

# El Salvador Documentary Shows Mining Company's Involvement in Activist Disappearance

The film "Return to El Salvador," narrated by actor Martin Sheen, brings to light the struggles of the Salvadoran people during civil war and informs viewers of the involvement of Canadian mining company, Pacific Rim, with the disappearances of anti-mining activists in El Salvador. Filmmaker Jamie Moffett and his crew share the stories of those whose lives have been forever changed by the war: There is the Salvadoran couple who fled death threats in the 1980s and found asylum and a political platform in the United States; The couple who, after escaping during the war, returned to El Salvador to work with churches and poor communities; and there is the family of a murdered anti-mining activist, Marcelo Rivera, and the people seeking the truth about his death.

"Return to El Salvador" primarily follows the 12-year civil conflict that killed over 70,000 people and displaced nearly one-fifth of the population, the result of tensions between the wealthy, land-owning elite and the impoverished rural majority. Fighting took place between the Salvadoran Army and the leftist guerrilla organization, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). It resulted in a staggering amount of civilian deaths as the Salvadoran Army bombed and raided villages thought to be sympathetic to the FMLN.

In the case of Marcelo Rivera, Moffett tells the story of how Rivera's tortured body was found at the bottom of well in San Isidro after he had been missing for nearly 12 days. Authorities claimed that Rivera was a victim of gang violence and was killed as a result of a drunken fight turned deadly. However, his autopsy showed cause of death as asphyxiation, mostly likely from a rope. Rivera's family stated that Marcelo did not drink and did have many enemies in the mining industry. They believe that there is more to his death than what has been reported by authorities. Rivera's most recent focus before his death was Pacific Rim, who had been proposing a very unpopular gold mine project in El Salvador. The film highlights many details in this matter:

- \* The Pacific Rim Mining Company has been lobbying for years for drilling rights under the mountain of El Dorado, an ironically named landmark in El Salvador containing over \$1.3 billion worth of gold and precious metals
- \* Environmental effects of mining for gold include the drying up of wells due to excessive water use, the death of livestock from contaminated water and a variety of other health issues.
- \* Pacific Rim is accused of being directly and indirectly responsible in the harassment of the people and communities of El Salvador. Activists and community organizers, like Marcelo Rivera, have been kidnapped and assassinated for their resistance against the company and their mining practices.
- \* The company is currently suing the country of El Salvador, using its US subsidiary in Nevada, for \$77 million, claiming that according to CAFTA the government of El Salvador has no right to deny mining.

"Return to El Salvador" brings the hopes of the Salvadoran people to light and explores significant ways to walk with them in their journey.

## Resources:

**Website:** <http://returntoelsalvador.com>

**Photos:** <http://www.flickr.com/photos/returntoelsalvador/>

### "Return to El Salvador" trailer (VIDEO):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMU4y-Q-mUw>

### First 7 minutes of "Return to El Salvador", with Martin Sheen's narration (VIDEO):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlj63TGsgkQ>

### "The Mysterious Death of Marcelo Rivera" (VIDEO):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yvXm52BhSHQ>

<http://www.returntoelsalvador.com>

<http://www.jamiemoffett.com>

**About Us:** Jamie Moffett Media Design & Production, uses motion picture to document the stories of those struggling for peace and justice in their communities and around the world; ordinary people who do extraordinary things with some simple love and service. In addition two feature-length documentaries, "The Ordinary Radicals" and "Return to El Salvador", they have produced dozens of short films, music videos and commercials.

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