

Chilean Indigenous win back land from logging company



Santiago de Chile, October 10 (RHC)-- In an historic ruling, a Chilean judge ruled that a major national lumber company had to give back nearly 100 hectares to the Ignacio Huilipan Indigenous community the company had illegally claimed as its own.

Judge Carmen Seguel issued the decision that 97 hectares near the town of Contulmoco, some 750 km south of Santiago, rightfully belonged to the Ignacio Huilipan community and not the lumber company, Bosques Arauco, which has been using the land to produce logs and wood pulp for three decades.

In 2015, the Ignacio Huilipan Indigenous community sued Bosques Arauco, a part of the Grupo Angelini conglomerate that is Chile's 10th largest corporation, which claimed the land as its own. The court cited a 1904 'Mercy Title' map that showed that a natural water boundary entitled the land to the community. The judge also ruled in favor of the Indigenous community also using the 1993 Chilean Indigenous Law and Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) to order the return of the 97 hectares, according to the community's lawyer, Andres Duran.

Bosques Arauco can still appeal the case and the final ruling will be decided by the nation's Supreme Court. The court's ruling may set a precedent in terms of returning land in southern Chile to Indigenous tribes who have long been fighting to reclaim the territories, such as the Mapuche, largely stolen from them by Chilean colonizers over 100 years ago.

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