

Peruvian Police Destroys an Entire Town of Illegal Miners



Lima, July 27 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Peruvian armed police destroyed and evicted the village of *Las Pampas*, in the southeastern region of *Madre de Dios*, as part of an operation aimed at eradicate the 55 illegal mining settlements in the Peruvian jungle.

In the unprecedented operation, the Peruvian government deployed nearly 900 police and armed helicopters, who raided an illegal gold mine and the settlement that had grown up around it, leaving hundreds of people homeless.

The agents torched the houses and forced people to evacuate, the action has been criticized by many as an excessive use of force. The illegal mining commissioner, Antonio Fernandez, said these operations will continue. "We have to keep doing this until these criminals understand that what they do is illegal," he said, adding that illegal mining is accompanied by other criminal activities such as child labor and prostitution.

Local media reported that as part of the operation in *La Pampa*, 32 women who had been forced into prostitution were rescued.

Illegal mining in Peru brings a series of problems ranging from organized crime to political corruption to black market trading and more, everything linked to the search for gold. The illegal activity has also a

huge ecological impact since mercury is most commonly used to extract gold particles but the illegal miners use it in an inappropriate way, allowing the toxic metal to contaminate local ecosystems.

According to official figures there are more than a half million illegal miners operating in 24 out of 26 South American country regions and it is estimated that more than 22 percent of \$10 billion Peru exports in gold comes from illegal mining.

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