campaigner Davis Apiti says. He's not happy about it. The area in question is managed by Tainui-Kawhia Inc on behalf of its Maori owners and Apiti said an

ancient pa site and burial grounds are known to exist there. "Our ancestors will be pumped out to a ship and taken to Japan or China and they'll come back as cars," Apiti said. But Tainui-Kawhia chairman Brendon Green said talk of mining is going too far.

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<http://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/news/5913154/Taking-a-stand-against-mining>

LATIN AMERICA

Indigenous territories occupy 40 percent of protected land and marine areas in Central America

AN IUCN map shows that Indigenous territories comprise more than half of the region's forests and many of its waterways, making Indigenous communities critical guardians of Central America's most fragile ecosystems. At approximately 282,000 square kilometers (about 109,000 square miles), the total area covered by traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples in the region is more than five times the size of Costa Rica, and more than a third of that land has already been designated as protected by local governments. The IUCN map identifies 948 recognized terrestrial and marine protected areas in Central America, 39 percent of which — or some 96,432 square kilometers (a little over 37,000 square miles) — are home to Indigenous Peoples.

READ MORE

<https://news.mongabay.com/2016/05/indigenous-territories-occupy-40-percent-protected-land-marine-areas-central-america/>

New map could help protect indigenous land in Central America

The areas occupied by hundreds of thousands of indigenous peoples have been plotted on a groundbreaking new map of Central America. According to the map's creators, the new wealth of information could help protect valuable regions from deforestation and harmful development. The main purpose of [the map](#), which was financed by the Danish government, National Geographic and the International Union for Conservation of Nature ([IUCN](#)), is to encourage respect for land rights of indigenous peoples and more sustainable use of the forests and other valuable regions that they occupy.

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<http://www.humanosphere.org/environment/2016/05/new-map-help-protect-indigenous-land-central-america/>

PERU

Peru declares emergency in Amazon where illegal gold mining is poisoning jungle tribes

Peru's government declared an emergency across a broad jungle region Monday because of mercury contamination caused by wildcat gold mining. The 60-day decree affects 11 districts in the Madre de Dios region bordering Brazil where studies carried out by Stanford University and others have found high levels of the toxic element in people, rivers and fish. Deputy Health Minister Percy Minaya said as many as 50,000 people could be exposed to high levels of mercury. Particularly affected are members of the Harakmbut indigenous group, some of whom were found with mercury levels six times the suggested level.

READ MORE

<http://news.nationalpost.com/news/world/peru-declares-emergency-in-amazon-where-illegal-gold-mining-is-poisoning-jungle-tribes>

Peru's illegal gold miners back Fujimori's vow to end crackdown

A government crackdown on illegal mines at the end of a decade-long gold rush has shuttered restaurants, quieted the town's muddied streets and slowed the flow of migrants from poor Andean towns seeking the jungle's riches. But the residents of Huepetuhe, whose town square is dominated by a golden statue of a muscular miner, see a shimmer of hope in presidential election front-runner Keiko Fujimori's promise to decriminalize the makeshift mines at the heart of the region's economy. Fujimori says she will repeal laws aimed at protecting the environment that ban the use of dredges and heavy machinery by miners in rivers and wetlands. She is also offering miners cheap credit and tax exemptions while they form tax-paying businesses.

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<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-peru-election-mining-idUSKCN0YM1R1>

Gold Mining Has Devastated The Peruvian Amazon

When Meraldo Umiña moved to the Madre De Dios region of Peru in 1983, the toxic gold rush that's destroyed swaths of Amazon rainforest there was in its infancy. There were no laws regulating informal or illegal mining, and artisanal miners like him were few. "Gold was cheap," Umiña, 59, told ThinkProgress in Spanish — "a gram was about \$12." Using simple but still harmful chemical methods, miners worked just by the rivers then, and the gold was easy to get, he said. There was no need to encroach on the jungle, and no financial incentive to use machine-intensive techniques of extraction. But as the 1980s waned and the 1990s rolled in, the Peruvian economy that had been in [shambles](#) improved as insurgency groups were defeated, and corrective macroeconomics took hold. Foreign markets turned their eyes on Peru. The price of gold gradually increased, Umiña said, and people from other areas of the country soon saw the same opportunity he had discovered years before and migrated to Madre de Dios. "People started to invade the lands of established residents," he said, and "it was hard to control the labor."

READ MORE

<http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2016/05/31/3782531/amazon-mining-poison-gold-rush/>

Illegal Mining Linked to Environmental, Health Emergency in Peru

The Peruvian government has announced a 60-day state of emergency in the southwestern state of Madre de Dios due to mercury contamination linked to illegal mining, highlighting the environmental dangers posed by this illicit business. The emergency measures were announced in a [decree](#) published in the official gazette, El Peruano, which states that the purpose of the state of emergency is to "execute immediate and necessary actions of response and rehabilitation aimed at reducing the harmful effects caused by this situation."

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<http://www.insightcrime.org/news-briefs/illegal-mining-linked-environmental-health-emergency-peru>

A Peruvian Amazon Community Is Putting Up a Fight Against the Expansion of Oil Palm

Santa Clara de Uchunya is a small community in the Peruvian Amazon, located on the banks of the [Aguaytía river](#) in the Ucayali region. Its members, who are of Shipibo origin, are taking legal action against the Plantaciones de Pucallpa (Plantations of Pucallpa) company's appropriation and deforestation of about 5,000 hectares of land that the community considers part of its ancestral territory. [An analysis](#) of satellite images taken in August 2014 revealed about 12,200 hectares of primary forest in two areas of the Department of Ucayali near the Aguaytía river had been razed. According to the MAAP (Monitoring of the Andean Amazon Project), the deforestation is caused by the expansion of two large-scale plantations of oil palms. Subsequently, a [report](#) by the environmental website [Mongabay](#) linked these plantations with Czech businessman Dennis Melka, through the Grupo Palmas del Perú (Palms Group of Peru), Plantaciones de Ucayali (Plantations of Ucayali), and Plantaciones de Pucallpa (Plantations of Pucallpa) companies.

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<https://globalvoices.org/2016/05/24/a-peruvian-amazon-community-is-putting-up-a-fight-against-the-expansion-of-oil-palm/>

BRAZIL

Brazil's interim government losing ground on indigenous land rights - UN official

Brazil's interim government is moving ahead with plans for a constitutional amendment that would weaken indigenous land rights and pave the way for new plantations and dams to encroach on lands inhabited by native peoples, a United Nations official said. Erika Yamada, a member of the U.N's Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a human rights advisory body, said the proposed constitutional change would result in Brazil moving backwards on indigenous land rights. The procedures used to identify and indigenous territories could be altered to give lawmakers more power to decide which territories belong to native peoples, she said.

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<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3601442/Brazils-interim-government-losing-ground-indigenous-land-rights--UN-official.html#ixzz4AVvawhx1>

Amid political turmoil in Brazil, what will become of indigenous rights?

Indigenous Peoples' rights in Brazil have been going through the worst phase since the end of military rule in the 1980s: their leaders are murdered and arrested with impunity, demarcation of Indigenous Peoples' lands in the country are at a 30-year low, and hydroelectric plants continue to be planned in indigenous territory despite the controversies surrounding the Belo Monte dam. This may come as a surprise to some, as just a decade ago Brazil was leading the way in securing rights for Indigenous Peoples. Brazil was one of the first to include protections for indigenous rights in its constitution, and to ratify International Labour Organization Convention No. 169, which gives Indigenous Peoples the right to be consulted before the implementation of any projects that affect their livelihood. Brazil has also titled over 191 million hectares of indigenous land, or around 23 percent of the country, but titling activity dropped sharply in recent years.

READ MORE

<http://news.trust.org/item/20160531103902-10vpr/>

Brazilian Indians protest plan to “undo” land rights progress 2 June 2016

Brazilian Indians are protesting against the country's political elite's threats to break up their lands and limit their rights. As the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff moves forward, interim President Michel Temer and his newly appointed ministers are attempting to put a stop to the protection of indigenous lands. President Rousseff has been criticized for mapping out fewer indigenous territories than any of her predecessors since the end of the military dictatorship. But Rousseff and her colleagues signed several land protection decrees in the weeks leading up to her suspension from office. These included the [land of the uncontacted Kawahiva](#), one of the most vulnerable peoples on the planet, following Survival's global campaign, [one Guarani territory](#) which had been stolen from the Indians leaving them in appalling conditions, and of the Avá Canoeiro, [Arara](#), Mura and Munduruku tribes.

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<http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/11300>

Tribes reject calls for forced contact with uncontacted peoples

South American tribes have denounced the call from [American academics Kim Hill and Robert Walker](#) for forced contact with [uncontacted tribal peoples in the Amazon](#), warning of the catastrophic consequences such contact would bring. [Speaking in a video](#) as part of [Survival's Tribal Voice project](#), Guajajara Indians rejected the idea entirely. Several members of the tribe, known as the “Guajajara Guardians,” have acted to protect nearby uncontacted Awá people in the absence of greater government support. The leader of the Guardians, Olimpio Guajajara, said: “We are here... Monitoring the land and defending the uncontacted Indians and the Guajajara who live here. Why? Because there are some people, some anthropologists in other countries who want, once again, to violate the rights of the uncontacted Indians in the country.” He added: “We are aware that some anthropologists have been calling for

'controlled contact' with the uncontacted Indians... We will not allow this to happen because it will be another genocide of a people... of an indigenous group which doesn't want contact."

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<http://www.survivalinternational.org/news/11257>

MEXICO

Me'phaa Indigenous communities, in the state of Guerrero, urge the Supreme Court to set a legal precedent and declare unconstitutional the mining act. During a press conference, the agrarian, municipal and traditional authorities of the Indigenous Me'phaa (Tlapaneca) community of San Miguel Del Progreso – Juba Wajiín announced that Supreme Court judge Norma Lucia will rule on a highly-anticipated case on May 25. Accompanied by their advisers from the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre, they encouraged the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional the mining act passed in 1992, arguing it was violating international treaties that Mexico had signed and ratified.

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<http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Land-Not-a-Commodity-Indigenous-Mexicans-Fight-Mining-Act-20160519-0064.html>

Tell the Mexican Government to Reject Mining in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve

Mexico's largest mining company is attempting to use a legal loophole to secure one of the final permits it needs to begin potentially catastrophic copper, zinc, and lead ore mining in the protected [Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve](#). This UNESCO World Heritage site contains overwintering habitat for most of the Eastern population of the [monarch butterfly](#). Loss of habitat and destruction of milkweed, a plant required for the survival of monarchs, has led to a nearly two-thirds decline in the overwintering population in just 12 years. The Eastern population of North America's monarchs migrates every year to mountainous oyamel fir forests in Mexico, where the butterflies roost from October to late March before returning to the U.S. and southern Canada. This is unique, as the monarch is the only butterfly known to make a two-way migration.

READ MORE AND SIGN THE PETITION

<https://takeaction.takepart.com/actions/tell-the-mexican-government-to-reject-mining-in-the-monarch-butterfly-biosphere-reserve>

PANAMA

Panama's indigenous tribes launch drones to fight deforestation

Indigenous people in Panama are using drones as a new weapon to monitor deforestation on their lands as thousands of hectares disappear every year in one of the world's most biodiverse rainforests, the United Nations said. More than half of Panama is covered with tropical rainforest, home to various indigenous groups who rely on the forests to survive. "The main objective of monitoring with drones is to identify changes in specific points of the

forest cover," the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said in a statement on Wednesday. "The monitoring is carried out in areas under deforestation and degradation pressure, which are only observable with high resolution spatial images." Indigenous people make up nearly 13 percent of Panama's population of 4 million, with about 200,000 living on autonomous tribal lands, known as comarcas.

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<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-panama-deforestation-idUSKCN0Y00BT>

ARGENTINA

Argentina's indigenous people face 'appalling' plight: U.N.

Argentina must do more to ensure indigenous groups can defend their land rights and claim title deeds without facing intimidation and violence from security forces, a U.N. expert said. Mutuma Ruteere, U.N. special rapporteur on racism and related intolerance, also called for indigenous groups - which make up roughly two percent of Argentina's 43 million people - to be represented in the country's government and judiciary. "Most alarming are the reported trends of repression, in several parts of the country, against the mobilization by indigenous groups to claim their rights; and the reprisals against indigenous civil rights defenders and leaders as well as members of their families," Ruteere said in a statement at the end of his first visit to Argentina. The government must protect rights campaigners, "who are subjected, along with their families, to judicial harassment and persecution by security forces throughout the country", he said.

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<http://www.businessinsider.com/r-argentinas-indigenous-people-face-appalling-plight-un-2016-5?IR=T>

NORTH AMERICA

Media in Indian country collapses, Native Americans efforts surge to defend Mother Earth

The collapse of the media, and specifically the media in Indian country, has accelerated the human rights abuses of Indigenous Peoples, increased the poisoning of the land and rivers and resulted in the theft of water rights and natural resources. In breaking news today, Indigenous Peoples are opposing the co-opting at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the United Nations in New York. Indigenous are opposing false solutions, including carbon trading and false green solutions.

READ MORE

<http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/brenda-norrell/2016/05/media-indian-country-collapses-native-americans-efforts-surge-defend>

CANADA

Chief Isadore Day Statement on Premier Wynnes Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples

Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day on behalf of the Political Confederacy and the Chiefs of Ontario issued this statement in the Ontario legislature today regarding the Ontario's Statement of Reconciliation: "Today, we journey together toward the Restoration of the rights originally recognized through sacred and binding Treaties with our Ancestors; and Reparation of lives of First Nation People damaged by Indian Residential Schools in Ontario.

We are here today on the traditional land of the Mississaugas of New Credit. This is a land walked upon and shared by so many Peoples from so many Indigenous Nations. We are the Anishinabek, Mushkegowuk, Onkwehonwe, and Lenape — the First Peoples of Turtle Island. This is our land — Ontario – land of blue waters.

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<http://www.manitoulin.ca/2016/05/30/ontario-regional-chief-isadore-days-statement-premier-wynnes-commitment-reconciliation-indigenous-peoples/>

We journey together toward the Restoration of the rights – Chief Day

The Indian Act of 1876 formalized the chains of oppression that we as First Nations Peoples continue to struggle to break free of; to this day. Combined colonialism – the Indian Act, along with the full implementation of the Residential School system – would become the malevolent scheme towards the destruction of our humanity. This colonial force created such a high level of dysfunction and despair for so many generational decades, that its effects continue to impact the wellbeing of our families to this day through intergenerational trauma – a communal post trauma experienced in all First Nations in this province. We also continue to be subject to policy and legislation that shape and control our lives; the progenies of the Indian Act system – unjustified and unjust jurisdiction against Our People and Our Lands. The deepness of poverty that continues to kill Our People, this is not right – this has never been right – in a land as rich as Ontario. Our Ancestors did not envision these present horrors when they agreed to share the wealth of the land, – this goes against the original treaties of Peace and Friendship.

READ MORE

<http://www.netnewsledger.com/2016/05/30/journey-together-toward-restoration-rights-chief-day/>

First Nations, Metis want say in UN declaration implementation

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) also called Thursday on all levels of government to address a recent finding that 69 per cent of children living on First Nations live in poverty. The high poverty rate reported this week by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives "is a result of severe underfunding of our communities especially in the areas of education, child welfare and investments in community infrastructure," FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron said. In a province with such high rates of First Nations children in poverty, it makes

sense for First Nations to be involved in resource businesses to offset the costs of housing, youth and elder programming and other services, he said in an interview Thursday.

READ MORE

<http://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/first-nations-metis-want-say-in-un-declaration-implementation>

Will Canada Recognize Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Developing Countries Too?

While Canada's long-awaited support for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples brought hope and celebration last week, it's not yet clear whether the rights of Indigenous people in developing countries harmed by Canadian mining companies will also be included. For almost a decade, Ottawa had voted against the Declaration, a global set of collective human rights covering an array of indigenous issues. The Conservative government that was voted out last year claimed that the provision requiring government to consult indigenous groups before making any decision that might impact their way of life or their ability to exercise rights over traditional lands and territories would amount to a indigenous veto on major resource projects. Signing the Declaration would be ignoring the human rights of non-indigenous Canadians, it asserted.

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<http://www.ipsnews.net/2016/05/will-canada-recognise-rights-of-indigenous-peoples-in-developing-countries-too/>

Canada Removes Objector Status and Officially Adopts United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Government of Canada voted against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ("UNDRIP") when it was first passed by the General Assembly in 2007. Three years later, the federal government accepted UNDRIP with qualifications as an "aspirational document". On May 10, 2016, Indigenous Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett officially announced that Canada would now fully support UNDRIP, without qualification, and affirmed Canada's commitment to adopt and implement UNDRIP in accordance with the Canadian Constitution. UNDRIP recognizes Indigenous peoples' basic human rights, language, equality, land and their right to control their own lives. It also contains an article which requires the state to obtain the free, prior and informed consent ("FPIC") of concerned Indigenous peoples prior to the approval of any project affecting their lands, territories or other resources. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission raised UNDRIP in 13 of its 94 recommendations, including a recommendation that Canada adopt and fully implement UNDRIP.

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<http://www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=c129be34-5424-41bf-ae98-94592440c7c5>

AFRICA

Corporate Oil Palm Plantations in Africa and the Destruction of Local Farming Communities

On Friday 3 June, African citizens, organizations and unions will disrupt the shareholder meeting of the Bolloré group at its headquarters in Puteaux, just outside of Paris, France. The protestors represent a movement composed of thousands of farmers who have been displaced from their lands by industrial oil palm and rubber plantations. Since Wednesday, this movement has also been occupying factories and plantations in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The representatives of the African diaspora—who will gather on 3 June at 9:00am at Bolloré Tower, 21-32 quai de Dion Bouton in Puteaux—come bearing the following message: “Since we no longer have access to our lands, we will prevent you from accessing your meeting”. The protestors have organized a sit-in and a non-violent blockade to stop the [shareholders' meeting](#) from taking place. They also demand that Vincent Bolloré explain why the company Socfin (of which Bolloré owns a 38.7% share) has failed to comply with [2013 and 2014 commitments](#) intended to resolve conflicts between local communities and Socfin plantations. Bolloré, who is also the head of the Paris-based media company Vivendi, will face a broad coalition including African organizations, NGOs, the French farmers' union Confédération Paysanne and the activist group Attac. Parallel to this action in France, affected communities will carry out [demonstrations and blockades](#) at the facilities of Socfin subsidiaries in West Africa: Socapalm in Cameroon, SOGB in Côte d'Ivoire, LAC in Liberia and SAC in Sierra Leone.

READ MORE

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/corporate-oil-palm-plantations-in-africa-and-the-destruction-of-local-farming-communities/5528434>

LIBERIA

Liberia charges top politicians, British mining company in massive corruption and patronage case

THREE top politicians and a British mining firm at the centre of a massive corruption scandal have been charged with “economic crimes,” Liberia’s Information Minister Eugene Nagbe said Wednesday. Chairman of the ruling Unity Party Varney Sherman, parliamentary speaker Alex Tyler former junior mining minister Ernest Jones all face charges, along with London-based Sable Mining, according to Nagbe. Sherman was arrested on Wednesday following allegations by campaign group Global Witness that he orchestrated a vast political patronage network based on bribery on behalf of the firm. “The indictment for now concerns only Speaker Tyler, Varney Sherman, Ernest C.B. Jones, Chris Onunuga and Sable Mining. Other people are still being investigated,” Nagbe told French news agency AFP. Sherman was the Liberian legal fixer for Sable, co-founded by former England international cricketer Phil Edmonds, between 2010 and 2012, as it sought to gain a foothold in the country’s lucrative iron ore industry.

READ MORE

<http://mgafrica.com/article/2016-05-26-liberia-charges-top-politicians-british-mining-firm-in-massive-corruption-case>

KENYA

Locked out of their forests, Kenya's Sengwer people fight back

Edwin Kipkotich Kiprono was asleep in the forest beside his brothers and the family's 10 cows, when he was woken by the sound of 40 guards running towards them. The 21-year-old is a member of the Sengwer community, traditional hunter gatherers who have been playing cat-and-mouse games with Kenya's authorities since British colonists evicted them from their land in the late 19th century. "I woke my brothers and we ran," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "If they caught us, they'd arrest us." In the darkness, he heard about 10 other families fleeing Kenya Forest Service (KFS) guards in the Cherangani Hills, some 400 kilometres (249 miles) north-west of the capital Nairobi. The Sengwer say they have been evicted from their ancestral land more than 20 times since it was gazetted as a forest reserve in 1964. The case illustrates continuing tensions between indigenous peoples' land rights and conservation policies throughout the globe, campaigners say.

READ MORE

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3597958/Locked-forests-Kenyas-Sengwer-people-fight-back.html#ixzz4AWxlHVlq>

UGANDA

Uganda: Minority Groups Struggle for Land, Representation

Historically, western Uganda was cloaked by forest cover, which was the home of the Batwa, an ancient traditional forest hunter-gatherer minority ethnic group. However, in the 1990s, the Batwa became casualties of a battle to save forests when what they called home, the Mgahinga and Bwindi forests were protected as national parks. They have never recovered from the trauma of being forced out of these gazetted forest areas in as far as they attempt to adopt "modern life". Likewise, the Basongora and Banyabindi, minority communities in western Uganda, were also evicted from part of their ancestral lands in 1952 by the colonial government to create Queen Elizabeth National Park in Kasese District. They also both accuse the Bakonzo, a dormant tribe in Kasese for encroaching on and grabbing their land.

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<http://allafrica.com/stories/201605160522.html>

ETHIOPIA

On Wednesday April 27th, an Ethiopian court sentenced indigenous leader and land rights activist Okello Akway Ochalla to nine years in prison. Mr. Okello is a Norwegian citizen who was kidnapped in South Sudan and unlawfully renditioned to Ethiopia in March 2014. His crime: speaking to international media including the BBC and the Voice of America about the 2003 massacre and the ongoing plight of the people of Gambella. In 2003, Mr. Okello was Governor of the Gambella region of Ethiopia when a massacre of indigenous Anuak people

took place at the hands of the Ethiopian Security Forces. An Anuak himself, Mr. Okello fled Ethiopia and eventually sought asylum in Norway. In the ensuing years, he continued to advocate for justice and the rights of the Anuaks. Because of this activism, he was branded a terrorist and arrested in 2014. Earlier this month, after a lengthy trial in which the primary evidence against Mr. Okello was a self-confession signed under torture, his charges were lessened from terrorism to criminal charges. Despite this small glimmer of hope, we are appalled by the court's sentence.

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<http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/action-behalf-indigenous-land-rights-leader-ethiopia>

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