

**IF THE MASSIF SURVIVES, WE ALL SURVIVE!
THIRD CONVENTION OF THE PEOPLE
FOR THE WATER OF THE “PATÍA RIVER VALLEY”**

Translated by Eunice Gibson, CSN volunteer translator

November 9, 2011, La Vega

On the weekend of November 4-7, 2011, in the District of Albania, La Vega Municipality, delegates from 42 community organizations from various provinces of Colombia and some international delegates got together.

For organizational reasons, the delegates from the Municipality and from our area of the Colombian Massif and the Rio Patía River Valley arrived first.

Campesino organizations, indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations and communities gathered at the call of the Farmers’ and People’s Procedures in the Municipality of La Vega, together with students, environmentalists, communicators and urban workers. They planned to analyze the government’s policies for repression of the people in order to exploit natural resources in mining, energy, and common property such as water.

In order to advance our knowledge of those government policies of expropriation and plunder and to continue creating policies and regulations for resistance, struggle and transformation, we listened to the analysis of these problems by three scholars. We established three groups where they could share their experiences and the practices of the different organizations and communities, especially those who are coordinating with the Procedures for the Unity of the People, from the Southwest – PUPSOC is the Spanish acronym.

As a part of this work by the people, we are going to carry out the **Second March for our Lives and for our Water**, “Symbolizing our Territory” between Albania and the town of Hueco Hondo. In the district of Santa Juana we could see the pipes of the town’s water mains and the mains of the school **cut off and out of service for more than a year**. The damage was caused by the Carboandes Company in setting up the “La Custodia” mine. They are refusing to repair it while they nonchalantly continue exploring, together with the Ashanti Anglo Gold Company, in the areas that the national government has licensed to them. They are guarded by the Army, which terrorizes the farmers, while no institution cares about the future of the Colombian Massif and the Patía River valley, which is a necessary condition for the existence of the biogeography of Chocó and of the Pacific Ocean.

We will conclude with this third version of the People’s Convention for the Water of the Patía River Valley. As a community, we will commit ourselves to the People’s Regulations that we have drafted and we will approve a final declaration that has been discussed at the tables. We will ratify the Colombian Massif Manifesto “The New Road

to Freedom” and we will unite under this cry for commitment and love for this region: **“If the Massif survives, we all survive. No to mining in our territory.”**

FINAL DECLARATION

Third People’s Convention for our Water

“Patía River Valley”

Colombian Massif, November 2011

The program of the government of the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, with its driving force, is day-by-day destroying the land, the forests, the water, the campesino and indigenous economies, the identity, the dreams, the cultures, and the dignity of the people. Now they are coming to the Colombian Massif to destroy that. They are taking over our land to ruin it, in one of the most diabolical and inhuman expressions of international capitalism. Its name is “Big Mining” or “Industrialized Mining”.

We learned from our forefathers that the forests, the water, the animals, and the communities could not live independently one from the others. The agreements between the national government and the big mining companies for the extraction of gold and other natural resources have brought imbalance as a consequence. In this case, it is the Colombian Massif, which has been identified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and is the source of the rivers that furnish 70% of the water supply of the country. It comes from the hundreds of tiny basins of the Cauca, Magdalena, Patía and Caquetá rivers, among others, that will be affected by big mining in southern Colombia.

It was the same mining companies that set off wars and converted other regions of the world into deserts and, in the case of Colombia, the Magdalena Medio region. Besides that, today they are occupying 40 municipalities in Cauca Province and other provinces of Colombia with their machinery for the extraction of gold, other metals, and oil. In the same way, animal and vegetable resources in this region are disappearing.

We call the attention of the people of Cauca and the people of Colombia to the terrible effects of mining. **Of the little more than three million hectares** in all of Cauca Province, **more than two million have already been turned over or are in the process of being turned over** by the national government to the mining companies **Anglo Gold Ashanti, Continental Gold, Carboandes and sixteen other national and international companies**. And as if that were all, **550,000 hectares of land in Cauca are being studied for licensing of the extraction of oil for the transnational Gran Tierra Energy**.

We ask ourselves, how many mountains, and how many plant and animal species will disappear? How many rivers, streams, and water sources that furnish our water systems will disappear or be contaminated by cyanide and other chemicals that are required for

mining? What is the future for our families, for our community, for our territory? Because of this uncertainty, we invite you to stand up and fight to avoid the catastrophe that is approaching.

From the discussion groups, such as Open Meetings, we will work to strengthen the Peoples' Regulations, the Third People's Convention for Water and "Patía River Basin". We are making another call to keep up our longstanding struggle against policies of foreign domination. This time they are represented in our own country by our current president Juan Manuel Santos. Once again we are calling together the local, regional, and national social organizations, basic systems, international NGO's, democratic personalities and all of those that are conscious of their right and duty to take up the defense of our lives and to stop the destructive advance of the mining policy that has already begun its devastating activities in the Colombian Massif.

We invite the social organizations of Cauca and of Colombia to build a common agenda of resistance at every level. In this battle, every kind of organization, every person, all who together or collectively occupy some part of the territory, have a job to do. Today the threat hangs over our whole territory, and it imposes on us the duty to fight, for the love of nature, for our children and for the water, so that we will not have to weep like cowards for what we did not know how to defend courageously.

We urgently need to let the whole world, and the national and international community know about the complicit attitude of different institutions, about their role in what is happening. The Army and the Police have been turned into private bodyguards for the officials of the mining companies. The Inspector General's Office does not check to see that its officials are carrying out their duties. The regional officials don't perform their duty to protect the environment. The academic institutions work hard to prepare inventories so that natural resources can be auctioned off. Armed men dressed in civilian clothes and driving private vehicles go around without any restraint, terrifying the communities and carrying Army soldiers as protection.

All of this corruption and cynical selling off of the living conditions of the cultures that make up Colombian society is supposed to be accepted as part of a "Government Under Law".

The campesino communities, the indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities of the Colombian Massif, their production organizations, the indigenous authorities, the Community Action Committees, the Community Councils and the local administrative agencies that are signers of this document, are all aware of our historic role in protecting nature and cultural diversity. These represent the possibility of life . . . a song of struggle for the love of the water and of the land.

Mining is only possible through the most violent
destruction of every form of life.
They begin by robbing us of the most basic of our needs,
the water.

For the protection and defense of our water wells,
of the community water systems in our towns,
districts and municipalities,
all of our community organizations are ready to fight.

No to mining,
No to privatization of water!
If the Massif survives,
We all survive!

Third People's Convention for our Water
"Patía River Valley"

Albania – La Vega, Heart of the Colombian Massif
November 4-7, 2011

Farmers' and People's Procedures for the Municipality of La Vega

MANIFESTO FOR THE COLOMBIAN MASSIF
"The New Route to Liberation"

The March for our Lives and for our Water

"The long walk of more than ten kilometers for the territory of the massif began in the district of Albania and ended in the district of Santa Juana Huecondo, where one of the most powerful multinationals in the world, AngloGold Ashanti, is based. There, using CARBOANDES, drop-by-drop, it is closing the people's doors and involving them in the mechanisms of extermination that capitalism is prone to."

Walking the territory is a proposal that is being included in all the meetings carried out by the Farmers' and People's Procedures for the Municipality of La Vega and on this occasion, it allowed the participants to get to know one of the richest and least known areas on the planet. There is a little stretch of the Patía River Valley that makes it possible for a species like the Jorobada (Humpback) whale to exist. Its flow through the Andes makes its waters rich in the nutrients that allow this species to survive. They receive the nourishment they will need when they pass through the Colombian Pacific with their young.

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