



DECLARATION OF HORONAMI YANOMAMI ORGANIZATION ABOUT ILLEGAL MINING IN THE UPPER OCAMO REGION

Today, 25th September 2012, we, the Yanomami indigenous people, represented by **HORONAMI Yanomami Organization**, gathered in Puerto Ayacucho, want to make the following declaration about the **PRESENCE OF ILLEGAL MINING IN THE UPPER OCAMO**, Upper Orinoco Municipality:

- 1.- The general objective of our Yanomami Organization HORONAMI is to 'achieve the integral strengthening and defence of the lives of the Yanomami people in their ancestral and traditional territory, in accordance with indigenous peoples' rights as recognized by the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela'. All members of the Horonami Organization have taken an oath to fulfill this.
- 2.- We recognize, again, the efforts made by the Venezuelan State, in particular the Bolivarian National Armed Forces, the Public Prosecutors' Office and the CICPC [Body of Scientific, Penal and Criminal Investigations], who went to the headwaters and the mountains of the Upper Ocamo, traveling in the region for five days accompanied by our representatives from Horonami.
- 3.- We consider it crucial that the commission of various state bodies which was in the area release the report about the results of its investigation which led it to rule out the Yanomami's denouncement. We, the Horonami Yanomami Organization, have already presented a report to the relevant bodies (Public Prosecutors' Office, Ombudsman, the 52nd Brigade of the Jungle Infantry and the Indigenous Peoples Commission of the National Assembly), requesting an investigation into the presence and impacts of illegal mining in the Upper Ocamo region, and requesting the Venezuelan State's adoption of necessary measures in this regard.
- 4.- We believe that if it has not yet been possible to determine evidence of a

massacre in the region, which for us is a source of happiness, we want everyone to know that there is a huge presence of illegal miners, who come from Brazil and have been camped for years in the Upper Ocamo region. In the media it has been reported that 'nothing' is happening in the Upper Ocamo, that all is calm and that the people are happy. We, the Yanomami of Horonami who were part of the commission, saw the illegal miners' camps, we saw a small plane pass overhead, we saw a clandestine airstrip, we saw some miners fleeing from the commission as we walked through the forest. We have evidence for what we are saying. The members of the armed forces, the Public Prosecutors' office, and the CICPC on the commission were also witnesses to this.

5.- It is easy to think that the Yanomami and their organization Horonami are lying because the commission did not find evidence of a massacre of Yanomami Indians. The news that reached us about the violent incidents is not lies; it is a clear sign that there is a lot of conflict in the Upper Ocamo area. Saying that everything is fine in this region is the lie.

6.- We do not want to attack our President Hugo Chávez Frías, nor do we want our situation to be manipulated for the elections. The truth is what we have to show, and our motivation is the defence of our people, our habitat and our land which is being destroyed and contaminated. We ask the Venezuelan state to respect our Horonami organization, and we are ready and willing to collaborate with governmental bodies. We reject Minister Nicia Maldonado's [Minister for Indigenous Affairs] attempts to divide our organization, and we condemn the media and other people who have manipulated the information for political purposes, trying to link us with members of the opposition, taking advantage of this serious situation for electioneering purposes.

7.- We recognise the Bolivarian Armed Forces' efforts in 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, responding to the Yanomami and their organization Horonami's warnings denouncing the presence of the illegal miners. We are also aware of the Brazilian government's recent efforts, through Operation Xawara, to evict the illegal miners. But we must insist that it is necessary that permanent measures, coordinated between Brazil and Venezuela, be taken to control the huge and harmful presence of illegal miners who for several years have been entering Venezuela, our country, from Brazil, posing a serious threat to the life and integrity of the Yanomami people.

8.- We want to explain that when the illegal miners live close to the Yanomami communities, they threaten them and tell them not to disclose anything to the authorities when they are asked about the presence of miners' camps. This is why a rapid visit by authorities who the Yanomami do not know will not result in the Yanomami making spontaneous complaints. When we went with the commission, we Horonami representatives spoke all night with the Yanomami from the communities, and when the government officials and the military were asleep, the Yanomami gave us detailed accounts of the presence of illegal miners.

9.- Although the information about violent incidents has not been confirmed, the abundant presence of illegal miners in the area for several years has resulted in constant conflicts between the Yanomami and the miners, who divide communities and harm our families. These conflicts could be the source for the information on the killings and many types of abuse. We cannot rule out, at this stage of the investigation, that killings, rape, threats and all sorts of abuse of Yanomami are not happening in the areas visited. On the contrary, the context of the region tells us there is conflict between miners and various communities in the Upper Ocamo.

10.- It is also known that the presence of illegal miners in the Yanomami area causes serious health consequences (centers of malaria transmission, venereal diseases, mercury contamination and more). During our visit to the area, we found communities with serious health problems, requiring urgent medical attention.

11.- The degradation of the environment, on which the Yanomami depend for food, drinking water and life, is also a consequence of the presence of illegal miners, their machinery and mercury pollution.

12.- Without miners in the region, threatening and exploiting the Yanomami, and harming nature, this type of news would not reach our ears. The Yanomami of these remote areas are at the mercy of the miners. The news which reached the media are not 'Yanomami lies', 'Horonami lies' or 'lies of the indigenous organizations of Amazonas state'. In a region where there is conflict, such news must be taken very seriously. The 1993 Haximu massacre is very present in our memory. These are not lies; they are clear signs of conflict.

13.- We request that the permanent and sustained patrolling of the Upper Ocamo and other regions of the Upper Orinoco such as Haximu, Cerro Delgado Chalbaud and the Siapa river, among others, be continued in order to evict the illegal mining camps definitively. This must be a joint effort by the Bolivarian Armed Forces and the Yanomami of our organization Horonami, who know our people and our territory.

14.- We ask for a continuous and efficient health care program for the Upper Ocamo area. Medical assistance, the training of Yanomami health agents from the communities, and the installation of communication radios, are fundamental to improve health and to prevent the return of illegal miners in the region.

15.- Considering the sensitivity of this problem, we request a more extensive investigation into the possible acts of violence and other possible abuses at the hands of the miners in the Upper Ocamo region. The investigation must be conducted more calmly and rigorously, with the participation of the Yanomami of Horonami, taking all the time that is necessary and considering the cultural specificities of the Yanomami people.

16.- We ask the media to transmit the content of this document; we will not give further statements.

The Yanomami people and communities are continuing to fight to defend our habitat and our lands. If we do not do this, what will we leave for our grandchildren?

HORONAMI Organización Yanomami [HORONAMI Yanomami Organization]

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