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El Libertario

# Venezuela : Demarcation without land, criminalization and death for indigenous struggle

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**\* The editorial collective of El Libertario denounces the criminal attack that took place on October 13, 2009 against the Yukpa people in the Sierra of Perija in Western Venezuela, resulting in two indigenous persons dead and several wounded. The following article -about the tactic and strategy of "Revolutionary Venezuelan" Ethnocide- describes the events.**

By Jose Quintero Weir (Translation Luis J. Prat)

*Struggle :*

*Old man Antonio used to say that the struggle is like a circle.*

*One can start anywhere*

*But it never ends.*

*Subcomandante Marcos*

<https://divergences.be/sites/divergences.be/IMG/gif/afichsolidaridadyukpas-2008.gif>

This past October 12 what we have been denouncing for a long time as the ethnocide and ethno-devouring strategy of the current State-government of Venezuela took place : Chavez's ministerial team came to award so-called title deeds to three indigenous Yukpa communities in the Sierra of Perija, with the pretense to finish the process of land demarcation in the habitat belonging to these people. It is noteworthy the absence of President Chavez in an event long awaited in the Sierra since the year 2002, when, by constitutional mandate, the State was supposed to finalize the process of land demarcation in all the indigenous territories in the country. Instead, an enormous deployment of soldiers blanketed the event, supposedly for the security of the ministers (Interior and Justice, Indigenous People's, among other functionaries present), and who, at the slightest sign of protest by those communities not favored by the event, went immediately into action to repress their demands. It was, in the end, an event by which the Yukpa had to forcefully accept the receipt of NOTHING.

It was known for weeks before that something was going to happen on the Yukpa side of the Sierra of Perija. The Regional Demarcation Commission announced the date for awarding the title deeds but said that it was for three communities : Aroy, Sirapta and Tinacoa, places where the government had already made a deal with the land owners who were in fact spared from giving land to the Yukpa who received nothing but mountain and rocks, not arable lands, which were legally left in the hands of the land owners.

During this period, in synchronicity and by means of actions executed alternatively, ministerial commissions headed by Diosdado Cabello (Chavez's plenipotentiary Minister) and Tarek el Aisami (Interior and Justice) among others, got busy distributing bags of food, promising infrastructure works : schools, institutes, roads, hospitals and other projects for agricultural and monetary production for those who would

accept the give away of October 12, and threatening those who would oppose it. At the same time, a military base was built in unmarked Yukpa territory, which was loudly protested by the indigenous people who were repressed by the very same Diosdado Cabello, commissioned by Chavez for the task since the base is linked to plans that we will discuss later in this article.

Meanwhile, in the same context, the Chaktapa community and its leader Sabino Romero have become the pebble in the "transnational-Chavist" shoe as this has been the community that didn't want to wait for the government's demarcation that condescendingly recognizes the living spaces of these peoples, but instead assumed their condition as historical subjects and decided to reclaim their ancestral lands, occupying and controlling as communal land some six haciendas. For Chavez's State-government and for the mining transnationals and land owners this act has turned Sabino and his Chaktapa community into the enemy to defeat and, for his daring, has been condemned to death, not as an indigenous warrior who's not for sale, but as a vulgar cattle rustler, a delinquent ready to kidnap and kill, someone linked to foreign military forces and an enemy of the State-government.

Thus, the act of giving land to the Yukpas on October 12 sealed the process by which Chavez's State-government swallowed up part of the Yukpa communities headed by Efrain Romero of Sirapta and the cacique Olegario Romero, giving them a free hand to act against their own Yukpa brothers of Chaktapa headed by Sabino Romero. The excuse : an accusation of cattle theft (120 heads) by an ad hoc rancher in which Sabino Romero, the true leader in the struggle for Yukpa territory in the Sierra of Perija, is directly accused.

Today, October 13 2009, as I write these lines, Sabino is being rescued from Chaktapa with three gunshot wounds inflicted by Olegario's people who, with the support of ranchers and the "revolutionary" government attacked him, killing one of his sons in law, wounding two of his sons and a grand daughter, while another of his sons has disappeared. All of this is the result of a grand strategy by the "Bolivarian revolution" regarding the demarcation of lands and indigenous habitat in the Sierra of Perija.

Therefore, we responsibly denounce that President Hugo Chavez knew what was going to happen. That is why he didn't attend the shameful act of October 12. We denounce this as we already start to see the news in the state owned channel trying to confuse the facts. Likewise, as confirmation we read or listen to confusing reports by traditional opposition journalists and land owners from Fegalago justifying the actions against Sabino and the Chaktapa community, paradoxically joining the State-government in this policy, publicly executed by its two principal ministers Diosdado Cabello and Tarek el Aisami. Therefore we denounce that everything that happened and may happen is just the tactical execution, within a political strategy of ethnocide and ethno-devouring, of a policy by a government that continues to hang onto the language and the lives of

the poor to maintain what is truly essential : its power.

Within this strategy of permanence in power, Chavez has opted for the continuation of development projects combined with the exploitation of non-traditional minerals such as uranium ; known to exist in the Yukpa region of the Perija. Therefore, the State-government builds a military base contested by the Yukpa but defended, in the President's name, by Diosdado Cabello as part of a Chavez-Iran project to exploit the uranium. At the same time, it gives a free hand to other mining projects and assures for the land owners the territorial despoliation of the indigenous people.

We've had enough with honest comrades in solidarity with the indigenous struggle that continue to justify Chavez and place the guilt for the insane policies against people on his bureaucracy. The guilty ones are the guilty ones, and in this case they are Chavez, Diosdado Cabello and Tarek el Aisami. These three will someday have to account for whatever happens to Sabino Romero and his community that, against all odds continues in the struggle because they have decided that is their way and the way of all indigenous communities in the country.

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