
Ecuador: indigenous women against oil exploration

The Steering Committee of Oilwatch was meeting in Quito on October 21st, when it received news that a group of indigenous women from the province of Pastaza -who had walked to Ecuador's capital to demonstrate against oil exploration in their territory by the state-owned Tripetrol corporation- was being repressed by the police. The steering committee immediately suspended its session and went to express its support to the protesting women.

On arriving at the entrance of the building of Tripetrol's headquarters they found that it was blocked by a double human chain: one composed of policemen and the other by a small -though powerful- group of indigenous women carrying their babies in their arms. The women's demand was simple: to hold a meeting with the corporation's director. The demand was denied and the police was called in to repress the demonstrators.

A month before, almost a hundred indigenous people -mostly women and children- had begun a march from Pastaza to Quito to denounce the acts of repression that are being borne upon local communities and indigenous peoples who resist the advance of the oil industry. In this case, Tripetrol began arbitrarily oil exploration activities and carried out legal actions and threats against local community leaders. The women expressed their demand of "respect for their right to decide about their future" and that "no oil explorations is carried out in their territories". The answer was the usual one: repression. The police even called in immigration officers to check the foreigners' papers and detained two of Oilwatch's steering committee members who didn't carry their passports with them. They were released soon after.

Source: Ricardo Carrere