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Nicaragua: Atlantic Coast Leader Calls For Respect Of Autonomy Law

by Deborah Tyroler
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On Nov. 4, Ray Hooker, Creole leader from Bluefields accused the government of violating regional autonomy legislation (Autonomy Statute). He said central government policies have led to increased unemployment and poverty on the Atlantic coast, a vast area covering about a half of Nicaraguan territory and home to 500,000 people. Hooker, who is also president of the Nicaraguan Atlantic Coast Aid and Development Foundation (FADCANIC), spoke during the inauguration of the Fourth Annual International Symposium on Autonomy in Managua. He said the central government failed to consult with local elected officials before granting authorization two months ago to a Taiwanese company for the exploitation of about 470,000 ha. of forest land on the Atlantic coast. According to Hooker, the deal violates the 1985 Autonomy Statute which grants jurisdiction over most local affairs to resident indigenous communities. Next, Hooker asserted that the government is currently negotiating minerals exploration contracts with transnational corporations, again in violation of indigenous rights stipulated in the statute. (Basic data from Agence France- Presse, 11/04/91)

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