

# **The international Caravan of La Via Campesina advances for Cancun**

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The three caravans that left on November 28<sup>th</sup> for San Luis Potosi, Guadalajara and Acapulco arrived yesterday in Mexico City. They went by central urban avenues and today they headed to Cancun, where they will arrive on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

They constitute the fourth caravan and will be joined by two more, one coming from Chiapas and the other from Oaxaca, to arrive together in the camp installed by La Via Campesina and The National Assembly of Those Affected by the Environment, the Mexican Electricians Union and the Movement for National Liberation.

This series of mobilizations seeks to publicize the grave conditions of social and environmental deterioration found in the cities, communities and towns of Mexico, due to the politics of privatization of public goods, the impunity with which industries operate with respect to environmental regulations and to the violations of the social and labor laws of the citizens.

The caravans have noted the serious pollution of the rivers in the country. It's known that sixty percent of the groundwater and watersheds are contaminated; seventy percent of the soil has some form of erosion and the contamination of transgenic corn is present in fifteen states of the republic, to mention only the most dramatic cases.

The mask of the government trying to appear as an active defender of nature and preoccupied with the climate crises is deteriorating with the advance of the caravans.

## **REJECTION OF CANADIAN MINING**

The first caravan started its travel in the city of San Luis Potosi and has its first act in the community of San Pedro, affected by the illegal exploitation of gold and silver by the Canadian company New Gold-Minera San Xavier. This illegal exploitation, with the complacency of the government, has devastated the hills of the Cerro de San Pedro, an emblem of the city and state of the same name.

The act began with a welcoming of the caravan by the citizens of San Pedro, who received the coalition of local, national and international organizations including:

The Broad Opposition Front to the San Xavier Mine, Pro San Luis Ecológico, The National Coordinator of Education Workers, representatives of the indigenous communities of Pame de la Huasteca Potosina, La Via Campesina, The Popular Front Francisco Villa and the National Organization of Popular Power.

As well as: The Movement for National Liberation – San Luis Potosí, the National Assembly of Those Affected by the Environment, the Canadian Environmentalist Council, Polaris Institute, Canada, ASUD, Italy and the Observatory of Debt in Globalization of Barcelona, Spain, among others.

During the meeting, the speakers explained that for fifteen years they have been fighting against the

mining company, which despite its legal defeat, continued their extractive operations for three more years, still illegally, trampling on the civil and social rights of the local population.

While European countries are prohibiting the exploitation and use of cyanide mining, in Mexico and Latin America they continue permitting it. This demonstrates the incongruence in the international legislation, and the conflicting legal framework of two countries which results in the continued use of toxic substances in the extraction of minerals.

The international delegates gave the residents and activists a letter signed by more than thirty-six Canadian organizations promising to require the Canadian Parliament to adopt a law that prohibits this type of mining activity by Canadian companies.

The caravan continued its journey towards Dolores Hidalgo and Salamanca, Guanajuato; Pachuca, Hidalgo; and Ecatepec, Mexico, before arriving in the Capital.

## **THE DEATH OF THE LERMA SANTIAGO RIVER**

The second caravan performed its first act in El Salto, Jalisco, a town situated thirty kilometers from Guadalajara, on the bank of the Lerma Santiago River.

This region once had a great natural diversity of corn and vegetables. There were mangoes, plums, guava, quince, white fish, carp, catfish and lots of birds and many other species. Their pride was the Salto de Juanacatlán, a waterfall of twenty-seven meters in height and one hundred and sixty seven meters in width.

By 1900 the government had installed a hydro-electric plant and the first industry in the region. With the plant as a beginning point, industry gained power over the municipality of Salto with industrial jobs and encouraged the illusion that with industry they would gain progress and end poverty.

The population went to factories and lost their view of the river. In a few years, the lack of planning, the urbanization of the jungle and the arrival of highly polluting industries transformed a paradise into a wasteland and converted the river into a receptacle for industrial poisons and excrements.

“When we returned, the river was dead. Today we are still poor, and sick, and now we have no river”, says Enrique Enciso Rivera.

Now the town is fighting for its life and to restore hope, and received the delegations that make up the caravan with a fighting spirit.

But they will never forget that less than two years ago, Miguel Ángel López Rocha, a young boy, accidentally fell in the river, and was in a coma for nineteen days and finally died due to heavy metal poisoning, hydrogen sulfide and arsenic.

In one act on the wide porch of a house, amidst the foul odors coming from the sewers that flow into the river, the members of the caravan (delegates of local, national and provincial organizations from Texas, California, Colorado, Oregon, Florida, Illinois and Chicago, also from Quebec and France) and the fighting locals share solidarity in their fights and make commitments. The road is long and uphill, but we must continue.

Already in Morelia, Michoacán, the professors of basic education of Section XVIII of the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE) and militants of the National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE) agreed to join the social struggles which aims to respect and preserve the environment.

## **AGAINST HYDROELECTRIC DAM LA PAROTA**

To stop the construction of the megaproject of the hydroelectric dam that puts the ecosystems of the region of Guerrero in serious peril, the threatened local people began a mega movement.

The Board of Ejidos and Communities Opposing the Parota Dam (CECOP) has been continually fighting and able to hold off the government's intentions until now.

The National Union of Regional Autonomous Peasant Organizations, the State Coordinator of Education Workers of Guerrero, the Environmental Justice Network of Italy, The Peasant Organization of the Southern Sierra, and various environmental groups from Holland, Ecuador, France, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States have demonstrated solidarity with the mobilizations of the CECOP in defense of the earth.

According to certain locals, the caravan represents a shield so that the government doesn't continue to abuse the peasants, students, members of the CETEG and the people evicted from Puerto Marqués.

The teachers of the democratic expression of Section Twenty-Six of SNTE, affiliates of CNTE, following the lead of María Asunción Gil, Secretary of Housing, gave their support and that of the teachers of Zacatecas and Durango to the movement against the hydroelectric dam.

Before leaving with caravan three on the way to Chilpancingo, and from there the Capital, Rogelio Alquisiras, of UNORCA, said that the climate crisis is uniting all people and organizations to fight to force their governments to stop the devastation of natural resources and the use of fossil fuels that the planet can no longer bear.

*Communication Team of CLOC/La Via Campesina*

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