

MEXICO

La Parota project threatens rights and livelihoods

Insufficient consultation of affected communities and an atmosphere of mounting tension, violence and intimidation have characterized government steps to build a hydroelectric dam in Guerrero State, Mexico.

If the proposed hydroelectric dam La Parota goes ahead, several thousand people, primarily peasant farmers and others from poor Indigenous communities, could be displaced.

La Parota is in Guerrero – one of Mexico’s most marginalized and least developed regions, with a large Indigenous population. The Federal Commission for Electricity (CFE – the state-owned company responsible for the project) says that only 2,981 people would be displaced by the dam. However, NGOs estimate 25,000 people in three municipalities in the state would have to leave their land, and that a further 75,000 would face indirect consequences.

Proponents of the plan claim the dam would provide sufficient electricity to meet eastern Mexico’s peak-time electricity needs, reducing Mexico’s energy expenditure significantly. But at what cost?

The stakes – and emotions – are running high, creating a tense atmosphere in the region. Community leaders and human rights defenders have been threatened and intimidated and three people have been killed in disputes apparently connected to La Parota project. Local activists are also concerned that the consultation process with affected communities has been riddled with irregularities, has failed to provide accurate, accessible and impartial information and has provided no opportunity for genuine participation.

Domestic laws are inadequate to ensure protection from forced evictions. The Mexican Agrarian Law, which regulates community assemblies, does not provide clear standards for effective consultation with affected communities. Only those who are registered on official land rights lists (*padrones*) can vote in community assemblies – often excluding women and a large proportion of families who have lived and worked on the land for generations.

The CFE and the Mexican authorities claim local communities have been thoroughly consulted on plans for the dam. The Council of Communal Land-owners and Communities Opposed to La Parota dam (Consejo de Ejidos y Comunidades Opositoras a la Presa la Parota, CECOP) and local organizations, however, have described the process as based on: “manipulation... social rupture; deceitful offers; lack of information and consultation; violations to the Agrarian Law and the rule of law; disproportionate use of force; criminalization of opponents; and death threats.”

CECOP and human rights NGO Centro de los Derechos Humanos de la Montaña “Tlachinollan” successfully challenged the legal basis for the community approval of the project, and it is now temporarily on hold. But the authorities appear intent on overcoming legal obstacles and pushing ahead with construction.

The Mexican government and the CFE must ensure that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled in preparing and implementing La Parota project. Amnesty International calls on both to take immediate steps to ensure:

- ▶ accurate and accessible information on the impact of the dam is provided to affected communities, in a form which is culturally appropriate and in a manner which people can understand;
- ▶ all those whose human rights are affected by the construction of the dam are offered the opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions regarding the planning and implementation of the project;
- ▶ any displacement does not amount to forced eviction;
- ▶ intimidation of community leaders and human rights defenders is stopped immediately.

TAKE ACTION!

For further information on the human rights situation around La Parota and the potential impact of the dam, see the report, *Human rights at risk in La Parota Dam project* (AI Index: AMR 41/029/2007).

In the meantime, write now to the Mexican authorities directly or to the Mexican embassy in your country expressing your concern and the need for a change in approach. You can explain that human rights are under threat in La Parota and point to the lack of full and accessible information; the irregularities in the process of consultation; the lack of genuine participation; the risk of forced evictions; and, the intimidation of community leaders and human rights defenders.

Call on the authorities to:

- ▶ Comply with the decision of the Agrarian Tribunal to halt preparatory work on La Parota dam until the human rights concerns have been addressed.
- ▶ Take concrete measures to ensure a full, prompt and impartial investigation into the killings, death threats and intimidation reportedly related to La Parota project.
- ▶ Ensure human rights defenders and activists can carry out their legitimate activities without fear or intimidation.
- ▶ Ensure that all of those whose human rights will be affected by La Parota dam are afforded the opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions regarding the dam which affect the exercise of their human rights. This should include:
 - ▶ the dissemination of accurate and accessible information on the impact of the dam;
 - ▶ extending the opportunity for such participation not only to those in *padrones* but to all who own or occupy housing or land in the affected areas, and including women;
 - ▶ making the process of participation culturally appropriate and in compliance with all applicable human rights laws and standards.
- ▶ Ensure the rights of Indigenous peoples are respected and protected in the process of developing and implementing the dam project, in accordance with ILO

Convention No. 169 and all other relevant human rights laws and standards.

- ▶ Implement the recommendations of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteurs on Indigenous people and the right to adequate housing related to La Parota.

Write, fax or email any or all of the following:

President of Mexico:

Lic. Felipe Calderón Hinojosa,
Presidente de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos,
Residencia Oficial de "Los Pinos",
Casa Miguel Alemán,
Col. San Miguel Chapultepec,
México DF, CP 11850, Mexico

Fax: +52 55 52772376

email: felipe.calderon@presidencia.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Presidente / Dear Mr President

Governor of the State of Guerrero:

Lic. Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo,
Gobernador del Estado de Guerrero,
Palacio de Gobierno, Edificio Centro, piso 2,
Ciudad de los Servicios, CP 39075,
Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico

Fax: +52 747 471 9801

email: gobernadore@guerrero.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Gobernador/ Dear Governor

Director of the Federal Commission of Electricity:

Lic. Alfredo Elias Ayub,
Director de la Comisión Federal de Electricidad,
Museo Tecnológico,
2a. Secc. del Bosque de Chapultepec,
Del. Miguel Hidalgo, CP 11870,
México DF, Mexico

Fax: +52 55 5533 5321

email: alfredo.elias@cfe.gob.mx

Salutation: Señor Director / Dear Director

Please send copies to:

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña "Tlachinollan"
AC, Calle Mina, No. 77, Col. Centro, Tlapa de Comonfort,
CP 41304, Guerrero, Mexico.

Who is Amnesty International?

Amnesty International is a global movement of 2.2 million people in more than 150 countries and territories, who campaign on human rights. Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards.

We research, campaign, advocate and mobilize to end abuses of human rights – civil, political, social, cultural and economic. From freedom of expression and association to physical and mental integrity, from protection from discrimination to the right to shelter – these rights are indivisible.

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