

New Panama law bans mining on native land

March 27 2012



Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli, pictured in January 2012, enacted a law Monday that prohibits mining on indigenous lands and requires that local native authorities be consulted before work can begin on new hydroelectric plants.

Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli enacted a law Monday that prohibits mining on indigenous lands and requires that local native authorities be consulted before work can begin on new hydroelectric plants.

Panama's Congress approved the law March 22 after the [government](#) reached an agreement with the Ngobe Bugle natives, Panama's largest indigenous ethnic group, to end violent protests that left at least two dead and dozens injured or arrested in January.

Ngobe Bugle protesters blocked roads for several days demanding a ban on mining and new dam construction in their territory.

Martinelli signed the law on Monday, the government communications office said in a brief statement.

The government agreed to stop mineral exploration but refused to halt [dam construction](#), saying the nation's fuel bill would rise considerably without the hydroelectric energy plants.

The law, which cancels mining [concessions](#) that were already granted, also states that future hydroelectric projects "should be approved" by indigenous authorities and be subject to referendums of the region's natives.

If they are approved, 5 percent of the annual revenue must be returned to the natives and one quarter of the operating employees must be hired locally.

"With this law, we guarantee the security of our natural resources" and that the Ngobe Bugle people "will be the ones who decide what will be done with those resources," said Rogelio Montezuma, a Ngobe Bugle leader during negotiations with the government on the agreements.

Jorge Fabrega, who led negotiations for the Panamanian government, said the [law](#) "shows the government's commitment to the agreements" with the Indians, who could benefit from the "future of prosperity" they offer.

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: New Panama law bans mining on native land (2012, March 27) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-03-panama-law-native.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is

provided for information purposes only.