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The Struggle Against Free Trade Continues By Gabriela Campos, Foreign Policy In Focus BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator

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On October 15th, La Mesa Nacional Frente a La Minería Metálica en El Salvador, also known as El Salvador's National Roundtable on Mining, won the [Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award](#) awarded by the Institute for Policy Studies for their fight against mining in El Salvador. Click [here](#) to view a video of the acceptance of the award.

As the international community's attention is fixed on the coup and crisis in Honduras, another Central American country fights the constraints and inequalities caused by flawed free trade agreements between the United States and the hemisphere. El Salvador currently battles a lawsuit issued by Canadian mining company Pacific Rim against the Salvadoran government, for prohibiting mining in their country, in fear of the repercussions it might have on its people and the environment. In the forefront of such a battle, a group of activists have stepped forward to attempt to permanently ban mining in El Salvador.

La Mesa Nacional Frente a la Minería Metálica is a coalition of environmental, faith-based, and community activists who have come together to successfully block permits for mining in El Salvador. Fighting against the devastating environmental effects that mining could have on their livelihood, La Mesa essentially strives for not only a national law banning mining but also a revision of the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) rules, which allow for multinational companies, such as Pacific Rim, to sue governments for violating investment rules.

Amidst their success and fight against mining in their small, over-populated country, La Mesa members have received violent threats against their lives in order to stop their activism. In fact, a leading La Mesa member, Marcelo Rivera, was found tortured and

murdered after his disappearance. Furthermore, during a House of Representatives hearing on October 15th Francisco Pineda, a member of La Mesa, said that one of his farm assistants was offered \$2,000 dollars if they agreed to poison Pineda's food.

On their recent trip to the United States and Canada, La Mesa has sought to further their goals by pressuring North American countries to reconsider CAFTA and NAFTA rules and look into human rights abuses. As they speak out on the events in El Salvador they stress how mining can be devastating for not only the country but also the region as a whole. Though La Mesa has achieved much already by blocking the ability of Pacific Rim and Commerce Group to mine, they continue to fight for their ultimate goals in a climate of violence and intimidation for the livelihood of their communities and Central America as a whole.

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator Gabriella Campos is an intern for Foreign Policy In Focus at the Institute for Policy Studies. Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Campos and the Institute for Policy Studies.



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