

PRESS RELEASE

ECUMENICAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

US CITIZEN LINKED TO A TRANSNATIONAL MINING COMPANY, ASCENDANT COPPER CORPORATION, INFILTRATED A DEMONSTRATION AND BROUGHT FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST INTAG LEADER

As part of the campaign of persecution, intimidation and aggression waged since 2004 by the Canadian Ascendant Copper Corporation S.A. mining company against leaders and residents opposing mining activity in the Intag zone since 1995, **US citizen Leslie Brooke Chaplin** has brought suit based on false accusations, this time against Carlos Zorrilla, an Intag resident belonging to DECOIN (Defense and Conservation of Intag), an environmental organization.

Leslie Brooke Chaplin, who infiltrated an Intag demonstration against the mining company on July 13, 2006 at the entrance to the Ministry of Energy and Mining, irresponsibly provoked demonstrators by passing out flyers in the mining company's favor. She brought suit on August 23, 2006, ten days after this significant event for local residents, accusing Carlos Zorrilla of alleged theft and injury.

The interest in tarnishing the reputation and harming leaders of the Intag people is reflected not only in this new unfounded complaint, but also in the crooked way that the mining company has proceeded on the basis of slander and lies, appointing a "proxy" so that theoretically Carlos Zorrilla was served notice. Zorrilla had no idea of this plot until October 17, 2006, at 6:15 a.m., when about 11 policemen broke violently into his home in order to supposedly remove "evidence". In fact, in front of Carlos Zorrilla's amazed wife and son, one of the policemen displayed a package claiming it was marihuana. Then, another policeman claimed he found a weapon in the boy's bedroom. This makes it foreseeable that there may be new accusations on the basis of these objects that suddenly turned up in their home. The 11 policemen also broke and entered a neighboring family's home without any court warrant.

The July 13, 2004 demonstration was peaceful from beginning to end. Demonstrators never even occupied Juan León Mera Street, but rather the front courtyard of the Ministry of Energy and Mining. When this US citizen infiltrated

the demonstration in such an untimely, irresponsible manner, attempting to hand out flyers in Ascendant's favor, demonstrators did nothing but take away that material, as witnessed by several Human Rights organizations, police officers and over 300 people from Intag present at the event.

It is outrageous for this US citizen, **Leslie Brooke Chaplin**, in addition to having recklessly infiltrated the Intag demonstration, to now appear as the plaintiff accusing a leader with a spotless background of dedication to serving the communities of the Intag area. Carlos Zorrilla is widely recognized for his merits and unceasing community service. He has organized alternative production projects such as growing and processing organic coffee that is exported to Europe, Asia and the United States; he has defended water resource reserves and the natural bounties of the cloud forests of the Intag zone, promoting projects that provide income for villager women.

However it is far more outrageous for our judicial and police institutions to be involved in such crooked moves against Intag residents, as eager pawns for the Ascendant Copper Corporation mining company, whose sole interest is to extract ore from the Intag zone, and make hefty profits any way they can, even if at the cost of the life, liberty, well-being and other fundamental rights of the Intag population and its leaders.

This lawsuit, disguised by Ascendant as "theft and injury" is actually just another attack against the collective cause of defending the villages of Intag.

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Sister Elsie Monge

Executive Director of the Ecumenical
Human Rights Commission (CEDHU)