
[Victories of peoples' resistance in Peru and Brazil](#)

At a time when large corporate interests are gaining control over ever more land and resources, it is refreshing to hear news of victories won through the tenacious resistance of local communities.

In Peru, within the framework of the implementation of the free trade agreement with the United States, the government of President Alan García has passed more than 30 laws and decrees aimed at extending the frontier of extractive activities in the Amazon region. These laws were intended to dismantle community rights and communities themselves, by facilitating the sale of their lands through more flexible mechanisms for the division and sale of collectively owned lands and the withdrawal of the special protections these lands once enjoyed. Ultimately, the goal was to strip the Amazon peoples of their territory to such a voracious extent that there was even talk of granting concessions over lowlands and riverbanks where poor people grow their rice or corn. These efforts were enthusiastically backed by the agrofuel, tree plantation, oil and mining industries (see WRM Bulletin No. 129).

One of the companies that hoped to benefit from this process was CMPC, a Chilean pulp and paper company. CMPC owns vast tracts of pine and eucalyptus plantations in Chile that were established in Mapuche indigenous territories during the Pinochet dictatorship. Referring to CMPC's plans to invest millions of dollars in Peru, Fernando Léniz, former minister of finance under Pinochet and current president of Corporación Chilena de la Madera, a national association of wood producers, stated: "Over there [in Peru] there is a better labour climate and better control against violence. This idea that pressure groups can achieve their demands through violence and illegality is doing a lot of harm to Chile." Mr. Léniz was alluding here to the legitimate struggle of the Mapuche people to regain control over their ancestral lands.

But neither Mr. Léniz nor the Peruvian government were expecting the forceful response of the peoples of the Amazon in defence of their rights. On 8 August, more than 3,000 indigenous and campesino protestors from various parts of the Amazon region declared an indefinite national strike against the new legislation.

On 22 August, as a result of this massive opposition and protest, the Peruvian Congress repealed Legislative Decrees 1015 and 1073, which the government had attempted to impose in violation of the collective rights of indigenous peoples and for the benefit of powerful economic groups. The indigenous victory in Peru is a clear demonstration of power against those who would attempt to destroy the Amazon, and has blocked the way to the establishment of large-scale monoculture tree plantations in the region, at least for the time being.

Meanwhile, in Brazil, a historic court decision has reinforced the popular struggle against eucalyptus monoculture plantations. On 28 August, the Court of Justice passed and unanimously upheld a decision that ordered the immediate suspension of eucalyptus planting in the municipality of São Luiz do Paraitinga, São Paulo, in view of the disastrous environmental and social impacts of the industrial expansion of this monoculture. The suspension is to remain in effect until the transnational companies operating the existing plantations carry out environmental impact assessments in all of

the areas where they are located, along with mandatory public hearings with the rural populations affected by them. Violation of this decision will be punished with a fine of 10,000 reais (around 6,000 U.S. dollars) per day.

In another landmark decision, the Court of Justice also rejected a motion filed by the São Luiz District Attorney's Office that sought to prevent the Public Defender's Office from monitoring compliance with the decision and challenged its right to take part in the proceedings. The Court of Justice unanimously found that the Public Defender's Office not only can but must act on behalf of the population with regard to environmental issues.

Public Defender Wagner Giron, who filed the suit, declared that the companies that own the eucalyptus plantations, particularly Votorantim Celulose e Papel and Suzano Papel e Celulose, "do not respect any environmental norms whatsoever. They plant the trees on mountains, in native forests, encroaching on springs and drying up waterways. There have already been cases of poisoning of human beings and deaths of fish and animals here, all as a result of this violation of environmental norms." (1)

It should be stressed that eucalyptus plantations currently cover around 20% of the municipality of São Luiz.

Victories like these in Peru and Brazil are like rays of hope that light the way for the legitimate resistance struggles of local communities around the world.

Article based on the following sources:

Peru: Interviews with Vladimir Pinto (vladimirpinto@gmail.com) and Paul Mcauley, Loretana Environmental Network (redambientalloreтана@yahoo.com); "Perú: Un Importante Triunfo de los Pueblos Indígenas Amazónicos", Mapuexpress, Informativo Mapuche, available at:

<http://www.mapuexpress.net/?act=news&id=3164&>

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Brazil: Interview with Geise Pereira, FASE-ES (geise.fase@terra.com.br); (1) "Brasil: Tribunal de Justiça suspende plantio de eucalipto em município de SP", available at:

<http://www.biodiversidadla.org/content/view/full/39528>