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October 2004

People Over Profit

*Local Struggles for Land Reform, Justice,
and Human Rights in Guatemala*



*Guatemalan Indigenous and Peasant Organizations
March for Land Reform - April 28, 2004*

Land Rights and Evictions

Although the new President, Oscar Berger, promised to halt land evictions and address agrarian conflicts, at least 23 violent land evictions have been carried out in Guatemala since the Berger Administration came into power on January 14th, 2004. Houses have been burned, girls sexually abused, activists persecuted.

Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and Plan Puebla-Panama

The US signed CAFTA with Guatemala and four other Central American nations on May 28th 2004, after a short 11 month period of negotiations. Labor, environmental, and non-discrimination protections remain weak while protections for investors are strengthened. PPP hires a US PR firm to change it's image after massive criticism.

US Business, Mining, and Indigenous Rights

In Guatemala, US mining companies continue to exploit Guatemala's natural resources after having bought mineral rich lands at bargain basement prices. Local populations have been publicly organizing for environmental assessments, consultation from companies, and respect. Indigenous communities protest companies' presence.

Effects of Militarization on Society

The whole Guatemalan government was administered and controlled by the US supported Guatemalan Army for decades, following the CIA sponsored coup d'etat of 1954. The struggle to democratize institutions and re-orient the mission and function of the army continues to this day. Organized crime and parallel power networks remain powerful.

Arnoldo Yat, Maya Q'eqchi' Organizer and Trainer, will talk about the struggle to reclaim the human, economic and cultural rights of Indigenous peoples in Guatemala

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