

*Collection,  
summary and  
edition by Sam  
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# MINES & TERRITORY

News comes and goes. With social media as the main outlet for civil society organizations in Colombia to get their stories heard, a story can be famous for a day and disappear in the mass information the next. Mines & Territory aims to **register and share these stories** for longer than just a viral thread. Mines & Territory collects the **most remarkable events** that have occurred in the **past month** regarding **extractivist matters in Colombia** and summarizes them in English so that the information is accesible to anyone interested and raises awareness internationally to the current eco-socio realities in Colombia.

## SEVEN SOCIAL LEADERS KILLED IN FIRST WEEK OF 2019

One human rights activist or social leader was murdered every two days in Colombia over the last year, that makes 172 murders in total, a 36.5 percent increase on 2017. Good intentions for 2019 stayed out as 7 social leaders, all defenders of human rights, already got killed only in the first week of January. Colombia's Procurator Fernando Carrillo calls it 'a humanitarian tragedy'. He states that the murder of social organizers "is the first major problem that the country has at this time". To ensure that the authorities take their responsibilities he will convene a "reunion for life" to address the situation of social leaders, following the murders registered at the beginning of this year. Carrillo will invite President Ivan Duque as well as ministers responsible for portfolios related to population protection, and commanders of the Public Force to the meeting. Since 2016, 431 activists have been killed in Colombia, the majority coming from indigenous, black and peasant communities.

The most dangerous areas for social leaders are: Cauca, Chocó, Valle del Cauca, Caquetá, Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Córdoba, Cesar, Meta, Nariño, Sucre and Putumayo.

The National Indigenous Organization urges for better protection for their communities. They clarify that since Duque took office in August, violence against their leaders has surged. Furthermore, there's a lack of coordination and transparency in the numbers of the crimes reported by several authorities, an example: the National Police affirms that the crimes perpetrated against social leaders in 2018 were 78, the 'Sistema de Alertas Precoces del Defensor del Pueblo' (Early Warning System of the Defense of the People) affirms that there were 164 and 'el movimiento Marcha Patriótica' (the Patriotic March movement) registered 252.

*Sources: ELTIEMPO 'El mapa de los líderes sociales asesinados en Colombia'; SEMANA 'Líderes sociales en Colombia por qué los están matando'; CANALI 'Amenazas líderes defensores del medioambiente'; LIBRE RED 'Colombia 7 líderes sociales asesinados primera semana año'; TRT WORLD 'Colombian rights activist killed every two days in 2018'; TELESUR ENGLISH 'Colombia Attorney General Says Activist Murders Need Probe'; PACIFISTA COLOMBIA instagrampage.*

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## THE COLOMBIAN STATE SOLD THE STATE COMPANY ECOPETROL

As the tax reform bill of the Colombian government only reached half of its target: \$7,14 trillion pesos instead of \$14 trillion pesos, the government wants to sale 8.9 percent of their stake in state-run oil firm Ecopetrol. The company is one of the four main petroleum producers in Latin-America and the state owns about 88.49 percent of Ecopetrol. The profits of the sale might mostly serve for the improvement of other economic sectors as large-scale industrial agronomy and a better infrastructure for exportation. Mario Valencia, spokesman of the network for taxable justice, criticizes the deal: "They want to tap the fiscal gap by selling a state company as a gift for the biggest companies and the rich elite of this country. The state will lose around \$ 600.000 million pesos every year on average without the foreseen dividends.

*Source: REUTERS 'Colombia evaluating selling stake in ecopetrol minister'; ELESPECTADOR '¿La Bolsa de Valores de Colombia necesita la venta de acciones de Ecopetrol?'; COLOMBIA24 'A Inversión, \$ 10 Billones Que Daría La Venta De Acciones De Ecopetrol'.*

## A FIRE DESTROYED A PART OF PÁRAMO (100 HECTÁREAS OF FRAILEJONES BURNED DOWN) IN PALOMAR, ANZOÁTEGUI, TOLOMIA

A burned farmland is probably the cause of a two-day fire that destroyed about 100 hectares of *Paramós* in Anzoátegui. The fire escalated because of the extreme temperatures in the highest area of Anzoátegui. Due to the fire, the mount lost lots of *Frailejones*. Those are typical *Paramó* vegetation, which absorb a lot of water and can reach ages up to hundreds of years. It takes at least 300 years to grow *Frailejones* of the same altitude as those destroyed in the fire. Authorities talk about a disaster, as it's one of the most important ecosystems in the area, providing almost 80 % of the water supply in Tolima, and warn people to be extremely careful with 'quemadas controladas', since it's not the first time this habit causes forest-fires.

*Source: VALENTINA CAMACHO TWITTER Status 4 enero 2019, 'ELTIEMPO: 'Controlan incendio que consumió 100 hectáreas en zona de páramo'*

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## THE UNIVERSITY OF ANTIOQUIA (PUBLIC UNIVERSITY) SIGNED A CONTRACT OF COOPERATION WITH MINING COMPANY ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI AND ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS MANAGED TO DEMAND ITS CANCELLATION.

Friends of the Earth Colombia warns for a cooperation between the public University of Antioquia and the multinational mining company of AngloGold Ashanti. They agreed on the implementation of a graduate/course in collaboration with several social organizations in the region of Jericó. It's worrying to see that the company uses the position of an "independent" university to greenwash their intentions to further, illegal exploration on the Quebradona mining project. The university, as a public actor, should remain critical and independent towards the acts of companies. Especially if it's proven that Ashanti's actions cause nefast consequences on human and nature rights. Therefore the organizations demand the university to show transparency about the cooperation with the company.

Later in January we heard the news that environmental organizations succeeded in the suspension of the graduate/course in "organizational reinforcement". The

course would take place from mid-January to mid-February and would train 40 social leaders in Jericó in topics such as leadership, self-management, and sustainability. The University canceled the project after 60 environmental organizations questioned in an open letter the intentions of the multinational as a financier of the course. They furthermore express their worries about the alliance between the public university and the mining company. Therefore they demand transparency about the contract that was signed with AngloGold Ashanti. The community of Jericó took several steps to stop the mining project of 'La Quebradona', which is currently in the phase of exploration. The company discovered a deposit of copper, gold, silver, and molybdenum 500 meters deep in the bordering mountains between Jericó and Tarsus. It would set the beginning of the first subterranean big scale mining project in Colombia. Last year, the council municipality of Jericó prohibited mining activities through a municipal agreement.

*Source: CONTAGIORADIO 'Suspenden diplomado financiado por Anglo Gold Ashanti en La Universidad de Antioquia'; CENSAT AGUA VIVA 'Alerta por alianza entre la Universidad de Antioquia y la AngloGold Ashanti Rechazamos que la Universidad Pública sea cooptada por el extractivismo'.*

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## IN CAMPO VELÁSQUEZ, LIVESTOCK STARTED DYING AFTER MANSAROVAR ENERGY STARTED EXPLORATIONS

In a video that circulates on Twitter, a woman shows how a lot of her chickens passed away because of stress, panic, heat and noise caused by the perforations of the company. The locals say they have contacted the staff of Mansarovar Energy on the matter but haven't been heard by the company.

*Source: MEDDAT CAQUETA ON TWITTER, 'Post January 5 2019'; BOYACA EXTRA 'Boyacenses denuncian a empresa de perforación por muerte de gallinas'.*

## MINING PROTEST IN JERICÓ

Tuesday, 24th of January 2019, a group of 40 farmers coming from the Palocabildo village and its surroundings occupied a mining platform of AngloGold Ashanti. The goal of the farmers was to remain on the platform until the mayor of Jericó would appear and promise to fulfill the municipal agreement that bans mining on the territory of Jericó.

On the 28th of January, the mayor of Jericó decided to suspend the exploration activity that AngloGold Ashanti was realizing nearby a farm in the area of Jericó. According to the

mayor, Jorge Pérez Hernández, the company's activities did not confirm the municipal agreement, set up the 20th of November 2018, which prohibits any exploration or exploitation in the area for mining purposes in order to protect the ecological and cultural patrimony. "The company should have suspended its activities at the moment in which the agreement was officialized. We waited for the company to accept the prohibition but they didn't and continued doing their activities. So I had to take measures", explains the mayor. He furthermore openly supports the act of the farmers who went protesting on the platform where the mining company was present. In a reaction, a representative of Anglogold declares that they were only studying the soil and not doing any kind of active exploration. He confirms that the company accepts the measures taken by the municipality but that it does not agree on them, as they consider the measure as an act against the law. In the past similar measures taken by several municipalities in the region have been declared invalid by the regions tribunal (Tribunal de Antioquia) as the soil (what's under the surface) would belong to the Colombian state and not to the local authorities.

*Source: CARACOL 'Campesinos se tomaron campamento de AngloGold Ashanti en Jericó'; SEMANA 'Alcalde de Jericó hace valer acuerdo municipal y saca a multinacional minera del territorio; ELCOLOMBIANA; 'Jericó suspende actividad minera de AngloGold Ashanti'.*

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## IN SANTURBAN (SANTANDER) THE ARAB MULTINATIONAL MINESA HAS APPLIED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL PERMIT TO START EXPLOITING SUBTERRANEAN MINING IN THE AREA.

Handing in their ecological impact report to extract gold for a period of 23 years, the company makes clear its intentions for mining in the area nearby the natural ecozone of the Santurban Paramó. Last year, the company already handed in a report to get the permit but then they surprisingly recalled their request. They clarify that the current report provides better conservation of the natural sources, the territory, and the communities through advanced mining techniques. Voices against and in favor are standing up, on all levels. Although the project would generate 5000 (in-)direct jobs, Erwin Rodríguez-Salah (Comité para la Defensa de Santurbán) does not understand how the ANLA (institute responsible for environmental permits) accepts the request when the new barriers of the Paramo reserve aren't even defined. The mayor of Bucaramanga is against the mine as it might affect the water provision of 3 million people in the Santander Area. Although there's no permit yet for the project, the company is already investing in housing and infrastructure

in the area as if they succeeded to get the permit.

*Sources: ELTIEMPO 'Segundo round de Minesa en batalla por explotar oro cerca de Santurbán'; RAZONPUBLICA 'Las grandes mineras tienen mucho y van por más este año'; MIINESA 'Nuestro Proyecto'; LAFM 'Solicitud de licencia ambiental de Minesa para explotación en Soto Norte genera alerta'; VANGUARDIA 'Minesa vuelve a solicitar licencia ambiental'.*

## MINESA STARTS UP A PROJECT WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO STRENGTHEN THEIR IMAGE AND STATUS WITH THE LOCALS AND THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC

How to greenwash when you are a contaminating and human rights violating multinational, and up your corporate responsibility through charity? Minesa kicks off the new year as a co-founder of the 'Mi Campo' program in which they seek to improve the commercialization of 'unknown' exotic fruits with a high potential in and around the villages of California and Surata, giving opportunities to the local community in the areas where they seek for large-scale mining.

*Source: VANGUARDIA '5 frutas exóticas de California y Surata se pondrán de moda en Colombia'; JORGE ORTIZ PRADA ON TWITTER 'Post January 7 2019'.*

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## A NEW SOURCE OF PETROL THAT HAS BEEN DISCOVERED IN CABUYARO (PROVINCE OF META) WILL PROVIDE LOTS OF OIL.

The Colombian government feels fortunate with the discovery of the new crude oil spring in Cabuyaro. President Duque confirmed the news: the source will provide about 4000 barrels a day. María Fernanda Suárez, minister of Mines and Energy calls it a good stimulus for the reactivation of the petrol sector. "In the province of Meta, presumptions said that most sources in Cuanca de los Llanos might have been explored now. The discovery of the new source shows that the oil potential of Colombia still has to be discovered and extracted", according to Suárez.

Nonetheless, it is proven that oil extraction can cause huge risks for the environment and the biodiversity in the region. Local citizens mostly have no choice than moving elsewhere when oil companies set foot on their lands.

*Sources: LAREPUBLICA 'La ANH y Duque confirmaron nuevo hallazgo de petróleo en pozo del Meta'.*

## UPDATE ABOUT DECISION CONSTITUTIONAL COURT TO PROHIBIT CONSULTA POPULAR

Researchers and academics of prestigious universities worldwide requested the supreme court to recall their verdict on sentence SU095 of 2018 which limits the participation of communities through 'consultas populares' on environmental issues such as mining and oil extraction. They argue that the 'consultas populares' function as an important participation mechanism which allows communities to solve social and environmental conflicts in a civilized and non-violent way. They furthermore encourage the court to make an effort to ensure that the results of 'consultas populares' are properly recognized and given a value in the allotment of admissions to mining companies. This sentence does not only limit fundamental, international rights of Colombians but might as well put at risk the new peace agreement and the possibilities to prevent the new generations for new violence.

*Sources: RED POR LA JUSTICIA AMBIENTAL COLOMBIA 'Infografía: sentencia de la Corte Constitucional sobre Consultas Populares'; COMITE AMBIENTAL EN DEFENSA DE LA VIDA 'Investigadores Y Académicos De Prestigiosas Universidades Del Mundo Solicitaron A La Corte Constitucional Declarar La Nulidad De La Sentencia SU 095 De 2018'*

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## A HUGE PETROVIADUCT OF 780 KM WILL CROSS 4 REGIONS WITH HIGH NATURAL RICHNESS IN COLOMBIA.

The Oleoducto al Pacífico (OAP) is a megaproject that will transport thinner from Buenaventura to the Llanos sedimentary basin where petrol is extracted. The pipeline will have a total length of 780 km and will pass through 4 regions: Orinoquia, Amazonia, Andina, Pacífica. The fact that the pipeline will pass through national park Picachos, raises a lot of questions: What about the risks for fauna and flora in the park? What about the inhabitants in the area? What's the risk for the surrounding water reservoirs in the natural area if there's a leak? Another example of a controversial project that divides communities and organizations.

*Sources: LAS2ORILLAS 'Oleoducto al Pacífico, el proyecto que afectará a cuatro regiones naturales de Colombia'.*

## DEATH TOLL BROMADINHO DAM DISASTER (25/01) IN BRAZIL RAISES UP TO 115.

A video that reveals the collapse of the dam was recently revealed as the death toll rises to 115. 248 others are still missing and thousands had to flee their homes due to the mud stream of toxic mining waste. Authorities say there's not much hope left to find survivors. It exposes once again the risk of big scale mining projects and an unstrict and weak regulation/supervision by the authorities. Ironically, only three days after the disaster, the authorities had to evacuate 24000 inhabitants in the same small city of Brumadinho because another dam closeby was apparently about to collapse as well.

“Environmental groups say industry regulations have reduced, rather than increased, since mining dams burst in nearby Mariana in 2015 (a similar disaster 4 years ago in the same region) killing nine people, destroying forests and contaminating nearby rivers. Many expect the weakening of protections to continue under new president Jair Bolsonaro, who has claimed regulation is hampering several industries including mining.”

*Sources: INDEPENDENT 'Moment Brazil dam collapsed caught on video as death toll rises to 115'; ELPAIS 'Brasil evacúa a 24.000 personas por el riesgo de rotura de otra presa en Brumadinho'.*

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## AMAZON AFFECTED BY AT LEAST 2300 SPOTS OF ILLEGAL MINING

The study 'Amazonia Saqueada' by RAISG (Red Amazónica de Información Socioambiental Georreferenciada) reports more than 2300 spots in the Amazon where illegal mining occurs. The spots diverge from Venezuela to Brasil, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. The overview has been put on an interactive satellite map that scales the impact of the problem. The raising gold prizes of the last decade triggers gold diggers to seek for gold and other minerals such as Diamant and coltan in the most remote areas of the Amazon. Untouched nature becomes suddenly a victim of extractive small-scale mining. Toxics such as mercury used to purify gold contaminate the rivers and the fish people eat. Mercury forms a danger for the health of local populations. High levels of mercury have already been measured in the hair of several indigenous clans. As the Amazon rainforest covers an enormous area, it's not easy to put a brake on all these widely dispersed mining activities. Scientists warn for the impact of this phenomenon as illegal miners do not operate according to environmental and social restrictions. Lots of small illegal mining activities might altogether have a heavy impact on the ecosystem, the biodiversity as well as on the indigenous people.

*Sources: LAS2ORILLAS 'Oleoducto al Pacífico, el proyecto que afectará a cuatro regiones naturales de Colombia'.*

### About CATAPA

*CATAPA is a volunteering organization (°2005) that works around sustainable development and alternative globalisation, with a focus on the mining issues and Latin America.*

*To contribute concretely to a sustainable solution for the ecological and climate crisis, we encourage a fairer mining industry and a more sustainable use of metals. We do this through awareness raising, networking, research, lobbying, exchange*

*programs and supporting farming communities that are threatened by multinational mining companies in our partner countries Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. CATAPA also follows some open-pit mining cases in Europe, especially in Romania and Greece.*

*CATAPA is short for Comité Académico Técnico de Asesoramiento a Problemas Ambientales, literally Technical Academic Committee for Assistance in Environmental Issues.*

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