



Rainforest Action Group

LOCALS ON GINA RINEHART'S ECUADOR CONCESSIONS PROTESTING "INVASION" BY COMPANY AND MILITARY

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The [Ombudsman's Office of Ecuador](#) has called on the [National Government](#) to suspend all mining activities in the Buenos Aires parish where Rinehart has several concessions, after what it deemed was excessive military force against inhabitants resisting mining. The Buenos Aires community says they have not been consulted and do not want a mine in their area.

Resistance against Hancock's Ecuador subsidiary, Hanrine Ecuadorian Exploration and Mining S.A, has been building in the last few weeks, with the company attempting to move machinery and personnel into the area despite a State of Emergency and curfews due to COVID-19.

"Villagers say Hanrine is acting illegally in trying to forcibly enter their territories. They do not want any kind of mining in their territories, particularly a foreign-owned mine, and they view the incursion as a violation of their rights. Despite reports in Australian and Ecuadorian press that resistance in the area was by illegal miners, locals insist this is not the case, saying that Hanrine is conducting a smear campaign against them," says Rebekah Hayden, a member of the Rainforest Action Group, a research and advocacy group investigating Australian mining companies acting in Ecuador.

"Hanrine have contracted a high-placed constitutional lawyer who sent a threatening letter to the Buenos Aires Parish government president, saying they are starting procedures to remove her from office, and may take her to court for violating the company's constitutional rights over allegedly restricting them from accessing their concessions. They have also said she is working with illegal miners, which is not the case," Rebekah Hayden says. (Letter attached)

"Villagers feel the state has abandoned them after authorities abruptly left the dialogue table on April 23 without resolving the conflict caused by the mining company. This contradicts statements by pro-mining newspaper Prensa Minera Ecuador that a resolution was reached," Rebekah Hayden says.

“The government has responded to the resistance by sending in the military and national police in what was seen by many to be a heavy-handed response. The Ombudsman’s Office of Ecuador denounced the use of excessive military force against inhabitants on April 24, and has asked the Government to suspend mining activities. The Alliance of Human Rights has also called on the Government to respect people’s rights to protest,” says Rebekah Hayden.

“The situation has been intensified by concerns that Hanrine’s movements are putting the population at risk of COVID-19. The area is currently under a State of Emergency, with a night curfew, and movement between areas restricted. However [on April 19](#), a backhoe entered, along with 7 trucks carrying machinery and approximately 25 pickups moving mining personnel into the area,” says Rebekah Hayden.

“The community has called for a constitutional injunction to stop Hanrine operating. Inhabitants state the company did not conduct environmental consultation with the people before entering their territory and that there is a [report from the Comptroller General of the State](#) complaining irregularities in the delivery of concessions to Hanrine,” Rebekah Hayden says.

“This is only the latest travesty for Gina, after her Ecuador CEO Carlos de Miguel was arrested for an [alleged illegal weapons cache](#), and follows two years of upheaval for the small town which [saw 10,000 illegal miners arrive](#) in 2018 in the search for gold on Rinehart’s concessions. The army was called in 2019 after armed militia began competing for dominance and several people were killed, their bodies stuffed down mine shafts. Several people are still missing. The situation has only deterred locals further from mining of any sort,” Rebekah Hayden says.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR FOR CONTACTS IN ECUADOR, PLEASE CONTACT REBEKAH HAYDEN, REBEKAH@WORDPORTRAITS.COM.AU, 0406 869 826

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