

San Dionisio del Mar: Indigenous communities under police siege for resisting imposition of windpark

by El Enemigo Común
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Indigenous peoples on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec are resisting a new police offensive to impose the construction of a mega wind park by the Spanish transnational Mareña Renovables in the Barra de Santa Teresa of San Dionisio del Mar. This wind park, the largest in Latin America, would completely do away with the habitat, natural resources and food supplies of the fishing and farming families of the Barra and would also destroy their sacred sites. Moreover, the project is a direct violation of their human rights as an indigenous people.

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As a form of protest, members of the Assembly of the Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus in Defense of the Land and Territory took over the town government offices a year ago and still occupy them. As of last October 29, they also maintain a blockade in Colonia Álvaro Obregón to prevent Mareña Renovables from entering the Barra to start construction.

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Despite the fact that the Seventh District Court of the State of Oaxaca has ordered the suspension of the megaproject, emphasizing that "the authorization conceded to Mareña Renovables implies the deprivation of the collective rights to property, possession, use and enjoyment of the communal lands of the Barra Santa Teresa," the police aggression continues.

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Urgent calls for solidarity are reproduced below:

Alert from the Assembly of the Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus in Defense of the Land and Territory, February 2, 2013.

URGENT. All day today police officers were harassing townspeople of the Álvaro Obregón neighborhood who are guarding the entrance to Barra Santa Teresa. Despite the presence of representatives of the International Peace Brigades and Code DH, a tense calm was perceived, at best. Around 8 pm, when the Human Rights observers had gone, a confrontation occurred when policemen tried to go into the Barra and evacuate the comrades, who were able to repel the attack. Nevertheless, several people were wounded, although the exact number has not yet been ascertained.

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We also denounce the fact that hired gunmen paid by the company and the state government are looking for human rights defenders Rodrigo Flores Pealoza, Isaul Celaya, Carlos Beas and Bettina Cruz Velázquez, with the intent to kill them. We know that Rodrigo is one of the most sought after defenders at this time and hold Mareña Renovables responsible for any act of violence or attack against his physical integrity or that of the other human rights defenders; the President of the Board, Jonathan Davis, bears specific responsibility as evidenced by his statements demanding that the state government of Oaxaca "take specific measures to guarantee his investment." We ask that you stay on the alert, given that we expect the tense situation to get worse during the night, including further attacks against the communities and human rights defenders.

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On February 1, Saul Celaya LÃ³pez of the Assembly of San Dionisio del Mar, Oaxaca, in Defense of Our Territory sent the following message:

â€œAt this moment, agents from several different police forces are attempting to break the blockade that has been maintained in the Colonia Ã•lvaro ObregÃ³n to impede the entrance of MareÃ±a Renovable into the Barra Santa Teresa de San Dionisio del Mar; they are using force to comply with the whim of MareÃ±a Renovable, thereby violating the protective order in our favor.â€•

Urgent CommuniquÃ© from the Assembly of the Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus in Defense of the Land and Territory, January 31, 2013

On January 30, around 7 oâ€™clock in the morning, a person claiming to be a biologist drove up in a white van to the entrance of the Barra Santa Teresa from Ã•lvaro ObregÃ³n. He had a document bearing the logo of MareÃ±a Renovables. The Zapotec farmers and fishermen who have been guarding the entrance since last October 29 told him he would have to leave due to a judicial order that prohibits the company from entering the Barra.

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About 10 oâ€™clock that morning a man who responds to the name of Donald sent by the Secretary of Government of Oaxaca (SEGEGO) arrived, along with 6 truckloads of state policemen. He told the people on guard that the government wanted to talk to them to negotiate MareÃ±aâ€™s entrance into the Barra. He also said told them that they were â€œnobody,â€ claiming that 60% of the people of Ã•lvaro ObregÃ³n want MareÃ±a to come in because it will mean work for them.

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When the comrades showed him a copy of the protective order decreeing the suspension of the project, Donald answered that it meant nothing to him because it was from San Dionisio and that they were being deceived. Neither did he give any credence to the minutes signed last November 8 of a meeting between the government, the company and the communities, in which the latter expressed their inconformity with the wind park, and the company and the government accepted their reasons. When the state government representative saw that the comrades would not budge, he withdrew along with the state policemen at around 4 oâ€™clock in the afternoon.

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The next day, January 31, at 10 oâ€™clock in the morning, two truckloads of state policemen arrived at the entrance to the Barra to ask the comrades to attend a dialogue with the state government and MareÃ±a Renovables; once again, the comrades refused. At that time two people in a van tried to get around the barricade in order to go into the Barra, but they were detained by the guards. This act was described as a kidnapping by state government official Rodrigo VelÃ¡squez GarcÃ­a, who claimed on the radio that the people of Ã•lvaro ObregÃ³n had kidnapped two people, a fact that was denied by a state policeman who was there at the time.

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After this incident, the SEGEGO representative in the Isthmus (Donald) arrived with two truckloads of state police, demanding that comrades allow them to go into the Barra so the company could begin to work because job opportunities were being lost. He also stated that the people of Ã•lvaro ObregÃ³n were not the owners of the Barra. Our comrades told

him that as a representative of the state government elected by the majority of the people, he should be looking out for them and not for the interests of a foreign business. They added that if he wanted a dialogue, Governor Gabino Cuéllar himself should come or at least the Director of the SEGEGO and that the community would no longer accept emissaries because anything they might discuss and sign would just be thrown in the trash can.

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That same day, according to NSS Oaxaca, in the context of the International Conference on Renewable Energy being held in the city, the President of the Board of Marea Renovables, Jonathan Davis Arzac, warned that they would take their wind energy project to another state if they weren't offered guarantees for their investment.

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In his statements, Davis Arzac minimized the resistance movement against the wind park, ignoring the will of the communities of San Dionisio del Mar, Ilvaro Obregón, San Francisco del Mar, San Mateo del Mar to refuse to permit the looting and destruction of the Barra Santa Teresa area. He gave an ultimatum to the state government, demanding that officials allow and guarantee the initiation of construction work and take measures to assure the security of the investment, and stating that if this does not happen, no other business will ever set foot in Oaxaca again.

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These statements pose a serious risk for the community people in resistance, implying a clear threat against the movement a threat that is likely to be made good tomorrow. In view of the events of the last few days, it is feared that beginning tomorrow and during the next few days, the state and federal governments will try to enter our territory by perpetrating a bloodbath, as has been done in other communities.

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So we want to denounce that tonight, ILVARO OBREGÓN and SAN DIONISIO DEL MAR are BESIEGED BY HUNDREDS OF STATE AND JUDICIAL POLICE. And furthermore, it has come to our attention that this afternoon a meeting was held with the Attorney General of the Public Defenders Office of Matías Romero and representatives of the Human Rights Commission, the Secretary General and the Attorney General's Office of the State of Oaxaca, in which strategies were orchestrated to attempt to murder our comrade RODRIGO FLORES PEÑALOZA, a teacher belonging to Section XXII of the Teachers Union in Oaxaca and a human rights defender.

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WE DENOUNCE ALL THESE THREATS, ACTS OF HARASSMENT AND INTIMIDATION, AND MURDER ATTEMPTS BY THE GABINO CUE GOVERNMENT.

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WE HOLD THE MAREA RENOVABLES COMPANY AND GOVERNOR GABINO CUE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PHYSICAL INTEGRITY OF ALL THE COMRADES IN RESISTANCE AND ESPECIALLY OUR COMRADE RODRIGO FLORES PEÑALOZA.

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WE DEMAND RESPECT FOR OUR HUMAN RIGHT AS PEOPLES TO MANAGE OUR PATRIMONY AND RESPECT FOR ALL OUR RIGHTS AS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES.

NOT ONE STEP BACKWARD IN THE DEFENSE OF OUR TERRITORY!

English translation of comunicaci3n published by the: Asamblea de Pueblos IndÃ©genas del Istmo de Tehuantepec en Defensa de la Tierra y el Territorio

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