



# Tahoe On Trial: Guatemalan communities rise up to defend land & life

*When Tahoe Resources bought the rights to the Escobal project from Goldcorp Inc. in 2009, it acquired more than a silver mine. The Canadian and U.S.-owned company also acquired Goldcorp's legacy of imposition and violation of rights with collaboration from state and private security.*

Like its predecessor - Goldcorp's Marlin Mine in northwestern Guatemala - the Escobal silver project began commercial production in 2014 despite years of protests, meetings, sit-ins, and other forms of community resistance. The mine is Tahoe Resources' flagship project, located in the middle of the small farming community of San Rafael las Flores in southeastern Guatemala. Strong, organized opposition to the mine's development has been met with severe repression, consistent with the country-wide pattern of using state security forces to crack down on local opposition to mega-development projects such as mines and hydroelectric dams.

***Tahoe's Escobal mine has depended on a legion of private security forces, civil police, and the Guatemalan military to ensure its construction, continued operation, and future expansion. At the outset, a key goal of the company's militarized security plan was to suppress opposition.***

In 2011, Tahoe contracted International Security and Defense Management LLC (ISDM), a U.S. private security company run by former military personnel with experience in Afghanistan and Iraq that specializes in counterinsurgency tactics. Tahoe continues to combine advice from ISDM with support from Guatemala police, military and security intelligence offices to carry out its security operations at the Escobal mine. This strategy has resulted in violence so severe that Norway's Government Pension Fund-Global, the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, divested from Tahoe in 2014 citing human rights violations.

One chilling example is ISDM's recommendation that Tahoe hire former Peruvian military officer Alberto Rotondo as head of security for the mine. He is currently under arrest in Guatemala and awaiting trial for opening fire on unarmed protesters outside the mine in April 2013. Wiretaps from Rotondo's telephone the day of the incident reveal a coordinated attack and subsequent cover-up, in which he orders private security to shoot at peaceful protesters and collect shell casings and other evidence in the aftermath. The wiretaps have been submitted as evidence in a Canadian lawsuit against Tahoe Resources for negligence and battery committed during the incident.



2009	2010
Tahoe Resources formed by former Goldcorp CEO; opens offices in Reno, Nevada & Vancouver, British Columbia; lists on New York & Toronto stock exchanges	Acquires Escobal silver project from Goldcorp, Inc. & begins exploration in southeastern Guatemala

## MINING LICENSES

25	year exploitation license granted to Tahoe to operate the Escobal mine for silver & other metals
23	licenses granted to or requested by Tahoe to extract, explore or prospect for silver & gold in southeastern Guatemala
31	tons of silver & other minerals expected to be extracted over 19 years at the Escobal mine
1290	square kilometres of licenses held or requested by Tahoe Resources in the area

2012	2013
Tahoe sues the Guatemalan government for failure to protect the company's interests, as peaceful protests grow in number & frequency	Escobal exploitation license granted, begins commercial production; lawsuit dismissed
1ST YEAR NET INCOME: \$119.3 MILLION	Environmental studies approved for second Tahoe mine in community of San Juan Bosco, 8km from Escobal

Although Tahoe consistently downplays the project's lack of social license to the media and to its shareholders, the local resistance is real. The company itself has been forced to acknowledge it. In June 2012, Tahoe sued the Guatemalan government on the grounds that protests were hindering its operations and the State was not doing enough to allow its activities to proceed. While a Guatemalan court eventually dismissed the claim in February 2013, it seems the pressure from the company had lasting affects.

In March 2013, just one month after the lawsuit was dismissed, the Guatemalan government secretly commenced a pilot initiative called the "Interinstitutional Group on Mining Affairs," which framed opposition to mining as a threat to national security. In its 2013 annual report, Tahoe voices its support for the government office and refers to it as a "High Level Commission [...]" to address community issues and oversee security matters."

Guatemalan activists call it a "counterinsurgency" and "a military intelligence operation," likening the government tactics to strategies of repression used during Guatemala's 36-year internal armed conflict. Indeed, the two new military bases that line the highway on both sides of the mine serve as a constant reminder of who and what their government is willing to protect.

CRIMINALIZATION,

## MILITARIZATION & VIOLENCE

8k

military & police descend upon 4 municipalities near the Escobal mine less than 1 month after Tahoe received its exploitation license, suspending civil liberties and militarizing the area

90

community members opposing Tahoe arrested & subjected to legal persecution from 2011 - 2015; 89 cases thrown out for lack of evidence

7

peaceful protesters shot & seriously wounded by Tahoe private security in April 2013

3

anti-mining activists killed in the last 3 years, including a 16-year-old youth leader



**"They send the police and military to repress us. The truth is, in Guatemala, the armed conflict isn't over."** Community member from Guadalupe, near the Escobal mine.

## Despite militarization, communities remain firm in their resistance



### COMMUNITY RESISTANCE

THE MANY WAYS TO SAY NO!

5

years of marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, public gatherings, & meetings to express peaceful opposition to the Escobal mine & expansion

5

legal cases filed against Tahoe & its employees in Guatemala & Canada for violence & environmental damages

282

legal oppositions filed by impacted people against the Escobal mine; all are rejected outright by the Ministry of Energy & Mines

55k

people voted in 14 community-organized referenda in the area & almost unanimously rejected the Escobal project & expansion

For people currently living in the shadow of the Escobal project, Tahoe Resources isn't just a mining company - its arrival has fundamentally changed the way people think about their family's future. Concerns about water contamination and shortages, heavy metal poisoning, divisions within the communities, and an increased military presence are very real.

As a result, communities have used a wide variety of creative tactics over the past five years in an attempt to voice their concerns and protect themselves from the transnational extraction of their natural resources. Despite the company's work to generate fear and repression, communities continue to speak out and resist Tahoe's planned expansion in the region.

**"The government calls us terrorists. They criminalize us to silence our voices. But we will never stop defending the land, the water, and life."** Community member from San Juan Bosco, site of Tahoe exploration license.





Overlooking Tahoe Resources' land holdings near the Escobal mine. Photo credit: NISGUA

## Join NISGUA & CODIDENA on tour!

This fall, Llan Carlos Dávila from the Diocesan Committee in Defense of Nature (CODIDENA) will tour the Midwest and Northeast regions of the U.S. to build stronger, face-to-face connections with activists supporting the global movement for ecological justice and community self-determination. He will be accompanied by the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), who has worked for more than 30 years amplifying the voices of organizations like CODIDENA as they organize to demand social justice and human rights.

Join us to hear Llan Carlos talk about CODIDENA's efforts to halt the development and expansion of Tahoe Resources' Escobal mine in southeastern Guatemala through popular education, grassroots base-building and the organizing of six municipal referenda during which more than 50,000 people have voted against mining in their territories. Show solidarity with Llan Carlos and other human rights defenders who are receiving threats for speaking out against U.S. companies, and who continue to stand up for life.

*"It is important that the people of the United States know the reality for Guatemalan human rights and environmental defenders. How is it possible that a company of this size is operating in the middle of such a populated area? We are very worried that Tahoe Resources is contaminating our waters and our crops. We live from the land. The earth provides for us and we want to leave our sons and daughters a fertile land, one in which they can cultivate their own food."*

*Llan Carlos Dávila, CODIDENA*



## Find a stop near you:

October 11 - 13: Reno, NV  
 October 14 - 15: Chicago, IL  
 October 16 - 17: Bad River Reservation, WI  
 October 18 - 19: Twin Cities, MN  
 October 20 - 21: La Crosse/Viroqua, WI  
 October 22 - 23: New York, NY  
 October 24 - 26: Boston, MA & Providence, RI

Email [megan@nisgua.org](mailto:megan@nisgua.org) for more information on joining tour stops in person and keep an eye out on social media for ways to connect online during the tour!



An international accompanier monitors a gathering in Guatemala City. Photo Credit: ACOGUATE

# Become a Human Rights Accompanier with GAP!

Now recruiting for 2016

NISGUA's Guatemala Accompaniment Project (GAP) trains and places qualified volunteers to work as human rights observers. They provide an international presence alongside Guatemalans organizing for justice and accountability and in defense of their natural resources. We accompany cases including the precedent-setting genocide trial and local opposition to mega-development projects.

Accompaniment is one tool used in response to the threats, harassment and violence faced by survivors of Guatemala's 36-year internal armed conflict, who are seeking justice for genocide and other crimes against humanity, and indigenous communities defending their rights to life, culture, and territory. Accompaniers work in pairs, travel between the capital and rural regions, connect with a diversity of organizations, observe and report on conditions, monitor the human rights situation and provide a crucial link to the international community.

***"In Guatemala, human rights accompaniment is an attempt to leverage privileged Northern citizenship against the active forces of U.S. imperialism, criminalization, and state violence that undermine movements for justice and self-determination. We accompany to hold ourselves accountable to the social privileges we hold, to manifest our commitments to social justice through our physical presence, and to engage in shared learning for stronger movements across borders." David, former GAP accompanier***

For more information and an application, visit: [nisgua.org/get\\_involved/join\\_gap](http://nisgua.org/get_involved/join_gap)

## NISGUA is hiring!

We are seeking a Guatemala Programs Coordinator to lead strategic campaigns for two of our main program areas: Justice & Accountability and Defense of Life & Territory. NISGUA employs strategic, creative and coordinated grassroots activism and advocacy to pursue justice for human rights abuses. We are looking for someone with an understanding of corporate campaigning and the rights of indigenous peoples, and who has demonstrated their commitment to social, economic and environmental justice.

We are also hiring an Accompaniment Coordinator to join our team in the Guatemala City office. This staff person will support international observers providing accompaniment to Guatemalan human rights defenders, organizations and communities who request international observation as they work towards grassroots social change.

***Please visit our website for the full job postings including details on how to apply. We are accepting applications on a rolling basis for both positions with an anticipated start date of November 8, 2015. Please forward widely!***



An Ixil woman testifies during the 2013 genocide trial. Photo Credit: NISGUA

NETWORK IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA / NISGUA  
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