
[Bolivia: the government legalises what is illegal](#)

Bolivian social organizations, trade unions, IPOs and environmental NGOs have strongly condemned and taken actions to face a recent governmental decree, which in fact guarantees the activities of illegal logging performed by depredatory companies to the detriment of the country's forests and their people.

Decree 25561 issued on October 27th legalises the wood illegally cut in communal lands belonging to indigenous peoples and in protected areas. This step is in blatant contradiction with the Forestry Law, whose objective is to achieve sustainable use of forests, their protection and the harmonisation of social, economic and ecological interests to the benefit of the country. The Law states very clearly that the use and trade of forest resources without previous permission obtained from the authority in charge is to be considered a crime.

However, the new decree authorizes the Forestry Department to tax the illegally cut wood, which thereafter becomes "legal". As a result, illegal logging will receive the same treatment as logging carried out in a legal manner, whereby the government itself can be seen as promoting illegal activities. The only logical explanation -though there may be others less so- seems to be that the government is accepting its inability to prevent illegal logging and that its only "solution" is to tax crime. If such is the case, then this is -for the forests and its people- the worse possible option.

Fuente: Foro Boliviano sobre Medio Ambiente y Desarrollo (FOBOMADE), 18/11/99;