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Amazon Leaders Give Oxy Ultimatum: Clean Up Your Toxic Waste from our Rainforest or Face Legal Action in the U.S.

Indigenous Children Suffer Lead and Cadmium Poisoning from Oxy's Toxic Dumping, New Report Finds

Friday photo op. and press briefing at Oxy shareholder meeting with indigenous delegation in traditional attire and actors Benjamin Bratt, Daryl Hannah and O'Orianka Kilcher. Details below.

Los Angeles, CA – Indigenous communities from the Peruvian Amazon today told Occidental Petroleum (Oxy) to clean up its toxic waste from their tropical rainforest or face a major lawsuit.

The ultimatum, on the eve of the Westwood-based oil major's annual general meeting for shareholders, came as a new technical report revealed that 30 years of Oxy's polluting had left indigenous Achuar children with illegal concentrations of lead and cadmium in their blood, at levels known to cause permanent developmental problems.

Compiled by EarthRights International (ERI), Amazon Watch, and Peruvian legal non-profit Racimos de Ungurahui, the report also provides a legal analysis showing how Oxy's cost-cutting and deliberate use of sub-standard technology exposes it to civil demands from the Achuar, both in Peru and the United States.

It is likely to be a hot subject during the shareholder meeting tomorrow, which will be attended by two Achuar leaders, who hold proxy shareholder rights, spiritual elder Tomas Maynas Carijano and Andrés Sandi Mucushua, President of the Federation of Native Communities of the Corrientes River (FECONACO), the principal Peruvian federation that represents the Achuar.

Mr. Sandi said: "My people are sick and dying because of Oxy. The water in our streams is not fit to drink and we can no longer eat the fish in our rivers or the animals in our forests."

Mr. Maynas Carijano one of the potential plaintiffs, added: "We have told Oxy this week that they must talk with us in good faith about how they are going to clean up the toxic waste they left in our rainforest. We have waited too long already. If Oxy doesn't respond satisfactorily and soon, I along with other Achuar are prepared to sue them for the damages they have caused us."

Marco Simons, Legal Director of EarthRights International, added: "There is no question that Oxy is legally responsible for the contamination of Achuar territory. If Oxy will not agree to fulfill its legal and moral duties, we are fully prepared to assist the Achuar in holding Oxy accountable in court."

In total, Oxy dumped nine *billion* barrels of untreated “formation waters”, a by-product of the oil drilling process containing a variety of toxins and carcinogens, directly into the Achuar’s pristine tropical rainforest territories.

Based on information gathered by a team of experts in May 2006 – including a doctor, nurse, lawyers, soil scientist, agronomist, environmental engineer, and chemist - the [report](#) found:

- Oxy dumped an average of *850,000 barrels per day* of toxic oil by-products directly into rivers and streams used by the Achuar for drinking, bathing, washing, and fishing.
- Oxy used earthen pits, prohibited by U.S. standards, to store drilling fluids, crude oil, and crude by-products. These pits, dug directly into the ground, were open, unlined, and routinely overflowed onto the ground and into surface waters, leaching into the surrounding soil and groundwater
- Oxy violated several international rights norms – including several in the American Convention on Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights – in its actions on Achuar territory, including the right to life, the right to health, the right to a healthy environment, and indigenous people’s rights.
- Oxy violated Peru’s General Water Law and General Health Law, as well as environmental statutes meant to be applied in the hydrocarbon sector.
- As a U.S. corporation, Oxy’s disregard for the law and for the wellbeing of the Achuar could subject it to legal liability in the U.S. as well as in Peru.

ERI previously brought a lawsuit against Unocal, another LA-based oil company, for abuses in Burma, concluding in a landmark settlement in 2005. Ka Hsaw Wa, ERI’s Executive Director, noted, “Oil companies think only about profits – they are blind to human rights and the environment. As an indigenous person from Burma whose people have suffered greatly at the hands of Unocal, I am compelled to act against similar abuses being experienced by my Achuar brothers and sisters.”

Atossa Soltani, Amazon Watch Executive Director, added: “Oxy’s history of disregard for the law and for the most basic human rights of the Achuar is appalling. Oxy needs to move decisively and rectify its past mistakes by cleaning up its toxic mess and helping the Achuar deal with their health problems. Otherwise this scandal could haunt Oxy for years to come with negative publicity and potential legal actions.”

FRIDAY’S PRESS BRIEFING AND PHOTO OP

ERI, FECONACO, and AW will also be holding a **sidewalk rally, press briefing and photo op with actors Benjamin Bratt, Daryl Hannah and Q’Orianka Kilcher and indigenous leaders in traditional attire** on **Friday May 4, 2007 from 9:45am to 10:15am** and a **press briefing at 12:00pm to give feedback from Oxy’s Annual General Meeting** outside the Fairmount Miramar Hotel, 101 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, California. (The AGM takes place in the hotel from 10:30am to 12:00pm). Participants will be available for interviews.

A copy of the report can be viewed online at ERI’s and Amazon Watch’s websites:

http://www.amazonwatch.org/amazon/PE/block1ab/a_legacy_of_harm.pdf

http://www.earthrights.org/files/Reports/A_Legacy_of_Harm.pdf

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