

87 Percent in Peru Want New Environmental Review of Tía María Mine



Lima, July 23 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The NGO Labor released on Monday a report on their recent survey showing 87 percent of Islay residents believe a new and independent environmental impact study should be conducted for the Tía María mining project.

Islay is a highly productive agricultural area in the region of Arequipa in southern Peru. It is the home to thousands of farm workers, and place where Southern Copper Corporation plans to implement the controversial copper mine with the support of the national government.

Recent protests in the area resulted in the death of two civilians and one police officer. Two other civilians died during the protests, but the causes are not clear.

President Ollanta Humala sent the army to the area and established a state of emergency in Islay starting on May 22. Minister of the Interior Pedro Cateriano has left open the possibility to extend the state of emergency. The Minister of Energy and Mining stated that “the Ministers are evaluating the extension” of the State of Emergency.” Police General Enrique Blanco stated that 1,000 police officers will stay in the area independently of whether or not the state of emergency would be lifted. An original Environmental Impact Study was conducted by UNOPS, the U.N. agency which made 138 observations to the Tía María project. The government claims all the UNOPS observations have been resolved by a project plan, but the U.N. agency has not been asked to review the second plan nor any other independent agency.

Nevertheless, the executive branch has insisted that the project will go ahead and the new plan will not be submitted to any revisions because “it has already been approved.”

Another result of the Labor survey is that 72 percent of those interviewed believe that the best route to achieve peace in the area is the indefinite suspension of the project and the lifting of the state of emergency.

Also, 89 percent responded their lives were affected by the confrontations during the protests, while 47 percent of the population considers that the mayors are their best representatives. Mayors of the towns of Islay have been openly opposed to the mining project and some have been leaders of the protests.

Furthermore, 25 percent of those surveyed expressed they feel represented by the social movements opposing. The study by Labor consisted of 20 questions to 385 interviewed residents of Islay over a 20 day period. The eight specialists of Labor also performed interviews, focus groups, and workshops with 129 people with different views on the matter.

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