
Colombia: a matter of life or death for the U'wa

The recent resolution of the Colombian government, in agreement with the U'wa leaders, according to which their legally recognized territory was increased in 120,000 hectares -now comprising 220,275 hectares- was celebrated as a great victory. Nevertheless, the consideration by the Ministry of the Environment of a request of environmental license for exploratory drilling by Occidental Petroleum just outside the newly created Unified U'wa Reservation is a pending menace on them (see WRM Bulletin 26).

Unfortunately, the worse has happened: on September 21st Environment Minister Juan Mayr announced he was granting a permit for the above named oil company to begin an exploratory drilling in the region. The U'wa have denounced the government's decision as cultural and environmental genocide and have made clear once again their decision to commit mass suicide in case their land continues to be sullied. For the U'wa oil is the blood of Mother Earth and therefore to drill is the ultimate desecration of their ancient traditions of living in peaceful balance with the Earth.

What can you/your organization do? Contact Occidental and the Colombian authorities expressing them your concern over this resolution with menaces the U'wa's culture and their environment.

Another way of showing your support to the U'wa is addressing directly the Colombian Embassy or Consulate in your respective countries, and organizing a demonstration on October 12th. This date is the anniversary of the white man's arrival to the Americas. Indigenous people and their supporters across the world will be celebrating more than 500 years of indigenous resistance.

In the longer run you can connect the U'wa's resistance to the global campaign against the WTO, which will be meeting from November 29th to December 3rd in Seattle, USA. The U'wa resistance is a good example of the emerging global resistance to corporate domination in the framework of globalization.

Your support is needed: it is nothing less than a matter of life or death for the U'wa.

Source: Sergio Oceransky