



News Release

For Immediate Release
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Photos and Video Available: As Free Trade Mining Hearing Begins, Grim Reapers Launch Cyanide-Laced Mineral Water Line at Canadian Consulate

Part of Int'l Day of Protest Against Canadian Gold Mining Company's
Central America Free Trade Agreement Suit Against El Salvador

**PHOTOS, VIDEO FOOTAGE, AND MEDIA KIT AVAILABLE AT
<http://snipurl.com/pacrim>**

On Thursday, May 27th at Noon, trade justice activists dressed as the CEO of Candian mining company Pacific Rim and as Grim Reapers hawked free samples of "cyanide contaminated mineral water" to passersby who drank the water and fell to the ground and "died" at a promotional table purporting to represent the Pacific Rim Mining Company. The street theater performance, held in front of the Consulate General of Canada in New York was part of the International Day of Protest Against Mining and Free Trade in El Salvador, organized in conjunction with the commencement of hearings at the World Bank's International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) help from May 31st to June 1st on Pacific Rim's US-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) case against the government of El Salvador. The company is demanding hundreds of millions of dollars in compensation for potential profits the company stands to lose as a result of El Savaldor blocking progress on a cyanide heap leach gold mining project that raised concerns of irreparable contamination of the Rio Lempa, the rver that provides 60% of the country's drinking water.

In 2009, the government of El Salvador denied a permit for a gold mining project by Canadian mining company Pacific Rim that risked contaminating the Lempa River, the country's primary source of drinking water, with cyanide. In response, Pacific Rim brought a suit under CAFTA-DR's state-investor provisions to the ICSID. The DR-CAFTA investment rules allow investors to sue for unlimited sums for profits they MIGHT have made in the future when projects like Pacific Rim's gold mining operation in El Salvador are canceled on the basis of environmental concerns. At the hearing earlier this week, El Salvador's attorneys sought to have Pacific Rim's case dismissed as frivolous.

According to William Castillo of the El Salvador-based Research Center on Investment and Trade (CEICOM), CAFTA-DR's investment chapter supersedes El Salvador's domestic laws: "Even though Pacific Rim did not establish sufficient environmental protections in its Environmental Impact Report or carry out an informed public consultation—both of which are required under Salvadoran mining law to obtain exploitation permits—they are now able to sue us because of this trade agreement that a past government signed despite of civil society rejecting it."

The company's lawsuit against the government of El Salvador has received international attention as the first extractive industries case brought under CAFTA-DR. Though Canada is not a signatory to the agreement, Pacific Rim is advancing their claim through a US-domiciled subsidiary, Pac Rim Cayman LLC. This could create a precedent for corporations to set up subsidiaries in nations that have NAFTA-style free trade agreements with the US in order to use the very broad investor rights of CAFTA, NAFTA, and the Peru Free Trade Agreement. These agreements grant more rights to foreign companies than to domestic US corporations, allowing them to sue for unlimited sums when enforcement of US environmental laws limits their opportunities for future profits.

The street performance was organized by TradeJustice NY Metro, the New York Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, and Global Justice for Animals & the Environment as part of a coordinated day of protest, with actions taking place in cities including Washington, DC; Boston, MA; Seattle, WA; Portland, OR; Vancouver, BC; and Toronto, ON.

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