



# Rainforest Action Group

## **COURT GIVES GINA RINEHART'S ECUADOR SUBSIDIARY 10 DAYS TO WITHDRAW FROM ROAD BLOCKADE**

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*Hundreds of workers from Rinehart's subsidiary Hanrine have blocked the only road to the town of Buenos Aires in north-west Ecuador for more than 40 days, hoping to force locals to allow them passage through the town to the concession Imba 1.*

The judge of the Urucuquí Multicompetent Unit, Manuel Sucuzhañay, [today accepted the Precautionary Measures](#) presented by Imbabura Assemblyman Mario Ruiz, recognising Hanrine's actions are violating the rights of the people of Buenos Aires. Hanrine was given 10 days to withdraw from the public highway.

*"Hundreds of workers have been camped on the side of the road at the entrance to the town for more than a month, living in trucks, vans and under makeshift tents made from plastic sheeting. They have been stopping locals from entering the town. In April they held Imbabura Assemblyman Mario Ruiz against his will for several hours, threatening him,"* says Rebekah Hayden, a member of the Rainforest Action Group, a research and advocacy group investigating Australian mining companies acting in Ecuador.

*"We are deeply concerned about the ongoing situation at Buenos Aires. On April 21, the [Ombudsman's Office of Ecuador called on the National Government](#) to suspend all mining activities in the area, after what it deemed was excessive military force against inhabitants resisting mining. The area is currently under a State of Emergency, as Ecuador is currently experiencing a fresh wave of Covid cases, the town has very limited health facilities, and locals are concerned about workers from other areas bringing in new cases in to the area,"* Rebekah Hayden says.

*"In response, villagers formed a resistance of their own, setting up at 24 hour vigil to stop miners from entering the town. They say Hanrine is acting illegally in trying to forcibly enter their community. They do not want mining of any kind, 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.

*“The situation has been aggravated by the lack of response from the State, with the Ombudsman’s Office saying in April that it had not adequately controlled or regulated both legal and illegal mining. Locals say police and government officials could have forced the mining company to move earlier, stating the road blockade represents both a traffic and health hazard,”* Rebekah Hayden says.

*“This is only the latest issue for Rinehart in Ecuador. A [Comptroller's report](#) states there were irregularities in the delivery of concessions to Hanrine, while inhabitants say the company did not conduct environmental consultation with the people before entering their territory. The community has called for a constitutional injunction to stop Hanrine operating in the area,”* Rebekah Hayden says.

*“Last year her Ecuador CEO Carlos de Miguel was arrested for an [alleged illegal weapons cache](#), and before that [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,”* Rebekah Hayden says.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR FOR CONTACTS IN ECUADOR, PLEASE CONTACT REBEKAH HAYDEN, [REBEKAH@WORDPORTRAITS.COM.AU](mailto:REBEKAH@WORDPORTRAITS.COM.AU), 0406 869 826**



*(Road blocked by Hanrine workers and their trucks. Image credits: [Plan V](#))*



LA MERCED DE BUENOS AIRES

Camiones de la empresa Hanrine

Única vía de acceso al pueblo