

Lago Agrio, November 03, 2022

AFTER 29 YEARS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE AGUINDA VS. CHEVRON CASE, THE GOVERNMENT SMOOTH THE WAY FOR THE OIL COMPANIES WITH A MINISTER WHO DENIES THE CONTAMINATION LEFT BY TEXACO.

November 3 marks the 29th anniversary of the lawsuit filed by a group of people from the provinces of Sucumbíos and Orellana against Texaco, today Chevron, for the environmental crime the company caused between 1968 and 1992 in the Amazon. By coincidence, the government of Guillermo Lasso changes the Minister of Energy and Mines, accused of bribery, for a lawyer of oil companies who was Minister of Energy and Mines in the government of Febres Cordero and who was also accused of bribery.

In 2016, the now new Minister of Energy and Mines, Santos Alvite, cynically and brazenly declared that: "A group of American and Ecuadorian lawyers, taking the name of the Amazonian indigenous people, invented environmental damages, bribed the judge in the Orient (of Ecuador) and this judge condemned Chevron to a compensation of billions of dollars, false, illegal and immoral because these damages do not exist... the oil waste does not cause damage to anyone".

The serious environmental damages, unfortunately, DO EXIST. What does not exist is any proof that the affected parties or their lawyers have bribed any judge. What DOES EXIST is international acknowledgment of the struggle of the communities and indigenous peoples, acknowledgment that has allowed UDAPT, the organization that brings together the affected groups and communities, to continue its struggle against Chevron and against all extractive activities that cause contamination and harm the health of the campesino and indigenous communities of the Ecuadorian Amazon.

The environmental contamination caused by TEXACO in the past, and the environmental contamination that continues today due to constant oil spills, improper treatment of oil waste and the presence of more than 400 gas flares that expel gas accompanied by noxious chemical elements, are essential to understand the high number of cancer cases in the provinces of Sucumbíos and Orellana. In an investigation conducted by Clínica Ambiental and UDAPT, 407 cases of cancer have been detected up until March 2022, and this is limited to the cantons of Lago Agrio,

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Shushufindi, Francisco de Orellana and Joya de los Sachas. This figure is alarmingly high, if we compare it to the national average, which, in 2018, was 165 cancer cases in women and 150 cancer cases in men, per 200,000 inhabitants.

Patricio Saravia, coordinator of the Observatory for the defense of people with catastrophic diseases in the provinces of Sucumbíos and Orellana, points out that: "It is indignant that, in spite of the desperate situation of people with cancer in Sucumbíos and Orellana, most of whom come from the strata of poverty and extreme poverty of the ecuadorian society, the State denies the attention established by the Constitution of the Republic and by the Organic Law of Planning of the CTEA, in its eighth general disposition. As a matter of fact this clearly establishes that the State must provide support in lodging, transportation and food to people with catastrophic illnesses for their effective care".

The non-allocation of resources to make the public policy in favor of people with cancer effective, has led to an increase in the number of deaths due to the inability to pay for treatment. This states of things and, in addition, the appointment of a minister who has defended and worked for transnational oil companies and who denies the tangible environmental damages caused by TEXACO, should alert the civil society and the National Assembly to supervise and censure these practices that affect the Ecuadorian homeland.

Pablo Fajardo, lawyer and representative of the UDAPT, affirms that the organization is stronger than ever in the defense of the rights of the campesino and indigenous communities and denounces the neoliberal policies of a government that serves the interests of the banks and transnational corporations, resulting in the increase of poverty, the death of people with cancer and the permanent damage to the environment of the Ecuadorian Amazon.

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