

On February 9, the Peace Network in Chiapas released a communiqué on the recent evictions in Montes Azules that we here reproduce for your consideration:

Montes Azules evictions jeopardize peace in Chiapas

We, representatives of the civil organizations that are members of the Peace Network in Chiapas, express our profound concern regarding the evictions that occurred on 21 and 22 January 2010 in indigenous communities in the region of Montes Azules, and we announce that we will be prepared for the possibility of more eviction-operations as announced by different sources.

During the forced eviction of the community of Laguna El Suspiro (also known as El Semental) and Laguna San Pedro (or San Pedro Guanil), which are located in the municipality of Ocosingo, the basic rights were of children, women, and men who have resided in the zone since time immemorial were violated.

The police and military operations coordinated by state and federal authorities that carried out the evictions were not the first to visit the Montes Azules zone. Due to governmental plans of "territorial clearing" to make way for the creation of tourist facilities, it is feared that the communal life and social fabric of several of the following communities that are presently threatened by eviction will continue to worsen: Nuevo San Gregorio, Nuevo Salvador Allende, Nuevo San Pedro, 6 de Octubre, Laguna Paraíso, Ojo de Agua el Progreso, Ojo de Agua La Pimienta, San Jacinto Lacanjá, Nueva Galilea, Chuncerro, Benito Juárez and Ranchería Corozal.

We also express our concern at the bias seen in media coverage of the event, principally in the stigmatizing portrayals of the evicted as well as claims that are made without previous investigation or use of non-official sources. We assert that journalism that presents only the government's version of events jeopardizes the security of displaced families as well as that of the human-rights defenders that accompany them and of the residents of communities threatened with eviction.

As civil organizations that work in the area, we do not accept the proffered excuse of "conservation and protection of natural resources" that has been employed at several levels of government to obtain territorial as well as social, political, and economic control over one of Chiapas' most-biodiverse regions.

Hence, we call on the state and federal governments to respect existing international conventions on human rights, especially Convention 169 of the ILO, which protects the right to territory of those who, following their ancestors, reside in the Montes Azules region.

Atentamente

Organizaciones integrantes de la Red por la Paz

Educación para la Paz (Edupaz) Centro de Investigaciones Económicas y Políticas de Acción Comunitaria, A.C. (Ciepac)

Desarrollo Económico y Social de los Mexicanos Indígenas, A.C. (Desmi)

Servicio Internacional para la Paz (Sipaz)

Comisión de Apoyo a la Unidad y Reconciliación Comunitaria, A.C. (Coreco)

Enlace Capacitación y Comunicación, A.C. (Enlace CC)

Servicios y Asesoría para la Paz, A.C. (Serapaz)

Centro de Derechos de la Mujer de Chiapas, A.C. (CDMCH)

Centro de Derechos Indígenas, A.C. (Cediac)

Comité de Derechos Humanos Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada, A.C.

Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, A.C. (Frayba)