

via fax: 011 502 2835 3319

Philippe Dewez

Guatemala Country Representative to IDB

via fax: 202 623 3096

Luis Albert Moreno

President, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

November 25, 2006

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to express our concern about the violent and repressive conditions in the area of the proposed Xalala Dam, down river from the infamous Chixoy Dam. [The Chixoy Dam project displaced dozens of Mayan-Achi communities and resulted in the massacres of 400 Rio Negro villagers during 1980-82. We have written several protest letters to officials of the Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank and government of Guatemala calling for justice and reparations.]

The area has been subject to growing violence, while the justice system has done nothing in prosecuting those responsible for the violence, despite the existence of ample evidence. The affected area along the Chixoy River includes municipalities San Miguel Uspantan and Ixcán in Quiché Department and Cobán in Alta Verapaz.

The local mayor's office has been subject to constant violence: attempted kidnapping, attempts to burn the municipal government building, threats, surveillance by armed men, physical attacks on municipal workers, libelous disinformation, and others. Workers for the Catholic Church Social Outreach team have been subject to similar threats as have many of the social organizations in the region.

The deterioration of the human rights situation in the area and the destabilization of those agencies charged with protecting residents have created a situation in which it is impossible to guarantee the fundamental human rights of people who would be displaced and negatively impacted by the construction of the Xalala dam. Approximately 6,000 to 8,000 Mayan-Qeqchi farmers would lose their agricultural lands and livelihoods.

We are concerned that the Guatemala National Institute for Electrical Development (INDE) is gathering information about community leaders opposing the dam. The Guatemalan National Army's search for missing INDE workers, the November 1 discovery of the body of INDE worker José Manuel Ordon and the defamation campaign against community leaders that has followed illustrate the dangers that exist in the region.

The Xalala dam cannot proceed without first guaranteeing that a functional justice system exists that is capable of stopping the actions of violent actors in the area and that there is a functional presence of human rights agencies capable of verifying the respect for the full range of rights of affected communities.

Without these conditions, the Inter-American Development Bank and private investors they may support in relation to the project are directly responsible for human rights violations that may occur.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

cc: Ambassador Jose Guillermo Castillo ~ via fax: 1 202 745 1908
Ambassador James Derham ~ via fax: 011 502 2334 8477
Courtney Turner, Guatemala Desk Officer ~ via fax: 1 202-647-2597
Paolo Carozza, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 1 202 458 3992 or 202 458 6215
President Oscar Berger Perdomo ~ via fax: 011 502 2239 0090
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