

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINES: LATIN AMERICA

THE MAYAN COMMUNITY OF LAGUNA LARGA RESISTS DISPLACEMENT

The information in this brief has been provided by the Laguna Larga community working in collaboration with ACCSS and Indignación. WIMN values these voices and notes that all the inputs come from these groups and their allies.

Prepared by:

Women in Migration Network with ACCSS, Indignación, Bloque Latinoamericano de Migración, MADRE and RESAMA drawing from the resistance of the Laguna Larga community and from the work of many people supporting them in their struggle.



CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The intersection of climate change, environmental degradation and displacement is not one of direct causality and is complex. Through cases like Laguna Larga, we are learning how it is intertwined with armed conflict, corporate exploitation of oil and gas, corruption, “green-washing” that presents false climate solutions, and other factors that undermine indigenous rights and survival. It is gendered and racialized. Climate and Environmental Justice puts native peoples, other directly affected communities, and nature at the center while affirming human rights for all.



OUR STORY

The Mayan community of Laguna Larga was located 3 km from the border with Mexico, in El Petén Department, Guatemala. They settled there in the eighties, when the Guatemalan government displaced them during the armed conflict.



In 1999, this same area was declared part of the Mayan Biosphere Reserve under the Protected Areas Law and in 2017, despite the fact that this settlement was recognised in 2000 as well as in subsequent years, the Laguna Larga community was forcibly and violently displaced again, accused of “land usurping” of protected areas. Simultaneously, the government enabled the Anglo-French company PERENCO to exploit oil in these same areas.

The Mayan people were forcibly displaced to an isolated area on the border with Mexico; they cross the border from one side to the other depending on which government is harassing them. They have been living in a campsite ever since, in unsanitary conditions and without basic services such as medical care, drinking water or food, exposing them to diseases, even as far as to produce miscarriages.

Despite the precarious living conditions, the Mayan women of Laguna Larga are the guardians of the territory. They know how to reproduce life in the midst of scarcity and resist in the hope of returning to their land; that is their strategy. The women are aware that the noise they have made at the international level has succeeded in stopping the eviction of 19 other communities—a triumph! They have survived through conscious resistance. As they say, their strategy is “*to resist and not become diluted as a community*”.

TIMELINE

1984/85



Several native Mayan communities are forced to move to the north of Petén by the Guatemalan government via violent eviction due to armed conflict.

1989



The government declares this zone a protected area and criminalises the communities living there, accusing them of “land usurping” of protected areas.

1999, Dec



The Forestry Concession of the Council of Protected Areas - CONAP signs a contract with PAXBAN-GIBOR for the 25-year exploitation and management of forest resources in an area of 65,755 hectares, including site of the Laguna Larga Community.

2017, Jun



The State of Guatemala forcibly displaced, without prior notice, 115 families from Laguna Larga. Homes and crops are burned and the community chased until they cross the border into Mexico.

2017, Sep



The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) issues an injunctive relief based on the protections owed to native peoples.

2023, Nov

The Bufete jurídico de Derechos Humanos achieve the renewal of the injunctive relief issued in 2017.



2023, Dec



The Guatemalan government renews its contract with CONAP a full year before it is due to expire to ensure its continuation for 25 more years.

2024, Feb



The Laguna Larga community secures a hearing with the IACHR and the new Guatemalan government of Bernardo Arévalo, to negotiate a return to their land.

2024, Apr

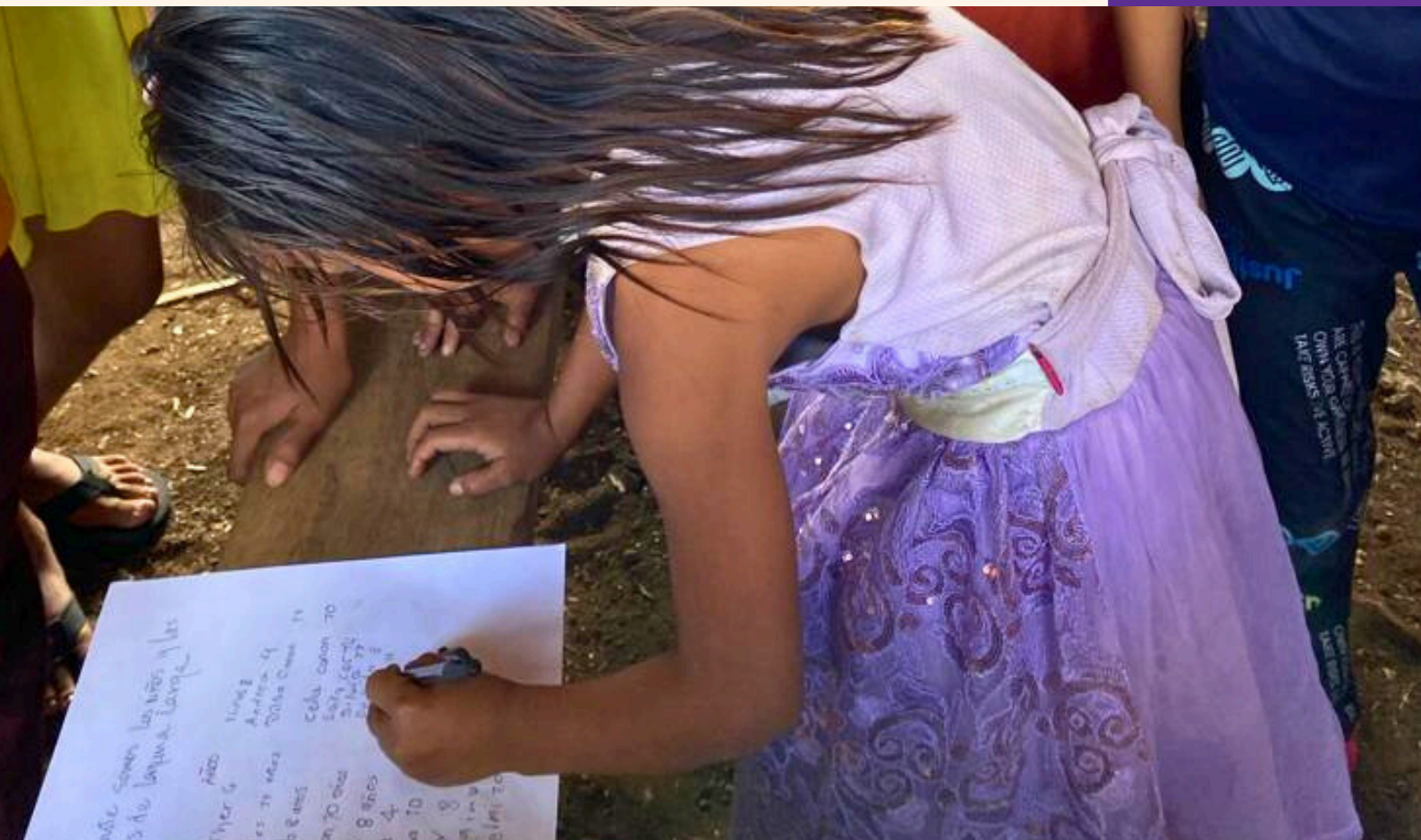


Arévalo's government suspends some forestry concessions granted to CONAP and demands that CONAP focus exclusively on its task of administering protected areas.

2024, Jun

Fulfilment of the agreements of the last hearing with the new Guatemalan government is still pending: repatriation, dignified return, non-repetition and legal certainty over their land.





**FOR
MORE
INFO**



www.womeninmigration.org

Laguna Larga

All images were kindly shared by Indignacion