11-10-1992

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Group Reports Coal Mining Destroying Colombian Indian Communities

by Erika Harding

Category/Department: General
Published: Tuesday, November 10, 1992

In a communique released Oct. 30, the London-based Survival International (SI) said coal mining in Colombia is destroying the communities of the Wayuu indians. The group criticized the British government for importing Colombian coal which they said both hurts British coal miners and contributes to the oppression of the Colombian indigenous communities. According to the communique, the Colombian coal mines, occupying about 37,000 hectares, were built on the Wayuu's traditional lands. The El Cerrejon mine, the largest strip mine in Latin America, "caused serious contamination which has already caused the death of about 20 indians in the region," said SI. The mine is exploited jointly by Colombia and US-based Exxon. Finally, SI expressed concern that Venezuelan Bari and Yupka tribes could face the same problems because the Venezuelan government has granted 50 mining concessions to international companies like Shell (Holland), Agip Coal (Italy) and Veba Oel (Germany). (Source: Agence France- Presse, 10/30/92)

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