

*Collection, summary and
edition by Jonas
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MINES & TERRITORY

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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 after which it disappears in the mass information. 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 accessible to anyone interested and raises awareness internationally to the current eco-socio realities in Colombia.

FRANCIA MÁRQUEZ: ILLEGAL MINING AS A STRATEGY OF THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AFTER THE COVID-19 CRISIS.

Francia Márquez, threatened social leader and winner of the Goldman Environmental Award for her fight against illegal mining, assures that the times after COVID 19 will not be the most promising for the communities who have been active in the fight against illegal mining.

She explains that the Colombian government will take advantage of the fall in oil prices and will strengthen the mining projects which they have been developing.

This of course will give profits to some, but at the same time reinforces the historical violation of the rights of the poorest. Regarding illegal mining, she says that now everything is apparently calm, but only because people are locked in their houses.

She claims that when the times of confinement end, due to the innumerable needs, many people will look to mining again in their search for a livelihood.

“And if we need water to wash our hands, how are we not going to protect the ecosystems that we have? Here and now we have to call on the human consciousness. So that from this crisis we finally understand that water is not born in a supermarket. Water is born in the territories.”

To conclude, Márquez affirms that the Colombian government will not do anything to stop illegal mining because it is part of its legitimization strategy so that large-scale mining projects can enter the territories.

“One would expect us to try to change, but what we see from the governments is that there is no intention to stop and transform ourselves because, to strengthen the economy, they are going to take advantage of that activity (mining) which for many is profitable in monetary terms, but devastating in ecological terms.”

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Concerning Covid, only the repetitive inefficiency of the State in these territories has been shown, which seems to have been intentional, says Francia:

"The pandemic clearly outlines the racism, institutional neglect and the corruption."

AS EXTRACTIVIST COMPANIES DIVIDE POPULATIONS, THEY MERGE AND "OPTIMIZE RESOURCES"

The Canadian multinational 'Gran Colombia Gold' and its new allies 'Guyana Goldfields' and 'Gold X' are hoping to extract a bit more than half million ounces of gold short term.

This merger demonstrates the clear intention to expand and strengthen mega-mining in Latin America, since this extractivist group will not only have Colombian mines, but also the others located in Guyana, where they would use the structures of the one to strengthen the other, the three of them Canadian multinationals.

The merger will maintain the name of Gran Colombia, an ironic name for the multinational considering its exploitation is invading the lands of the Chibchas indigenous communities.

*In this link you can see the complete interview carried out by Tatiana Rojas Hernández for the Colombian newspaper El Tiempo:
<https://www.eltiempo.com/vida/medio-ambiente/coronavirus-en-colombia-francia-marquez-explica-por-que-mineria-se-incrementara-tras-la-pandemia-490444>*

SOURCES:
<https://www.elcolombiano.com/negocios/gran-colombia-gold-va-por-fusion-minera-KC12980291> <https://latam-mining.com/gran-colombia-anuncia-fusion-con-gold-x/> <https://www.antioquiatic.edu.co/noticias-general/item/226-culturas-indigenas-de-antioquia>

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CLIMATE EMERGENCY IN ANTIOQUIA AND WATER FOR ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI

Before COVID-19 arrived in Colombia, the governor of Antioquia Anibal Gaviria announced a CLIMATE EMERGENCY in the department, which is marked by impressive mountains and colorful houses.

His announcement was based on the air quality, the rising numbers of forest fires and the unusual increases in temperature.

Despite the supposed concern of the governor of Antioquia, the huge amounts of water needed for mega-mining activities in Antioquia and the constant wink to mining company AngloGold Ashanti do not coincide with his environmental "uneasiness".

Approximately 6,419 cubic meters of water are required to supply some 50,000 people in a day, which is the same amount that AngloGold Ashanti has requested to use daily for its extractive activities.

If there is an emergency about forest fires, with what water will they be extinguished? Hopefully it won't be the water highly contaminated by mega mining that they are thinking of using.

Claudia Vasquez wrote in minuto30 on what is not told about AngloGold Ashanti and its projects in Antioquia, here the full article: https://www.minuto30.com/opinion/mineria-cobre-tiempos-emergencia-climatica/1023322/?fbclid=IwAR1yKyz9gYauOlz_zhdIOH8OY4e-qsJSw03Ts3yZMuQVfJNGpbbZWC7xVrLE

THE COPPER AND GOLD PROMISES FOR COLOMBIA BEFORE THE COVID HIT

On January 15, the PORTAFOLIO magazine listed the mining projects that are planned for the alleged development of Colombia on its digital platform, under the title "the four big projects that will move the mining sector in 2020".

The populations affected by the project of Soto Norte in Santander, and Quebradona, Gramalote and Burirtica in Antioquia are the possible medium-term victims of these projects who will be executed during two decades. They come with considerable promises for the next few years, which undoubtedly are driven by the corrupt hunger of Colombian politics at the cost of communities thirsty for satisfying their most basic needs.

About the project in Jericho is said: "The project is planned for a production of 23 years and would begin in 2024. It is estimated to extract 2.96 billion pounds of copper. The investment during the construction phase is between \$ 1 billion and \$ 1.2 billion; and in the operation stage between US\$ 55 million and US\$ 74 million."

So without any shame, on May 18, 2020, the Abu Dhabi multinational MINESA SAS shared the article on its web platform and showed with great pride that its project Soto Norte is within the goal and annual projection of Colombia, even when oil was at its regular price and COVID had not been the topic on the day-to-day table.

Is this a threat? For the Mines & Territory editorial group, recognizing the effects caused by mega-mining in each territory, it is one without a doubt.

The articles mentioned are available here: https://www.minesa.com/es_es/cuatro-grandes-proyectos-mineros-2020/<https://www.portafolio.co/economia/los-cuatro-grandes-proyectos-que-moveran-la-mineria-en-2020-537157>

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EXTRACTIVISM IS ALSO ENTERING THE INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES OF THE SIERRA NEVADA OF SANTA MARTA,

The definition and meaning of the Sierra Nevada in Santa Marta goes far beyond its landscape and its indisputable geological and mineral characteristics. Its historical and cultural wealth due to the sacred value of its soils trampled by Kogui, Arhuaco, Wiwa and Kankuamos feel matter very little when it comes to extractivism.

Tourism, energy and mineral extraction projects are projected in the "heart of the world", as the indigenous people who inhabit its spaces call it. The gold and oil that is within the so-called BLACK LINE, has jeopardized the protection of these sacred lands. The Colombian government, trying to solve everything, has proposed creating lines of delimitation: from here to there it is sacred land, from there to here is an area of extraction.

"For us, there is life in all the elements. The peaks, rivers, animals, plants, stones and planets are in constant interaction to achieve harmony and balance in nature and with ourselves."

Indigenous communities have expressed their complete discontentment. They feel threatened, their leaders who have exposed the problem are assassinated, autonomy is not recognized for their environmental and territorial decisions, and independent monitoring mechanisms have expressed the violation of their fundamental rights to participation and territorial autonomy.

Since 1973 the importance of the soils in 'the heart of the world' have been systematically questioned.

"There has always been pressure on the Sierra Nevada, but it was with President Alvaro Uribe that the number of mining applications and concessions exploded."

"Now, the legislative negligence leads us to 132 mining concessions and 260 applications to exploit minerals and carbon."

The reports of the Territorial Council of Indigenous Councils of the Sierra Nevada are indicating this threat with titles such as "The heart of the world is at risk for physical and cultural extermination".

Hopefully one day it will be something of the past to have to speak up about the exploited and violated ecosystems of the territories in Latin America.

Since 1973 the importance of the soils in 'the heart of the world' have been systematically questioned.

In these links you will see that the issue and the threat are very relevant today:

<https://www.colombiainforma.info/pueblos-indigenas-de-la-sierra-nevada-resisten-a-la-mineria/?fbclid=IwAR1VE03GYRauzPc1m9GTWSCdHoTSsNOC17KuWEYhz7Eza7PZ7JCdrdQ8GUk>

<https://sostenibilidad.semmana.com/impacto/articulo/mine-ria-y-megaproyectos-invaden-el-corazon-del-mundo-de-colombia/49866>

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ALVARO URIBE VELEZ, THE PRESIDENT OF EXPLOITING THE TERRITORIES. THE GENOCIDAL, AS ASSERTED BY THE DOCUMENTARY MATARIFE.

Colombia has a rather painful history. And in its list of active politicians the noted and investigated former president, is still very much present as senator of the republic, Alvaro Uribe Velez.

His name is resonating through the month of May, in the midst of a pandemic, in national and international media since the launch of the video WhatsApp series MATARIFE. The series is written by the lawyer Daniel Mendoza and was scheduled to launch on Friday the 22th of May.

They prereleased the series which talks about what Daniel Mendoza has depicted as 'the story behind the former president'. It shows the results of the investigation that Mendoza, who has received death threats, has carried out on Uribe Velez. The statements in this series seem to be so serious that there was an entire organizational and protective structure installed, so that even the death of those behind this production will not prevent the series from being published. Which is created to expose Uribe Velez.

The former president, whom Mendoza openly calls 'the genocidal', was the great exponent and best friend of extractivism in Colombia, granting mining concessions in the southeast of Antioquia and some 7,860 more on national territory.

In his last years of government, some 1,900 mining titles were granted in areas of Páramos (ecosystems of special care, supplying water to 85% of the Colombian population).

"In the eight years that the former president ruled, the area of hectares with a mining concession went from 1.13 million to 8.53 million. And the concessioned area in the Páramos more than doubled. Today, 6.3% of hectares in paramos (which amounts to 122 thousand hectares) are concessioned. "

He used tax exemptions for mining multinationals as an attraction mechanism for its foreign investment policy.

But not only this, it also took more than 7 months to sign a law (which was lying on his desk) that would prohibit mining activities in strategic areas of some Colombian ecosystems, whilst he was handing over mining titles. These issues would later trigger international lawsuits over legal prohibitions and political authorizations.

What a gentleman the former president is, to cheat the law, to favor his interests for land accumulation and to nurture his evident megalomania. In May we will see him exposed in the series MATARIFE. He the genocidal, he who is the unmentionable, the number 82 of the list of drug trafficking actors in Colombia according to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), he who handed over the Colombian soils to multinationals.

Written by Dayana Corzo

Sources: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pVbtNO6qyU>
<https://www.infobae.com/americas/agencias/2020/03/20/cidh-pide-a-colombia-proteger-a-cuatro-periodistas-amenazados/>
<https://sostenibilidad.semana.com/consumo-responsable/articulo/alvaro-uribe-y-la-mineria-en-colombia-el-cinismo-del-senador/38363>
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4lHh510lrExVmZxZ3QwRFk5MUE/view?fbclid=IwAR2Wfri5kzMy0i_rLAdyc6ZC3QUiyMZhd_BaH65Dxeo97B_tGxH9ejlHo-A
<https://diariolaeconomia.com/mineria-y-petroleo/item/2313-politica-minera-de-uribe-terminara-con-demandas-multimillonarias-al-estado.html>

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IN COVID-19 TIMES, WHAT ABOUT THE PACIFIC?

The extractivist model has no limits. Now the Colombian Pacific is being targeted as a possible region to carry out polymetallic extraction in the deep sea.

Mining on the deep seabed of the Pacific Ocean will cause "extensive and serious [damage], lasting for generations," says a report published by the Deep Sea Mining Campaign and MiningWatch Canada, which compiles more than 250 scientific articles.

The problem is that it is not only the Colombian seas that are in imminent risk of losing their ecosystems, the islands of the Central American Pacific are listed as possible victims of severe pollution due to the large-scale mining activity in its vicinity.

And like many of the cases where groups have denounced mega mining, the problem lies with uncertainty about the damage that would be caused.

The threat is clear, but there are no tools to know exactly what the cost of mining will be to ancient ecosystems, as its specific behaviors are not yet known and it is unclear how long it would take to recover.

"we have discovered only a handful of species down there and we do not know how ecosystems operate", beyond the fact that they are full of "unique and wonderful life forms" that would be damaged "for thousands of years" by mining activity.

The associations that compiled and signed the study know that COVID-19 will become the perfect smokescreen for pro-extractivist governments.

The right to efficient, transparent and timely participation would also be affected because under the pretext of no meetings and no social contact because of the virus, projects would be approved without significant debate.

Environmentalists have insisted on a moratorium to allow the principles of precaution and prevention for greater environmental damage.

The Pacific is undoubtedly at risk, with deep sea mining project now even more.

Soucers: <https://www.eltiempo.com/vida/ciencia/la-mineria-en-alta-mar-producira-danos-amplios-y-graves-en-el-pacifico-497318>

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MINESA AND ITS 'MAKEUP TRICK'

While some miners have to leave through the back door of many countries which became aware of the environmental damage the miners caused and terrified by reality, other countries open their doors and invite them to come in: serve them the banquet at ease; "The mining locomotive is here to stay!"

Colombia, as usual, is at the forefront in terms of exploitation — not just of its territory; also of its inhabitants—, and when saying Colombia, it is of course referring to the respective governments and the political class.

Four mining projects promise to breastfeed the sector in 2020: the Soto Norte complex in Santander and Quebradona, Gramalote and Burirticá in Antioquia. Therefore it is worth putting the emphasis on Santander, since the large-scale gold project that the Minesa megamine intends to develop between the municipalities of California and Suratá, is awaiting a public hearing to issue its corresponding environmental license.

And beyond the uncertainty about "what will happen", there is the bewilderment of the figures that the company refers to whenever it has an opportunity, since it speaks of a three-year scheduled assembly with an investment of 1 million US dollars daily, with the ambition to reach 1.2 trillion dollars. Likewise, Minesa maintains projections of taxes and royalties of 100 million dollars each year of the mining project. And, since the transaction is economic, the Arab multinational presents its figures: 30 billion dollars of social investment will be done between 2016 and 2018, as well as approximate 5,000 jobs that would be generated in the process.

According to its own sources, Minesa generates around 500 jobs in Santander, of which only 160 are direct. About 68% of its workers are outsourced through job exchanges, thereby avoiding the collective right to unionize and ensuring this by tightening the sanctions regime within its Internal Labor Regulations. Its quest to maintain secrecy in information continues and is renewed day by day with its economic power.

Isn't its intention evident to public opinion? They show a corporate image of social investment in the closest communities in order to legitimize their already controversial presence. Meanwhile they make the living conditions of their workers more precarious, who, in the end, integrate these same sectors. A makeup trick that cleverly hides the dull and suspicious character of your business goals. It seems that mining companies never improvise.

Written by Iván Darío Prada

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SALENTO WITHOUT PARTICIPATION, WITHOUT AUTONOMY AND WITH MINING ON THEIR SOILS.

A consultation with the town of Salento, Quindío was scheduled for July 15, 2018. The inhabitants of the municipality would be asked if they would agree to mega mining or not within the territory. The electoral authorities responded with the "impossibility" of voting.

So it was decided that through the municipal council an agreement would be made prohibiting mining activities that would endanger the soils of the beautiful territory of Salento.

In Colombia the Council of State has come and gone with their positions on whether the territories can make administrative decisions about the use of their land, sometimes the answer would be obvious: "Of course they can, they are the ones who live there and would also experience the consequences of mining! Of course they can decide for themselves!" Alas.

Different stakeholders have filed actions such as court cases to stop these agreements between the inhabitants of the municipality in Quindío, and have won, denying the possibility for the people of Salento to decide on the future of their land.

The Council of State, in another mistake, has said that national decisions must also be taken into account for coordination, and of course, decisions are made at the desks of the country's capital, while the towns are left with their polluted waters and infertile soils.

The violent and invasive extractivist model is neither allowing participation nor autonomy in Colombian lands.

Soucers: <https://www.elcolombiano.com/medio-ambiente/niegan-tutela-que-pretendia-revivir-prohibicion-de-mineria-en-salento-quindio-DG13048478>

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, Ecuador 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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