



Canadian Mining Company Torex Gold Resources Inc; Archetype of Violence in Guerrero

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Since 2010, in the heart of the municipality of Cocula in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, Canadian mining company Torex Gold Resources Inc. has been operating through its subsidiary *Minera Media Luna S.A. de C.V.*. Its Limón-Guajes project is an open pit and underground gold and silver mine. Since the company's arrival, it has been one of the spoiled favourites of diverse political operators in the state of Guerrero, especially the governors of the day, as well as having received repeat visits from the Canadian diplomatic mission in Mexico. This has allowed Mr. Fred Stanford, Torex Gold Director, President and CEO, to move freely with complete impunity, despite hundreds of harms committed by the company and its violent operators, particularly in the communities of Nuevo Balsas, La Fundición, Real de Limón and Atzacala.

Since which time the company has been in the area, its operations have been shut down various times as a result of actions taken by mine opponents and workers. On each occasion, some sort of violence has been perpetrated against them by workers affiliated with the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM by its initials in Spanish, a "protection union" that does not legitimately represent workers) and organized crime, which has for years operated openly in the area in favour of the company, controlling who comes and goes, offering jobs and suppressing the population at its whim. The list of harms that have taken place is just as long as the impunity that operates in the country, starting with the people who were displaced from the community La Fundición who had to flee the country or move to other states to avoid being assassinated. The appearance of false land titles used to dispossess the original owners of their land and the forced relocation of around 170 families from La Fundición and Real del Limón. The mine has also contaminated water supplies, which has permanently affected the economic activity and health of fishers in the community of Nuevo Balsas. The University of Guerrero distorted the information about the contamination as if the company had no role, which is hardly surprising given that the university has received funds for years from Torex Gold, as well as from Goldcorp when it was still operating [the Los Filos mine] in Carrizalillo, Guerrero.

In addition, there have been multiple cases of extortion, people being picked up and either threatened or disappeared, and kidnappings. We recall what took place to the three brothers Victor, Miguel and Modesto Rebolledo Salinas, members of the community Real del Limón who were picked up shortly after their other brother, Eligio Rebolledo Salinas, was shot and seriously injured. Another pair of brothers were assassinated, Victor and Marcelino Sahuaitla Peña, who had been workers opposed to being exploited by the company and the CTM. The most remarkable aspect of their assassination is that it took place in sight of so-called “military officials” assigned to patrol #0827327, which several days prior had installed a security checkpoint in the area. The checkpoint was in response to a 600-strong worker strike that shut down mine operations as part of their struggle for the freedom of association, freedom of union representation and freedom to collective negotiations as fundamental rights. Shortly later, another leader in this worker struggle was murdered, Mr. Quintin Salgado Salgado. This cleanup that the company and its assassins undertook to get rid of people struggling for their rights also included – of course – individual and mass dismissals of workers. Meanwhile, others have continued to be persecuted in a grotesque manner, considering the disappearance of opponents such as Oscar Hernández Romero on September 23 of this year. Since this time, over a hundred people have gone looking for him in different parts of Cocula. His disappearance is retaliation for the legal action that 200 workers who were unjustifiably dismissed have taken against the company. Now, the pseudo-community police, made up of assassins who operate in favour of the company, have decided to shut down their search, issuing death threats against the friends who are looking for their leader.

Below we share a brief outline of the recurring harms that have taken place in connection with the violent Canadian mining company Torex Gold Resources Inc. We do so in order to shed light on a story that has not been told and that has been little analyzed, except perhaps by the publication *Diario El Sur* in Acapulco.

Since the [2017] closure of the company’s operations as a result of the 600-strong worker strike demanding that the company refuse to recognize the collective agreement with the CTM union any longer, there have been a series of violent events gradually taking place, making an increasingly notorious case. In response, there were attempts at a solidarity visits by diverse actors, who were also detained by groups of assassins on their way to the area. High ranked state representatives also appeared, along with Canadian diplomats, the state and municipal police, the gendarmerie and the army, as well as representatives of the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Allied Workers of the Mexican Republic (STMMSRM by its initials in Spanish), led by now Senator Gómez Urrutia who, using the influence that he has in Canada, brought the United Steelworkers (USW) into the fray. The USW urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to intervene with Mexican authorities to stop the repression against the worker strike. The Canadian union also issued a press release denouncing that the subsidiary of Torex Gold Resources had struck an alliance with the CTM union to associate all of its workers to that union without their consent, stating that this is a “corrupt practice” that is illegal both in Canada and the U.S. Support from these unions soon led to a case before the Federal Board for Conciliation

and Arbitration where at least two public hearings took place to determine the date when a vote would be held to select a union, which clearly pointed toward the creation of a section under the STMMSRM.

In the press, a date for the vote was announced to finally determine the change in union. However, one day prior to the date set by the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, the company widely distributed a communiqué in which it expressed its pleasure at an internal agreement that had been reached by the parties, with which the strike was lifted and - with the stroke of a pen - the conflict, the assassinations, the kidnappings and the cases of extortion were all forgotten. Nothing further was known of the national or international support that mine opponents had received from the STMMSRM and the USW. The repressive Mr. Fred Stanford, President and CEO of Torex Gold Resources Inc., heaped exuberant praise on himself, lauding his good business sense. But it was all a lie because the testimonies of the opponents state that it was organized crime acting in favour of the company who suddenly ended the strike with their arrival and threat to kill everyone if the strike did not stop. All the support for the workers was withdrawn without a word from the national and international unions, the state and municipal governments, the Federal Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, the Canadian diplomats, or the state and federal armed forces. Meanwhile, Mr. Stanford was widely celebrating “the great agreement” that had been reached.

This summary helps to explain that the violent reality that the communities in the municipality of Cocula and surrounding municipalities live with has not changed one bit. The federal government continues to be absent in the area, despite the effect created by the case of the young men from Ayotzinapa. As a result, impunity continues to be at the centre of corporate power that has every political operator in the state suppressed, submissive and bought out. Mining “progress and development”, as REMA has documented and denounced ad nauseum, is - to put it lightly – an atrocity.

REMA expresses our solidarity with the struggle of the men and women who are living with systemic violence throughout the area known as the “Guerrero Gold Belt”. We know that this is a struggle that you are fighting in complete solitude because, for some time, the state has been fully in the pockets of organized crime and the mining companies. In this context, we recognize the tremendous efforts you are making to hold your heads high and continue to fight for life.

When will the simulation and impunity end?

If the Fourth Transformation fails to get clarity about this root issue, everything that is said in the daily morning press conferences will be totally irrelevant

We demand the appearance with life of Oscar Hernández Romero

For Territories Free of Mining

Mexican Network of Mining Affected People