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In Ecuador, antimilitarist and environmental activists are currently working together in a way that allows us to imagine a post-extraction society. Since the 1970s, the country has been heavily dependent on petroleum extraction in order to finance its budget and achieve sought-after 'development', as defined by the Western world view.

This has led to Ecuador depending on petroleum for almost 35% of its income. (El Telégrafo, 2012) This model based on extraction has not taken into consideration the environmental and social costs in some areas of the country, displacing and contaminating indigenous and rural communities in the areas where petroleum is extracted.

In response, a group of community and youth organisations decided to campaign against petroleum extraction in Yasuní National Park, where there is an attempt to implement a petroleum exploration and extraction project which would impact one of the areas of greatest biodiversity on the planet, where there are even peoples who live in voluntary isolation, such as the Tagaeri and the Tarmenani.

The growing militarisation of the Yasuní region by the Ecuadorian government has led to there being access restrictions in area where they are trying to drill for oil. Once again the armed forces play the role of 'protecting' the state and its natural resources while also impeding people's movements and blocking any monitoring of what is happening in the area.

The company in charge of the oil drilling, which has already started exploratory studies, would be Petroamazonas, an Ecuadorian state company which would work in association with Chinese companies interested in Yasuní oil, as China is currently eager for natural resources such as petroleum.

This whole situation was an incentive for the creation of the Yasunidos movement, which works against petroleum exploitation in the Yasuní and in favour of a post-petroleum society.

One of our main activities over the past few months has been a proposal for a popular referendum carried out by citizens so that people can express whether they are for or against petroleum exploration in the area.

The path through this process was very difficult because we had to collect 560,000 signatures, which is approximately 5% of the country's electoral register. We went about this work by organising everyone who was interested in the defence of the national park at a national level. After many months of effort and citizen participation, we were able to collect about 750,000 signatures, which really motivated us to believe in the process of participation and think that people would finally have a chance to voice their opinions.

However, the state institution in charge of verifying the signatures and organising the consultation invalidated many of our signatures on technicalities, saying the size of the piece of paper was too small, that the signatures were outside the box where they were supposed to go, that people's names were not complete, etc. That is to say that people in Ecuador were prevented from giving their opinions regarding something that is very important and worrying such as the possible exploitation of the Yasuní national park .

The whole process included constant obstruction and intimidation of everyone involved in the Yasunidos collective, with intimidation ranging from being followed by government intelligence agents, to the circulation of fake signature collection forms, to impeding public actions we carry out for the Yasuní.

This makes us think that new forms of militarisation in Latin America are intended to secure the extraction of natural resources using the military apparatus to displace, intimidate and prohibit the entry of citizens who are worried about the environment in our countries. This is expressed in the case of the Yasuní, for example, in the way that many citizen protests have been suppressed, while areas near the national park are surrounded by soldiers and the military dominates and controls the zone around the national park. This increases Ecuador's military budget under the pretext of protecting natural resources and national security, amongst other factors. Having no more enemies, we have become the direct citizens of our countries, who in the state's view are opposed to development.

One example of government repression happened on 15 August 2013, when a peaceful march in Quito was violently suppressed using disproportionate police force. Rubber bullets were used, causing serious clashes that showed just how little interest the state has in guaranteeing

the right to protest and opening a dialogue about the Yasuní.

In Yasunidos we have learned to work in conjunction with a series of collectives which represent the diversity that we promote, including groups of women, anti-militarists, environmentalists, animal rights activists, students and neighbourhood organisations, amongst others.

We believe that in the current context it is increasingly necessary to work in coordination with various collectives, in order to denounce and resist the militarisation and environmental destruction that is occurring on a global scale.

Right now we continue working, promoting and carrying out actions rooted in nonviolence including pickets, observation trips to the area, international support campaigns, marches through the Yasuní, information in educational institutions and spaces. These allow us to see and speak out about the effects that petroleum extraction will have in areas like the Yasuní. This has been invaluable in creating an ample support base across the country, which has been complimented by growing concern with what is happening in environmental and social arenas, particularly where extractionism takes root.

We, the activists who make up Yasunidos, believe that nonviolence and resistance starting with civil disobedience should be promoted and adapted to these new realities in which natural resource shortages provoke a growing militarisation of the state.

If you want more information about Yasunidos and our vision, you can visit:

www.yasunidos.org

Sources:

El Telegrafo (2012). "Presupuesto estatal deja de depender del petróleo". En:
<http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/noticias/informacion-general/item/presupuesto-estatal-deja-de-dep>

[ender-del-petroleo.html](#)

Yasunidos: www.yasunidos.org

Amazonía por la Vida: www.amazoníaporlavidas.org

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