

Thousands of Peruvian fishermen live in uncertainty



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By Maria Josefina Arce

Thousands of Peruvians continue to be unable to access their livelihood, fishing, just over two years after the oil spill by the Spanish multinational REPSOL on the coast of the district of Ventanilla, in the province of Callao, considered the biggest ecological disaster in the history of the Andean country.

In January 2022, almost 12,000 barrels of oil were dumped into the sea. REPSOL tried to avoid its responsibility, and linked it to strong waves after the eruption of a volcano in Tonga, however, citizens present in the area denied any anomaly in the sea.

The truth is that, as it later came to light, the event was caused by a rupture in the underwater pipeline during the unloading of oil from the Italian-flagged ship Mare Doricum to the La Pampilla refinery, owned

by the Spanish company.

Covering an area rich in biodiversity and fragile habitats, the spill resulted in the loss of 1,850 species of wildlife, some considered endangered.

According to a recent report by the Peruvian organisation CooperAcción, artisanal fishermen are losing more than 3,100 dollars a month due to the contamination of the waters.

But it is not only fishing that has been affected, but also another fundamental economic activity for the area, tourism. Some 25 beaches are still closed due to the degree of contamination.

A little more than two years later, many questions remain unanswered. It is not known how long it will take to recover the affected areas, nor the state of the seabed, in addition to the fact that the affected families have not been properly compensated, and the government of the self-proclaimed president Dina Boluarte has not done much to help the victims. REPSOL has been the target of innumerable criticisms for its irresponsibility and lack of a comprehensive and adequate response to this environmental crisis.

The inhabitants of the area denounce that the multinational has only carried out superficial clean-up actions. It has not taken into account the necessary rehabilitation of habitats and repopulation of species. The oil spill off the coast of Peru has brought to the table an old problem, which unfortunately still exists worldwide: the irresponsibility of transnationals towards the environment.

Air, water and soil pollution, damage to flora and fauna and to the health of the inhabitants of the areas where they operate are some of the damages caused by the actions of these companies in the world, which is already experiencing an environmental crisis.

But, as experts point out, justice does not come quickly enough or is not applied with force when large companies are involved in environmental catastrophes and human rights violations.

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