

Carta de Açucena

We wish to invite the Brazilian society to discuss the severe consequences caused by the expansion of mining projects in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, as well as the inexistent dialogue on the proposed new mining laws. It is also necessary to review our Federal Pact, considering the fragile position of small and medium-size cities given the needs and wishes of the local population.

Justified as “a job generating activity”, mining has been devastating our environment and impacting the life of thousands of people in Minas Gerais. Dozens of cities are affected in the name of foreign and “national” companies’ interests.

Mining has great impact on watercourses, forests and land rights. In the name of providing (low quality) jobs, it has negatively altered the sociability of local communities through a series of Human Rights violations.

As a consequence of this extractivist model, we are witnessing countless projects for the construction of pipelines. These projects represent a crime against our country, demanding a vast volume of water to transport gross ore to the coast, as well as large ports to receive and export this enormous production.

The Minas-Rio Project, owned by the British company Anglo American (which connects Conceição do Mato Dentro-MG to Açú Port, in São João da Barra-RJ) is an example of such destruction. Through a 30-meter wide and 525-km long pipe, it has killed water springs, silted streams, suppressed cultivated areas and fragmented properties and traditionally occupied territories. It has contaminated the life of entire populations and cities.

Aware of such devastation, we are gathered in order to prevent the construction of another pipeline in the basin of the Santo Antonio River – the Manabi pipeline, which intends to connect Morro do Pilar-MG to Linhares-ES. We endorse the decision made by Mayor Darcira, from Açucena, who revoked the support needed for the environmental license. Let’s raise our voices: Manabi, get out!

We denounce the attitude of environmental agencies, such as Ibama, which, instead of fulfilling its role as an inspection agent, has been acting as an office for Manabi’s interests. Instead of supporting local governments’ demand for information, Ibama has organized fraudulent public meetings and acted in favour of the needed concessions for the project.

We claim for an immediate action by the Federal Government. Furthermore, we would like to inform this conflict to the Brazilian Development Bank, BNDES, since our money cannot finance this type of project. Local governments need to be granted the right to say NO. In this sense, we stand beside Mayor Darcira, who has been suffering all kinds of pressure.

More than immediate action, we demand an extended debate in Brazilian society. What mining do we want? Are we to continue deepening our dependent condition based on a primary-exporting economic model?

This extended debate should include a discussion on issues concerning the propositions for a new mining code. The current code dates from 1967 and serves as a base for the primary-exporting model under course. However, instead of reversing this logic, this new code (written by a federal congress member from Minas Gerais, Leonardo Quintão) would increase foreign and “national” companies’ privileges, giving no defense for affected communities.

At the same time, it tries to seduce local governments through an increase on mining local taxes (CFEM), an insidious attempt to gain political support for the code. This debate, however, goes much beyond a tax policy!

Local governments cannot be hostage to this type of operation. We need a serious debate to review our federal pact, considering the functions and responsibilities given to local governments since the 1988 Federal Constitution, with no increase on their budget.

Down with politics of begging, which puts mayors hostage to this kind of operation. Small and medium-size cities need to be taken seriously and receive the necessary means in order to improve their quality of life.

Given this context, we extend the debate beyond Brazil. Açucena’s Seminar resulted in a landmark for this battle, gathering the interests of affected communities, social movements, researchers and local governments.

This confluence tends to be expanded, given the necessity to break the pact responsible to articulate provincial governments, federal government, foreign and “national” companies around anti-popular interests. This confluence tends to be expanded, in order to break the 500 years of history that insists to put us in a condition of dependency.

DOWN WITH A CONDITION OF SUBORDINATION AND DEPENDENCY!

DOWN WITH THE PRIMARY-EXPORTING MINING MODEL!

ENOUGH OF PIPELINES!

ENOUGH OF POLITICS OF BEGGING: WE CLAIM FOR A NEW FEDERAL PACT IN FAVOUR OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS!

Açucena, Minas Gerais, Brasil

April 27th, 2014

Darcira de Souza Pereira (Mayor of Açucena); Reinaldo César de Lima Guimarães (Mayor of Conceição do Mato Dentro); ACAÓ (Associação de Conservação Ambiental Orgânica – Santa Maria de Itabira-MG); ADDAF (Associação de Defesa e Desenvolvimento Ambiental de Ferros – MG); Águas do Gandarela; Associação Ambiental Voz da Natureza (ES); Associação PIM; Brigadas Populares; Campanha pelas Águas contra o mineroduto da *Ferrous*; Cantos do Mundo; Cáritas Diocesana; Casa Fora do Eixo; Coletivo Margarida Alves; Comitê Nacional em Defesa dos Territórios Frente à mineração; ELA – Esquerda Libertária Anticapitalista; ENEBIO; Fonasc; Greenpeace; JPIC (Justiça, Paz, Integração da criação); Labcen (Laboratório de Cenários Sociambientais em Municípios com mineração – PUC MG); MAB

(Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens); MACACA (Movimento Artístico, Cultural e Ambiental de Caeté); MAM (Movimento dos Atingidos pela Mineração); Mídia Ninja; Movimento Pelas Serras e Águas de Minas; RENAP – Rede Nacional de Advogados Populares – MG; Sindicato dos Trabalhadores Rurais de Açucena; Sinfrajupe; SOS Serra da Piedade; ÚNICON (Unidos por Conceição do Mato Dentro); Adriano Ventura (Vereador – PT/BH); Alessandro M. Bayer, Geógrafo, Conselheiro de Patrimônio Ecológico, Natural e Paisagístico do Conselho Estadual de Cultura – ES; Edemilson Paraná – Vice-presidente PSOL – DF Leandro Cruz – Secretário de Meio Ambiente do PT – MG; Magno Araújo (Vereador – PTB/Açucena).