

A Call For Action

How would you feel if you suddenly saw your own community described in haunting precision, although the case at hand has nothing to do with you – or has it?

This recently happened to us, while reading an [article](#) by two Canadian judges at the People's Tribunal in Guatemala (July 2012) explaining why the international panel of judges found a Vancouver based mining company (Goldcorp) guilty:

*[...] In all cases, mining operations were imposed on communities without their prior consent, and have created divisions and conflicts within communities and even within families. In all cases there has been an increase in tension, mistrust and violence at the community level. We heard about polarization and fragmentation of community life, pitting neighbour against neighbour, and a feeling of being betrayed by government officials who defend the interests of the company over the individual and collective human rights of the communities.
[...]*

Greece is rapidly becoming the scene where [Eldorado Gold](#) – another Vancouver based multinational – backed by the Greek Government and central European Union policies, and fueled by the complex economic politics of the current Euro crisis, is creating a profitable “golden monopoly” for itself. See [recent analysis](#) of Eldorado Gold from an investors' point of view.

Pressure on communities to sit back quietly and thankfully while mining projects are developed is high (see for example, the Canadian ambassador to Athens, Robert Peck's visit to local authorities in Thrace in March 2012 (see [video1](#) / [video2](#)) – making a bid for Canadian investments in gold mining... and hydroplanes as a savory side-dish).

This should not come as a surprise – albeit in the land that gave birth to democracy – as it is not a secret that (quoting from the People's Tribunal [verdict](#)) [...] the Canadian government, through its Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, and other mechanisms, intervenes directly in the affairs of other governments in order to create a legal and political context which is favourable for the operation of Canadian mining companies [...].

Communities of the northern Greece regions of Thrace (19 km² - [Perama Hill](#)), Halkidiki (317 km² - [Stratoni](#), [Skouries](#), [Olympias](#)), and Kilkis (91 km² [Krousia-Paiko](#)) are opposing the large scale exploration and extraction projects which are under development. Each project is at the different stage of the concession and permitting process, but it has become very clear that the whole region has been declared “open for mining business” at the central political level, while in blatant violation of international and national legislation that guarantees the right to free, prior and informed consent and participation of communities in the decision-making process.

Lawsuits have been filed before the Council of State (Greece's Supreme Administrative Court) challenging the state's 2011 EIS approval for the Halkidiki mining projects, and the legality of the decision of the Secretary General of the Decentralized Administration of Macedonia-Thrace, granting the right to acquire the forest land necessary for the development of the projects in Halkidiki. The lawsuits are currently awaiting the court's decision – all that can be done judicially is being done at the moment.

Do we need to wait some decades down the road to witness [people's tribunals](#) in Europe holding corporations accountable for social and environmental devastation – full of [...] stories of exploration, exploitation of gold and also of people - stories of the destruction of futures and the denial of facts, stories of strategies that increase danger of 'jobs' and social conflict, the story of our gain through the impoverishment of the majority, of tomorrows destruction for today's gain [...]

Is gold mining really a form of sustainable development or is it merely a well-disguised form of sustainable development of profit for multinational corporations?

Is it truly “only fair” that we Europeans now pay the price of a whole history of our own imperialistic practices on other continents with a taste of the same medicine? And in this case, are we witnessing a return of imperialism in its crudest form by making certain European “partner” nations pay the price of sustaining attitudes to unsustainable ways of living on this planet?

If the Halkidiki project goes forward as planned – extracting beyond the holding capacity of the ecosystem - it will industrialize the region at the expense of all other means of production, as well as increase social dependency on just one multinational corporation. It will create a monstrous monoculture on all levels. You can read more about the issue of Halkidiki gold mining and [support our campaign](#).

Our struggle is a common one – we are reaching out to you today in an attempt to raise awareness to the fact that our own engagement is not enough. What we truly need today is co-engagement. We need to mobilize each other, to build a community of responsiveness that cares for all such cases, acting in the awareness that all cases have a common denominator – the destructive nature of our definition of development.

With the understanding that engagement in ways that suit each of our individual goals and practices is crucial to any common struggle, we invite you to consider our case, and communicate with us if you so wish.

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