



Amazon In Focus

FALL 2017



AMAZON WATCH

OUR MISSION & VISION

Our Mission

Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996 to protect the rainforest and advance the rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability, and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

Our Vision

We envision a world that honors and values cultural and biological diversity and the critical contribution of tropical rainforests to our planet's life support system. We believe that indigenous self-determination is a critical component of any successful conservation strategy for the Amazon, and see that indigenous knowledge, cultures, and traditional practices contribute greatly to sustainable and equitable stewardship of Mother Earth. We strive for a world in which governments, corporations, and civil society respect the collective rights of indigenous peoples to free, prior and informed consent over any activity affecting their territories and resources. We commit, in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect, to support our indigenous allies in their efforts to protect life, land, and culture in accordance with their aspirations and needs, as well as the needs of future generations.

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MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Photo: Rucha Chitnis

Dear Friends of the Amazon:

As I reflect on the challenges of our time, I turn to the messages and guidance of our indigenous partners across Abya Yala (the Americas) who remind us to remain unified in resistance and in defense of indigenous rights, the Amazon and all of Mother Earth to protect all that is sacred.

In 1997, the U'wa people of Colombia declared that they would rather die than to allow L.A.-based Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) to drill for oil – a substance the U'wa believe to be the blood of Mother Earth – on their sacred ancestral territory. They said, “We will in no way sell our Mother Earth. To do so would be to give up our work of collaborating with the spirits to protect the heart of the world, which sustains and gives life to the rest of the universe.” Since then, Amazon Watch has stood in solidarity with the U'wa who have shown the world what it truly means to keep it in the ground and defend the sacred. We are honored to continue supporting their visionary leadership and recommit to advancing their solutions to protecting rivers, rights and rainforests for all.

While the threats to the Amazon and indigenous peoples seem daunting at times – with reports of increased deforestation due to industrial activity and lawlessness resulting in attacks against earth defenders – we cannot lose sight of hope and victories on the horizon.

As Naomi Klein says, “No is Not Enough.” She’s right! That is why Amazon Watch is committed to both resistance and solutions. We must be bold and resist the continued threats to all of our communities and our global climate, and reject false solutions; listen to the wisdom of indigenous peoples – the guardians of Mother Earth – who protect 80% of the planet’s biodiversity and water on which we all depend for life; stand in solidarity with them and with the scientists who’ve confirmed that we must keep 80% of fossil fuels in the ground to avoid climate chaos; and create the solutions we want to see in the world, including supporting indigenous-led conservation efforts and building a renewable energy economy from California to the Amazon.

To do this, we need you! Please join us in defending the sacred with the U'wa, Sápara, Kichwa, Achuar Munduruku, and all of our indigenous partners and allies across Abya Yala. Together, we will win!

In gratitude and partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leila S. Salazar". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Leila Salazar-López
Executive Director



OUR WORK:
PROTECTING
THE AMAZON
AND OUR CLIMATE
BY SUPPORTING
INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES

Since 1996, Amazon Watch has protected the rainforest and advanced the rights of indigenous peoples in the Amazon Basin. We partner with indigenous and environmental organizations in campaigns for human rights, corporate accountability, and the preservation of the Amazon's ecological systems.

Stop Amazon Destruction

Amazon Watch resists the destruction of the Amazon by challenging disastrous development projects and natural resource extraction and by promoting indigenous rights.

In the last year we achieved significant victories and challenged new disastrous projects:

- Brazil dropped plans for the controversial Tapajós mega-dam after the Munduruku people and Amazon Watch advocated aggressively about the “lessons learned” from Belo Monte.

- Launched our End Amazon Crude campaign with the first-ever report tracking oil imports from the Amazon.
- Amazon Watch and the Achuar of Peru put oil company Geopark on notice to keep out of Block 64 after it announced new plans to drill there.

Current Priorities:

- Apply international markets pressure via our End Amazon Crude campaign to stigmatize and ultimately halt the U.S. importation of Amazonian oil.
- Stop Beijing-backed oil drilling and mining projects by encouraging China to uphold its environmental and climate commitments.
- Slow Brazil's renewed assault on the Amazon, environmental regulations, and indigenous territorial rights by exposing international investment in corrupt government leaders representing agribusiness, mining, and energy interests.

Advance Indigenous-led Solutions

Amazon Watch supports and promotes indigenous-led alternative solutions to climate change, natural resource extraction, and industrial development

In the last year we achieved significant victories:

- Our indigenous solar communications project launched in collaboration with Empowered By Light to provide clean energy and communications systems for indigenous Amazonian communities in Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia.
- Amazonian leaders strengthened the international movement for indigenous territorial rights with delegations from Ecuador and Colombia to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's September 2016 World Conservation Congress. There indigenous leadership played a key role in the passage of Motion 26, which elevates "sacred natural sites"



to protected area designations as "No Go" zones for extractive industries.

- Throughout 2016 and 2017, Amazon Watch engaged with Brazilian allies and the international community to fight escalating environmental and human rights threats from Brazil's right-wing *ruralista* government leaders.

Current Priorities:

- Support grassroots indigenous-led efforts to advance a vision for a permanently protected Sacred Headwaters bio-cultural region located between the Napo and Marañón rivers.
- Continue to install solar power and communications systems in frontline indigenous communities and provide training in their use and upkeep in coordination with Empowered By Light.
- Manage a re-granting program to ensure that our indigenous partners have the resources needed to wage successful struggles against rights abuses and natural resource and climate destruction.

Support Climate Justice

Amazon Watch joins with the climate justice movement to address the fact that the most vulnerable – especially indigenous people and people of color – bear the brunt of environmental destruction, corporate greed, and climate change, and are often excluded from top-down solutions.

In the last year we achieved significant victories:

- Amazon Watch provided logistical and financial support to the Kichwa people of Sarayaku to bring their legal claims against the Ecuadorian government before the Inter-American Human Rights Court.
- Amazon Watch brought indigenous Amazonian leaders to join tens of thousands at the front of the People's Climate March alongside Standing Rock leaders and allies like Leonardo DiCaprio.
- Amazon Watch's re-granting program provided financial resources to our indigenous partners to increase their capacity to wage their own campaigns.

- In 2016, we launched an Earth Defenders Urgent Action Fund to provide rapid response grants to communities increasingly facing human rights violations at the hands of government and corporate forces.

Current Priorities:

- Ensure indigenous Amazonian participation in international climate change convenings and negotiations, including COP23 in Bonn, Germany in November 2017.
- Support inter-ethnic and international alliance-building between indigenous peoples of the North and South calling for climate justice.
- Support and advance proposals by indigenous women and youth on the frontlines of ecological destruction and climate change in the Amazon.
- Maintain the pressure on Chevron to address and clean up its toxic legacy in the Ecuadorian Amazon.
- Engage China in productive dialogue about its climate-harming activities in the Amazon.



PROFILE: AURA TEGRIA CRISTANCHO



Aura Tegria Cristancho is a young indigenous lawyer from Colombia's U'wa Nation. Since late 2013, she has served as the legal advisor to the U'wa Association of Traditional Authorities and Councils (ASOU'WA). During her tenure, Aura has played a key role in a number of important advances made by the U'wa people in the defense of their ancestral territory, like their successful shutdown of a natural gas exploration platform constructed within their ancestral territory in early 2014. Using nonviolent protest, international advocacy, media campaigns, and direct negotiations with the government, the U'wa stopped the project in its tracks. Throughout this process, Aura served as a liaison

with Colombian and international allies, and a spokesperson before international media outlets and the government. Aura has also helped lead the U'wa's fight to protect Zizuma, the sacred mountain that soars over their ancestral territory and plays a central role in their spiritual cosmivision. Aura has served as an international ambassador for the U'wa, participating in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2014 and 2016 and traveling to Washington, DC to meet with human rights lawyers at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The IACHR formally took up the U'wa case in late 2015 in large part due to Aura's leadership.



Photo: Kinorama CopyLeft

COLOMBIA'S U'WA STILL TEACHING US HOW TO RESIST

By Atossa Soltani

A longer version appeared in January 2017 on the Amazon Watch blog, Eye on the Amazon.

In late November of 2016, on the eve of the signing of the peace agreement aimed at ending Colombia's five-decade civil war with the FARC, Amazon Watch made its first visit to the U'wa people in their territory in Northeastern Colombia near the border with Venezuela. We hadn't been able to visit previously due to safety concerns related to the armed conflict.

As the guardians of their sacred ancestral homeland, for centuries the U'wa have successfully defended their territory high in the Andean cloud forests. They have resisted conquistadors, missionaries, colonists, and, more recently, the oil industry, guerrillas, the military, and paramilitary groups active in the region.

A testament to the strength of their traditional leaders, the U'wa have survived these aggressions with their language, culture and a large area of their ancestral territories still intact.

Amazon Watch first began to work with the U'wa in 1997 after they declared that they would rather die than

to allow the L.A.-based Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) to drill for oil – a substance the U'wa believe to be the blood of Mother Earth – on their sacred ancestral territory.

In announcing their decision, the U'wa wrote:

All the economic offers for what is sacred to us, like the earth and its blood, are an insult to our ears and a bribe to our beliefs.... From us, there will be no betrayal of our Mother Earth, or of her sons who are our brothers. Neither will we betray the pride of our ancestors because our land is sacred and everything in it is sacred.... If to defend life we have to give our own, we will do it."

The U'wa's Extraordinary Visionary Leadership

While a part of the U'wa success has been their steadfast resistance, skillful organizing, and global campaigning, behind all these tactics are their spiritual beliefs and practices.

For example, in the spring of 2001, when Oxy began drilling its first well to access oil reserves beneath the U'wa territory, the U'wa *Werjayas* and *Kerakas* gathered for three months of fasting, meditation, prayer and chanting, asking their ancestors to hide the oil beneath their territory. Their strategy proved effective. Oxy spent \$100 million drilling the Gibraltar well to access an oil field that the company estimated contained 1.2 billion barrels of oil, potentially Colombia's largest

oil find in decades. In May 2002, Oxy abandoned the oil project after announcing that it had only found natural gas and condensates.

Key to that struggle was Berito Kuwaru'wa, an elder, former U'wa president, and the first U'wa leader to bring the U'wa's message to the world. Berito also worked tirelessly to gain legal recognition of the U'wa Unified Reserve and expel the missionaries who used to steal U'wa children – including him – and force them to adopt Christianity. For his visionary leadership, Berito was awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize in 1998 and today continues to be a guiding force for the next generation of U'wa leaders.

U'wa Resurgence and Resistance

The threats facing U'wa territory and culture did not go away when Oxy left. Following Oxy's departure, the state oil company Ecopetrol assumed exploration of the Gibraltar complex. Ecopetrol even attempted to do seismic testing inside the heart of the U'wa reserve, but was thwarted by U'wa resistance. Still, despite strong objections by the U'wa, Ecopetrol did drill two additional wells and finally found sufficient gas to move to commercial production.

The Gibraltar complex is located on the site of a sacred spring, on land the U'wa had legally acquired but which Oxy expropriated in 2000. In recent years, the drilling project, which

produces high-grade gas liquids, has suffered several ruptures that have polluted the nearby Cobaría River. These spills further intensified the U'wa people's actions to halt this project.

In June-July of 2016 the U'wa indigenous guard organized a series of peaceful actions at the Gibraltar 3 well site, eventually succeeding in halting all production. The local *campesino* (small-scale farmer) association joined the occupation in solidarity. After a tense standoff, U'wa entered into dialogue with the national government. Eventually, the government agreed to some of the U'wa demands, including advancing legal recognition for two U'wa reserves. However, the U'wa demand for the closure of the Gibraltar complex was rejected. Thus, the U'wa continue



Berito Kuwaru'wa

their legal battle to decommission the Gibraltar plant and to annul all permits for oil and gas projects on their lands.

The U'wa Guard: Courageous Protection and Stewardship

The U'wa are impressive conservationists. In accordance with their natural laws and customary practices, the U'wa leave the majority of their territory off-limits to humans, dedicating them to the protection of animals and spirits. Only the *Werjayas* (spiritual elders) are allowed occasional entrance for spiritual purposes. This explains why, as far as the eye can see, there are well-conserved forest-covered mountains.

Particularly crucial for the U'wa is the preservation and protection of Mount Zizuma, the sacred birthplace of all of the rivers in their ancestral lands. The mountain is so sacred to the U'wa that only the spiritual leaders are authorized, on rare occasion, to climb its slopes in search of communication with the nature spirits. The U'wa reserve extends 544,000 acres across 5 provinces and stretches from the glacier peak of Mount Zizuma (about 17,500 feet above sea level) to the alpine tundra (the páramo), giving way to the bio-diverse cloud forests. Their ancestral territory is at least another million acres beyond the legally-recognized reserve. This montane cloud forest ecosystem is among the most endangered tropical ecosystems on the planet.



Photo: MAPP-OEA

But Mount Zizuma is located within the boundaries of the Cocuy National Park. Last year, after a charity game of high-altitude soccer was played on its snow-capped peak, the U'wa moved to shut down access to this area. This struggle for the sacred Mount Zizuma is a key focal point for the U'wa people's exercise of territorial rights.

A Bittersweet Walk Down Memory Lane

Neither I nor the U'wa, nor any of their allies, will ever forget the heartbreaking tragedy of March of 1999, when we got the news that the FARC had captured and brutally killed three North American activists during a visit to the U'wa.

The 24-year-old Terrence (Terry) Freitas had met the U'wa on their first visit to the U.S., when they came to Los Angeles to confront Oxy, and for the next two years became their global ambassador for the campaign to halt the oil project. He founded the U'wa Defense Project and led a coalition of organizations working in solidarity with the U'wa. On the March 1999 trip, Terry brought with him

Lahe'ena'e Gay, a Native Hawaiian cultural leader who was part of the movement to bring back the Hawaiian language; and Ingrid Washinawatok, an indigenous rights leader from the Menominee nation who was a global crusader for indigenous peoples' rights. Their murders were devastating for family and friends and the tragedy deepened our bond with the U'wa people.

During my visit many U'wa paid repeated tributes to honor the spirit of Terry, Lahe and Ingrid: "We U'wa traditional authorities feel the pain that is felt by the families of the three indigenous rights activists," one U'wa community member said, "but we should also remember that they continue to live on with us, they continue helping the U'wa process."

Inspiring Global Solidarity

The U'wa are among the very first indigenous group that Amazon Watch had the honor of working closely with, and we have learned so much from them about working in solidarity with indigenous communities.

The U'wa have also inspired many around the world with their powerful declarations and courageous actions. They have often been on the forefront of indigenous rights debates and have masterfully forged global alliances with local *campesino* associations, Colombian indigenous and social movements, and global solidarity networks. The Oxy campaign was among the first successful global solidarity efforts for indigenous rights and corporate accountability, and the U'wa were the first to insist on leaving petroleum in the ground, a call that has since emerged as an imperative for addressing global climate change and been adopted by progressive movements around the globe from the Yasuni National Park in Ecuador to Northern Alberta in Canada.

"For us everything is significant – the rocks, the mountains, the rivers – everything exists in relationship. And this needs to be maintained. We can't continue destroying Mother Earth, we can't continue taking the blood out of her. We also can't continue using all natural resources to the damage of the ecosystem. That's why I invite everyone to put their hands over their heart and to defend our U'wa process and all the other processes happening within indigenous territories."

– Daris Cristancho,
at the site of the now dismantled
Magallanes gas project,
Colombia November 29, 2016



CHEVRON CEO WATSON LEAVES A LEGACY OF TOXIC WASTE

By Paul Paz y Miño

After seven dreadful years, Chevron CEO John Watson recently made a surprise announcement that he is finally resigning. Yet the world will continue to suffer from the disastrous effects of his terrible decisions for many years to come.

Amazon Watch's history with Watson dates back to Chevron's merger with Texaco. John Watson was a principal architect of that merger, and at a Chevron shareholder meeting we presented him with a great deal of information about Texaco's environmental disaster in Ecuador and warned that if the merger went through then Chevron would necessarily assume all liability to clean up the worst oil-related disaster in history. Watson ignored us.

In 2010, Watson became CEO on the eve of the largest environmental judgment ever won against an oil company, in which Chevron was ordered to pay \$9.5 billion to clean up Texaco's toxic mess. Chevron lost that trial after years of efforts to delay and derail it, and after thousands of pages of scientific evidence – much of which provided by Chevron's own experts – demonstrated the damage caused by Texaco's deliberate dumping and shoddy operations. At the time of that judgment, Watson had another chance to listen to the appeals of the people of Ecuador and finally do the right thing.

Not only did Watson refuse to take responsibility and clean up the toxic waste still poisoning these communities, but he focused the full weight of Chevron's legal and public relations might on demonizing the Ecuadorians and their lawyers, and he even countersued them, alleging extortion. The company is even seeking \$32 million in legal fees in an attempt to personally bankrupt Steven Donziger –

a key member of the legal team that achieved the historic judgment in Ecuador. We at Amazon Watch were pulled into Chevron's sham suit as an alleged "co-conspirator" for standing with the communities who sued to clean up their homes. It's estimated that, to date, Chevron has spent as much as \$2 billion just to avoid cleaning up the toxic waste that Texaco admitted dumping in Ecuador.

During Watson's time as CEO, Chevron even approved payments to company witnesses and bribed them to falsify evidence and testimony in U.S. federal court. With these tactics, CEO Watson helped pave the way for a new wave of racketeering lawsuits that have since been filed by other corporations against a variety of environmental and human rights organizations, such as our friends at Greenpeace and the Sierra Club.

In short, it would be hard for Chevron to do worse than Watson and we are thrilled to see him go. The company is still facing a collection action in Canada for its \$9.5 billion debt to the people of Ecuador. A new CEO will have an opportunity to finally break with Chevron's abusive past and respect the rule of law and the environment. Watson's legacy makes it harder for the environmental and human rights community to challenge corporate power, but we stand united and will continue to hold Chevron to account, no matter who is at the helm.

China's Other Big Export: Pollution

By Paulina Garzón and Leila Salazar-López

While President Trump rolls back environmental protections and announces the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris climate accord, China is trying to position itself as the world's climate leader, pledging to cooperate with other countries to build an "eco-civilization." China has established the largest solar panel farm in the world, plans to close over 100 coal-fired power plants, and is committed to spending at least \$361 billion on renewable energy by 2020.

All of this is laudable and sorely needed. But if China truly wants to be a climate leader it needs to address its global climate footprint, not just pollution within its borders.

China's lending in Latin American and Caribbean countries provides a telling example of how the country has outsourced its emissions.

The Chinese Development Bank and the China Export-Import Bank

provided more than \$141 billion in loan commitments to Latin America and the Caribbean from 2005 to 2016, far surpassing lending from multilateral banks to the region. These loans have gone mainly to projects with significant environmental effects like oil drilling, coal mining, hydroelectric dam construction and road building. Over half of all public-sector lending from China to Latin America, some \$17.2 billion in 2017, went to the fossil-fuel industry.

Chinese direct investment in Latin America follows a similar pattern: \$113.6 billion was invested from 2001 to 2016, about 65 percent of which went to commodity-oriented transactions.

Many of the extraction projects are in areas, like the Amazon rain forest, that must be preserved for combating climate change. The Amazon is the world's largest terrestrial carbon sink and plays a critical role in regulating the global climate. Expanding fossil-fuel production in this region results in more emissions and deforestation.

Chinese money is fueling the growth of fossil-fuel industries in places like the Yasuní Biosphere Reserve in the Ecuadorean Amazon, believed to be the most biodiverse place in the world and the home to indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. Some of the \$17.4 billion in financing provided by China to Ecuador since 2010 has gone to oil-for-loan deals, meaning they must be paid through the sale of oil or fuel — and nearly all of Ecuador's reserves are in the Amazon rainforest. Meanwhile, Chinese investment in genuine sustainable-energy projects in Ecuador is scant.

In the Brazilian Amazon, China has committed significant funding, through development financing and direct investment by state-run companies, for the Brazilian government's efforts to construct a new commodities corridor through the Amazon basin, facilitating the expansion of industrial agribusiness into remote, pristine rain forest.

This kind of investment in Brazil also empowers the country's powerful agribusiness lobby, known as the *ruralistas*. President Michel Temer's administration has advanced the *ruralistas'* goal

of dismantling environmental safeguards by essentially providing a rubber stamp for even more dirty energy projects in places like the Amazon.

Another example comes from Patagonia, home of the largest ice fields in the Southern Hemisphere outside of Antarctica. There, the Chinese firm Gezhouba is pursuing the construction of a \$4.7 billion hydroelectric dam complex, with financing from the China Development Bank, the Bank of China and the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China. The dams may damage the glaciers in Argentina's Los Glaciares National Park, a Unesco World Heritage Site.

China is worsening the climate crisis with its financing elsewhere as well. From 2000 to 2015 China extended \$94.4 billion in loans to Africa, fueling extractive industries like oil, minerals and timber; the expansion roads and ports to get those raw materials to market; and dirty energy like large dams and power plants. Beijing is building and financing some 50 new coal plants across Africa.

China has begun to consider a different path in its overseas environmental and social policies — at least on paper. In 2012 the government approved the Green

Credit Directive, which requires Chinese banks to “effectively identify, measure, monitor and control environmental and social risks associated with their credit activities” and recommends that funds be suspended or terminated where “major risks or hazards are



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identified.” While these guidelines are rarely followed, they show that there is concern among the leadership about the environmental and social impact of the country's investments abroad.

Such concern is well placed. In Nicaragua, Ecuador and Peru, community protests against Chinese

operations have led to the killings of local residents, imposition of states of emergency and legal actions against Chinese companies.

China should approach its international projects with the same concern for the environment that its starting to show at home. Beijing should refrain from supporting extraction in areas of global ecological importance, and instead heavily invest in clean, renewable energy projects. Civil society groups should keep the pressure on, and developing-country governments should incorporate such guidelines into bilateral agreements and project contracts.

Continuing to pursue fossil fuel development is a losing proposition in the face of low oil prices, growing competition from renewables, and the scientific imperative to leave 80 percent of known fossil fuel reserves in the ground to avoid a catastrophic two-degree Celsius rise in global temperatures.

A true climate leader would invest in the preservation of areas of global ecological importance rather than destroy them.

A version of this op-ed appears in print on July 22, 2017, in The International New York Times



Photo: John Parnell

SOLAR POWER LIGHTS UP AMAZON COMMUNITIES FIGHTING DIRTY ENERGY

By Moira Birss

The Trump Administration is waging an unprecedented war on the planet: he has exited the Paris climate agreement, wants to gut the Clean Power Plan and is approving fossil fuel projects like the Keystone XL pipeline.

But regardless of what Trump does, the fossil fuel age is ending. Today, in the Amazon, indigenous people are leading us toward that end as they embrace clean energy while defending the living forest. They are true climate leaders, and Amazon Watch is ensuring they have tools to continue this leadership.

Through our partnership with Empowered by Light, three indigenous communities on the front lines of the Amazon rainforest's most emblematic rights and resources struggles now have solar energy generation capacity and internet hubs.

Solar micro-systems and radio communications infrastructure are now powering five Sápara communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon as they resist oil drilling on their lands; two Munduruku communities in the Brazilian Amazon as they demand legal recognition and protection for their territory; and one U'wa community in the Colombian cloud forests as they defend their sacred sites. More installations are planned for late 2017 and 2018.

This solar and communications equipment allows these remote communities to communicate internally to improve their safety and engage in cross-community dialogue; tell their own story to the broader world directly through new communications technology and training, further increasing their visibility and safety; and have access to reliable, clean energy for other community needs without relying on dirty energy sources like kerosene or diesel.

Collaborative project planning, along with maintenance and communications trainings, are integral parts of all of these projects in order to maximize both system longevity and impact. These projects, all of which were specifically requested by the communities, provide critical external and internal communications capacity, thereby allowing communities to increase both their personal safety and visibility for their emblematic campaigns.

Indigenous communities like these are showing the world how to fight big energy directly while also taking action at home. Growing their efforts to protect rainforests and reject dirty energy is critical to confronting our climate crisis.

Lighting the way for the future of our climate and our forests, these indigenous earth defenders know the solution to climate change must include stopping the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.



THE INCREDIBLE BIODIVERSITY OF THE AMAZON

The Amazon rainforest is one of the most biodiverse places in the world – one in ten known species in the world lives in the Amazon rainforest, constituting the largest collection of living plant and animal species in the world.

Some areas of the Amazon hold even greater concentrations of biodiversity, like Yasuní National Park in Ecuador, which scientists believe may be THE most biodiverse place in the world – nearly 600 bird species have been documented there, for example.

These gorgeous photos by our friend, wildlife photographer Bejat McCracken, give you a small taste of the incredible richness of the fauna in Yasuní.



Resting Female Wire-tailed Manakin

All photos in the essay ©Bejat McCracken



Shag Moth Larva



Poison dart frogs



Spikeheaded Katydid



Procilla beauty butterfly



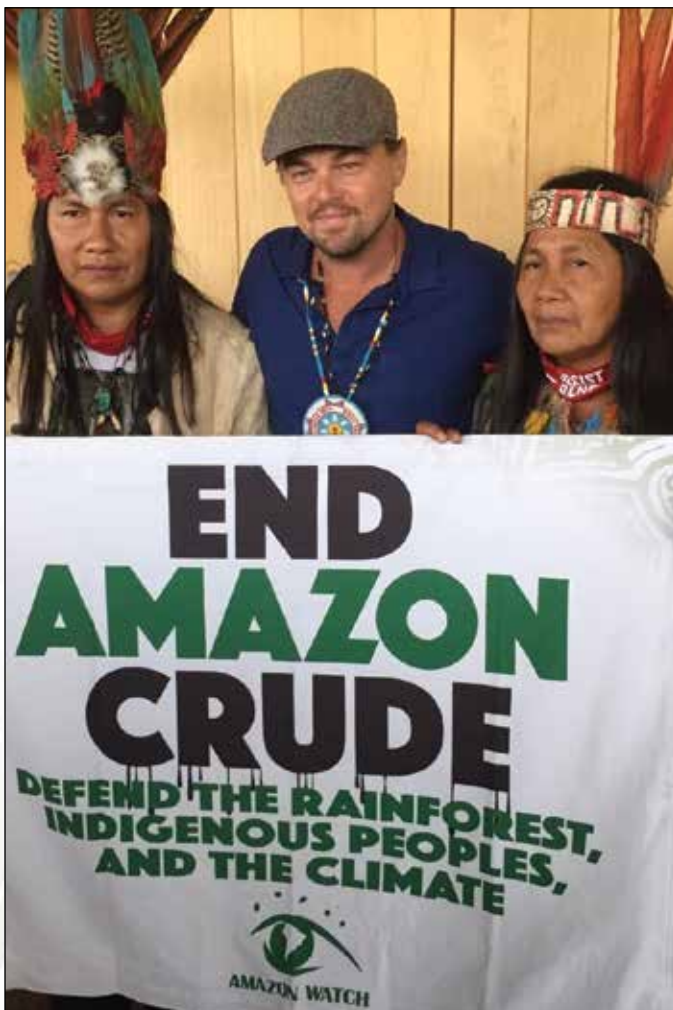
Spotted Night Snake



Smokey jungle frog



Chestnut Eared Aracari



Drilling for oil in the Amazon Basin has devastating impacts on the rainforest, the global climate, and indigenous peoples in the region. Expanding oil extraction in the Amazon accelerates climate change through direct and indirect deforestation and the continued burning of fossil fuels. It also endangers the health and livelihoods of community members who rely on the rainforest for their survival. Amazon Watch is working to stop this destruction. In addition to continuing our support for local resistance, we are taking action in the United States to End Amazon Crude.

It often surprises people to learn that most Amazon crude isn't actually refined and consumed in the countries where it is produced. In fact, pipelines carry much of this crude oil to South America's Pacific Coast, where tankers transport it to countries around the world. The majority of these ships have a single destination: the United States. In California, where most of the Amazon crude that comes to the U.S. is processed, air pollution from refineries harms the most vulnerable people in nearby communities. When the finished petroleum product is burned, it adds to global warming pollution and makes the air harder to breathe. This cycle of destruction will continue until we say no to new fossil fuel projects and "Keep It In The Ground".

The United States' demand for Amazon crude plays a significant role in driving the expansion of the fossil fuel frontier deeper into the rainforest. On the hopeful side, this means that we have power to protect the Amazon here at home: we can demand that corporations and decisionmakers stop using Amazon crude oil and do their part to End Amazon Crude.

BUILDING A CAMPAIGN TO END AMAZON CRUDE

By Zoë Cina-Sklar

One year ago this month, we launched our End Amazon Crude campaign with the release of a new report: *From Well to Wheel: The Social, Environmental and Climate Costs of Amazon Crude*. In addition to documenting the myriad negative impacts of drilling for oil in the Amazon, we tracked Amazon crude imports to individual oil refineries in the United States, with research help from our friends at the Borealis Centre for Environmental and Trade Research. We determined that all major truck fleets operating in California use Amazon-derived fuel, and that Chevron Corporation, infamous for its past operations in the Ecuadorian Amazon, continues its legacy of destruction as the leading processor of Amazon crude.

Along with our report, we shared a short animated video by Mark Fiore, "Blood Diamonds in a Barrel," that was viewed 130,000 times. *The Guardian* and *Fusion* covered our report and *AJ+* produced a video about Amazon crude in the United States. Our petition calling on U.S. corporations, cities, and states to end their use of Amazon crude, launched with the report release, has been signed over 10,000 times.

Comprehensive research in hand, we are now demonstrating how U.S. corporations contribute to climate change and the ongoing destruction of the rainforest by purchasing Amazon crude oil, and putting pressure on these corporations to go Amazon crude-free. We reached out to over forty Fortune 500 companies to share our *From Well to Wheel* report, and called on these companies to stop using Amazon-derived fuels to power their truck fleets. This resulted in dozens of productive in-person meetings and phone conversations with these companies. Soon, we will go public with a campaign to pressure a group of large companies to go Amazon crude-free and will call on oil refineries to follow their lead.

In addition to our corporate campaign, we will tell our California elected officials about the state's role in Amazon destruction, and urge them to take bold action. Student groups in Santa Cruz, Irvine, and San Diego will launch campaigns



asking their city councils to pass resolutions calling for a statewide ban on Amazon crude this fall, and Amazon Watch will begin outreach to our state-level legislators.

Woven throughout this campaign is a continued commitment to collaborating and relationship-building with people and organizations in California and beyond that are organizing for a just transition away from fossil fuels. First Nations in Canada fighting tar sands and indigenous peoples in Ecuador opposing drilling on their territories both call for sovereignty and respect for Mother Earth. People living near California refineries experience many of the same health impacts and human rights violations as those who live near oil wells in Ecuador. In many cases, the very same companies are doing the polluting, the very same banks are providing financing, and the very same governments are justifying this destruction in the name of economic growth – which often merely benefits the already-wealthy elite.

Communities on the frontlines and their allies around the world understand that the status quo is not sustainable and know that it is past time to "Keep It In The Ground" and create a future that is livable for all. At Amazon Watch, we are proud to contribute to that broader struggle by campaigning to End Amazon Crude.



THE PEOPLE OF THE WATERFALLS THREATENED BY LARGE-SCALE MINING

By Carlos Mazabanda



The Ecuadorian Amazon occupies just 1.5% of what is known as the Pan-Amazonian region, yet is believed to be one of the most biodiverse places on the planet. It is also home to ten indigenous nations and at least two indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation. Yet rather than protect this treasure, the Ecuadorian government has pursued the expansion of oil and mining projects there.

The provinces of Pastaza, Morona Santiago, and Zamora Chinchipe, located in the southern part of the Ecuadorian Amazon, contain the best-preserved rainforests, in which, until recently, extractive industries have not operated. Starting in 2011, however,

the Ecuadorian government began expanding oil and mining projects, offering up blocks of territory to the highest corporate bidder.

Twenty-one of those blocks were designated for oil drilling, and overlap with all or part of the territories of seven indigenous nationalities. Rights to drill in two of those blocks were given to the state company Petroamazonas, while Chinese company Andes Petroleum won rights to two others. These four blocks directly overlap with 59% of the territory of the Sápara Nation and 91% of Sarayaku territory, despite the fact that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that the

government violated the Sarayaku's rights to free, prior and informed consultation. In addition to oil drilling, two large-scale mining projects are underway under the auspices of two Chinese companies. Both projects affect ancestral territory of the Shuar Arutam peoples and are located in the area where the Andes meets the Amazon, a mountain range known as the Cordillera del Cóndor.

The investment of Chinese companies in these projects is just one manifestation of the growing economic relationship between Ecuador and China, which includes loans in exchange for Ecuadorian oil and the construction of infrastructure projects such as hydroelectric dams.

Shuar Territory In Dispute

The Shuar Arutam People includes 60 communities and around 6,000 inhabitants whose territory covers 190,000 hectares in the Province of Morona Santiago in the Cordillera del Cóndor, near the border between Ecuador and Peru. These mountains are home to an ecosystem of major biological importance and many endemic species of flora and fauna. The Cordillera del Cóndor is also the origin of a key water network, including countless waterfalls of great importance for the cosmology of the Shuar – in these waterfalls resides their highest deity, Arutam. For this reason, the Shuar are known as the People of the Waterfalls.

Yet the territory and survival of the Shuar Arutam faces serious risk from an open-pit copper mine, known as Panantza-San Carlos, currently under construction by Explocobres S.A., a Chinese conglomerate.

In August of 2016, disputes over this territory led to an operation in which over 2,000 members of the police and military, at the request of the mining company, evicted eight families – 32 people – from the Shuar village known as Nankints. The company claims to have titles for this property. However, these titles were granted to individual settlers by the government between the years 2000 and 2006 and later sold to the company, contrary to the Shuar's wishes.

The homes of Nankints inhabitants were destroyed with backhoes and replaced by a camp for EXSA workers. The displaced families sought refuge in a nearby community, but without clothing and supplies necessary for long-term survival, they are living in precarious conditions.

The conflict escalated in December of 2016, when a Shuar group attempted to take over the mining camp. This led to confrontations with police and military, there to protect the company's property. Then-President Rafael Correa declared a state of emergency in the province and deployed a large military force to patrol the area. Simultaneously, the national police raided the offices of the Shuar

federation, FICSH, and detained its president, Agustín Wachapá.

The military presence led families from nearby Shuar communities to also flee. The 35 displaced families – more than 150 people – now lack adequate housing and have lost their plots of land for growing the crops they rely on for daily sustenance.

The state of emergency was lifted after two months, but the government left the military personnel in place to respond to “any eventuality,” a presence which prevents these communities from returning to their homes.

This is how we want to live!

Tarimiat Pujustin is a Shuar concept and a series of principles that defines life in harmony with nature. It is a way of life they have practiced ancestrally and the reason for which 92% of Shuar territory is still covered by intact tropical forest. These

forests would be seriously damaged by the continued development of a large-scale mining project, negatively affecting subsistence hunting, fishing, planting and gathering activities.

The Shuar, in seeking the guarantee of their rights and the protection of their forests, which are essential for sustaining its culture, have sent a call to the world to help them maintain their territories and way of life.

Amazon Watch has heard this call, and provides support to the Shuar and to the fulfillment of their vision through training, communications support, and advocacy activities at international human rights organizations such as the Inter-American Human Rights System and the United Nations. The Shuar struggle for survival and territorial protection will continue, against the Panantza-San Carlos copper mine as well as against the 7 other mining concessions in the region.





Photo: Todd Southgate

CHALLENGING BRAZIL'S ASSAULT ON INDIGENOUS RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

By Christian Poirier

In our particularly troubled times we face a daily litany of concerns, from climate chaos to political disarray. Perhaps nowhere better encapsulates this crisis than Brazil, currently experiencing its worst social and environmental upheaval since the dark days of military dictatorship. The multitude of environmental and social crises there urgently require decisive responses from those of us who care about forests and forest guardians.

Amazon Watch has the privilege of working alongside an inspirational coalition of Brazilian indigenous peoples, social movements, and NGOs to help forge just solutions to Brazil's complex problems. We continue to counter destructive

“development” projects and promote respect for traditional ways of life and the preservation of the Amazon’s vital forests for humanity’s collective benefit.

In recent years, Amazon Watch’s Brazil-based campaigns centered on supporting grassroots movements to stop the construction of large dams on the Madeira, Xingu, and Tapajós Rivers, given the disasters these projects portend for the forest and forest peoples. Our efforts to shine an international spotlight on these emblematic struggles helped elevate them to global prominence and directly contributed to last year’s archiving of the São Luiz do Tapajós mega-dam, a watershed victory for human rights and environmental protection.

The celebration did not last long, however. Brazil’s spiraling socio-environmental crisis requires a concerted response greater than that of our past efforts. The evolving assault upon the Amazon and its indigenous communities represents an existential threat that simply cannot be ignored. This menace, and its proponents, must be countered consistently and categorically, and Amazon Watch is taking steps to do so.

After seizing power from President Dilma Rousseff in a highly-dubious impeachment process in 2016, President Michel Temer has closely served the interests of an agribusiness-affiliated congressional bloc. Known as the *ruralistas*, this conservative rural elite represents some of Brazil’s most regressive political and economic actors, embodying implicit racism, cultural intolerance, and complete disregard for environmental balance.

Seeking to strengthen his hand and avoid prosecution for rampant corruption, Mr. Temer is implementing a draconian *ruralista* wishlist that guts indigenous territorial rights and opens vast protected areas in the Amazon to unfettered destruction. His policies run entirely counter to Brazil’s constitutional safeguards by legalizing land grabbing and ushering in a new era of rampant deforestation

in the Amazon’s once-protected forests. This frontal assault on the territorial rights of indigenous and traditional peoples seek to dismantle decades of hard-fought socio-environmental victories under the rubric of economic growth at any cost.

By dismantling Brazil’s environmental licensing process for industrial development projects, the Temer government would create an administrative rubber stamp for some of the most destructive projects envisioned for the Amazon, including dams like São Luiz do Tapajós. The disregard for the environment and human rights his regime fosters in Brasilia is increasingly reflected in rural areas, where deadly violence against Earth Defenders has reached fever pitch, with 62 murders already this year.

Fortunately, the international community is taking notice of the Brazilian government’s brazen moves to undermine rights and environmental protections. High-level denunciations by UN officials and other leading human rights dignitaries have openly denounced the Temer government. Echoing these concerns, and working with a coalition of Brazilian and international partners, Amazon Watch is developing strong and innovative responses to these regressions, aiming not just to stop specific policies but also to stem the *ruralista*’s economic and political power on the global level.

The parallels of Brazil’s political crisis – and its collateral damage on human rights and the environment – with what we’re experiencing in the U.S. are striking, and must be fought with no less intensity. Amazon Watch continues to draw inspiration and direction from Brazil’s National Indigenous Movement, whose determined resistance and struggle for rights and for justice is a shining light in these dark times. Only a groundswell of determined and effective activism from Brazilian and international civil society – including Amazon Watch supporters – can put the brakes on today’s serious threats.



TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS IN THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

By Andrew E. Miller

Last fall, Peruvian indigenous water protectors mobilized in an inspirational protest that evoked the simultaneous organizing in Standing Rock. As luck would have it, an Amazon Watch field mission to the Peruvian Amazon coincided with the 105-day indigenous mobilization in Saramurillo, along the banks of the mighty Marañón River. These Achuar, Kukama, Urarina, and Kichwa people were demanding justice for the many recent oil spills along the Northern Peruvian Oil Pipeline, as well as for the legacy of pollution from 45 years of oil exploitation in the region.

Through a combination of nonviolent tactics – blockading the river, on-site dialogue with officials, media coverage, and advocacy in Lima – the coalition of indigenous grassroots organizations forced the Peruvian government to send high-level officials, including the Prime Minister, to sign an impressive series of agreements in December. Amazon Watch supported the mobilization by blasting out English-language publicity of the mobilization to our networks and issuing

an urgent action to generate additional pressure on the government to dialogue in good faith.

This Saramurillo case, however, is another example of two steps forward, one step back. In the subsequent months little progress has been made on the actual implementation of the agreements. The Peruvian federal government appears to be ignoring its commitments, using the excuse that it is dealing with 'more pressing' political issues. Ongoing campaigning by indigenous communities and their allies at national and international levels – including Amazon Watch and our supporters – will be necessary for concrete steps to be taken toward justice.

That said, 2017 has seen a number of important victories against specific oil projects elsewhere in the Peruvian Amazon. As detailed in our April 2017 blog post, "Trouble for Oil in the Peruvian Amazon?", in recent months three oil companies have either voluntarily left or been forced out of the Amazon by court decisions. The role of campaigns led by local indigenous peoples were important in each case, especially the legal suit to annul the oil contract in Block 116 due to lack of consultation with local communities.

The struggle for the future of the Peruvian Amazon continues. Our Achuar partners along the Pastaza River are advancing a lawsuit demanding a collective land title; a successful outcome would revolutionize indigenous land rights in Peru and annul the entirety of oil Block 64, which overlaps with Achuar territory and about which they were not consulted. The Peruvian government, for its part, is mobilizing the full legal resources of eleven ministries in opposition to the Achuar's case.

Meanwhile, on December 1, 2016, Chilean oil company GeoPark announced its intention to move forward with oil exploration in Block 64. Somehow, though the Achuar were successful in ejecting other international companies like Occidental and Talisman, the executives at GeoPark believe they will have better luck. The Achuar swiftly responded, issuing a notification to the company that it is

not authorized to operate within Achuar territory. Amazon Watch helped connect the Achuar with international reporters, resulting in an important *Reuters* article about the conflicts, and shared the information with the financial analysts who specialize in evaluating GeoPark for international bond markets.

Amazon Watch is committed to continue our long-term support for these indigenous struggles, through 2017 and beyond. The Achuar invited us to return to their sacred territory this fall, a trip that will strengthen our relationship with the federation FENAP and provide an opportunity to further strategize on a campaign to help the Achuar kick GeoPark out of the territory. We will also evaluate the possibility of extending our Amazon Solar Project to Peru, in further support of positive solutions to indigenous peoples who reject oil projects but want positive alternatives to support their own indigenous-led development models.



AN INVITATION TO DEFEND THE SACRED:

THE AMAZON WATCH

SACRED GIVING CIRCLE

Giving in a sacred way is central to many indigenous cultures, whether as a means of giving thanks, convening people for a shared purpose, gaining honor, or more equitably distributing resources so that all may survive. In this spirit, we have convened the Sacred Giving Circle, an interconnected circle of supporters with shared values to defend the Sacred Headwaters of the Amazon and keep sacred natural areas free from extraction.

Sacred Giving Circle members commit to bring \$25,000 in annual support to our work and partner with us to expand our community and grow our capacity for enacting change.

"It is truly an honor to partner with Amazon Watch and invest in their critical work to defend indigenous rights, the Amazon and the climate for all of our collective future."

– Monica Winsor,
Sacred Giving Circle Member

THE AMAZON WATCH IMPACT FUND

Amazon Watch calls upon our philanthropic partners to support our Amazon Impact Fund which seeks to raise \$1 million in the next 18 months.

Support for the Amazon Impact Fund will allow us to:

- Expand our on-the-ground team in Brazil, Colombia, and Peru and work more closely with our indigenous partners.
- Launch an Amazon Indigenous Rising Media Team to expand indigenous communications capacity and directly amplify voices and solutions of indigenous peoples.
- Grow our Solar for the Amazon program to support indigenous communities' pursuit of clean energy and communications capacity.

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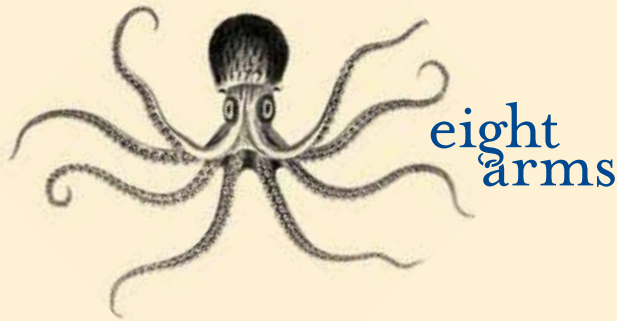
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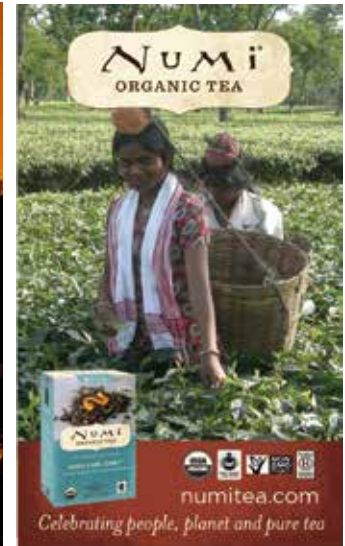
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CEH

Deforestation kills more than trees.



Forests house approximately 80% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity.

Over 400 mammals have been identified in the Amazon, as well as about 1,300 birds, 400 reptiles, 400 amphibians, and 3,000 freshwater fish.

Yet, close to 20% of the Amazon has been lost in the last 50 years, mostly due to cattle ranching.

Ceasing industrial development is a necessary step in preventing deforestation from cattle ranching because it opens access to land for pastures via road construction.

By supporting indigenous peoples, Amazon Watch works directly to challenge the underlying drivers of deforestation.

In Brazil alone, deforestation within community-protected forests is eleven times lower than in other areas.

This is a primary reason why Amazon Watch works in long-term partnership with indigenous peoples to strengthen their capacity to advocate for their rights and protect their ancestral territories.





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MAIN OFFICE

2201 Broadway Suite 508
Oakland, CA 94612
Tel: 510-281-9020
Fax: 510-281-9021

WASHINGTON, DC

1101 15th St NW 11th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-785-8700



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