
Peru: The population of Cajamarca opposes mining

In the city of Cajamarca in northern Peru, thousands of peasants, students and social organizations are struggling against the plans of the Yanacocha mining company (its main shareholder is Newmont, a US mining company, together with the Peruvian Buenaventura company and the World Bank's International Finance Corporation) to carry out exploration in Cerro Quilish, whose streams feed the Grande and Porcon rivers.

The population demands that the Peruvian Government annul the resolution taken authorizing the Yanacocha Company to launch its activities (see communities' arguments, in Spanish, at <http://www.wrm.org.uy/paises/Peru/Quilish.html>).

They are asking us for urgent support and request we send letters to the Peruvian authorities in rejection of this decision. We are attaching a model of a letter to be sent.

Thanking you in anticipation for your support!

MODEL LETTER

Dear Sir,

We would like to express our concern over the cases that have arisen in Cajamarca, a city located in the north of Peru that have been widely disseminated on an international level due to the controversy between the population of the city and the Yanacocha mining company.

According to the Peruvian and international mass media, and in the opinion of local organizations and various technical reports, the controversy has arisen because of the insistence of the Yanacocha mining company (whose main stakeholder is the Newmont company together with the Buenaventura mining company and the World Bank) and the Ministry of Energy and Mines in carrying out mining exploration works in Cerro Quilish, in spite of local peasant opposition. The local peasants and population, in knowledge of the damage caused by the company in other areas of the region – such as the mercury spill in Choropampa and other complaints made since 1993 against the Yanacocha company – are fearful that mining in this location will severely affect water resources, essential for the life of the population and its sources of sustenance – agriculture and stock-raising.

We are requesting you to take all necessary measures to achieve the annulment of Director Resolution 361-2004-MEM/AAM authorizing the Yanacocha mining company to reinitiate exploration in Cerro Quilish. With this administrative measure, the Ministry of Energy and Mines ignored a local decision declaring Cerro Quilish a Municipally Protected Area, through Provincial Municipality of Cajamarca ordinance No. 012-2000. Furthermore this resolution violates a sentence by the Plenary of the Cajamarca Provincial Council, issued on 3 September 2004, making the Ministry and the company responsible for the authorization and demanding activities to be stopped and machinery to be withdrawn from Cerro Quilish.

We are also requesting that repression and violence against the peasants and population be avoided as they have already suffered severe arbitrary treatment affecting their physical integrity. We expect that respect for life, freedom and personal security – rights recognized both by the Universal Human Rights Declaration and by national legislation – be placed before the economic interest of the Yanacocha Company.

Both the Ministry of Energy and Mines that you preside and the company itself must respect the peasants' rights to defend their lands, to enjoy protected areas in their Province, and their right to a healthy environment and water. Finally we would like to stress the importance of the peoples' right of self-determination to decide what type of development they want in Cajamarca, as was upheld years ago by the internationally known people of Tambogrande in Piura.

Yours sincerely,

These letters should be sent to:

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