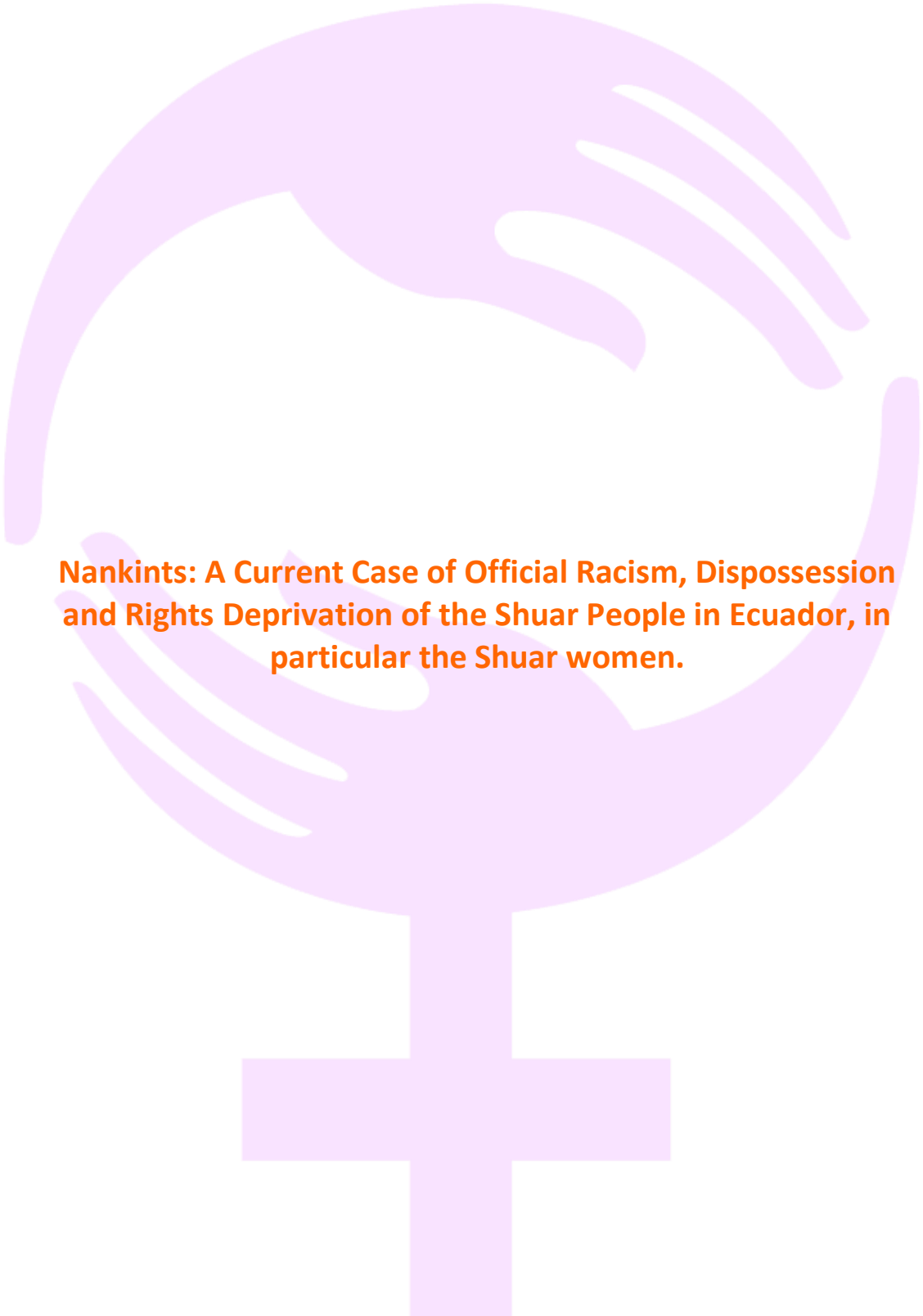


***NATIONAL COALITION OF WOMEN OF ECUADOR***



**Nankints: A Current Case of Official Racism, Dispossession and Rights Deprivation of the Shuar People in Ecuador, in particular the Shuar women.**

**Quito, July 7 2017**

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### **INSTITUTIONAL PRESENTATION**

The National Coalition of Women<sup>1</sup> is a plural space created to defend the human rights of women. Its main activities are political advocacy, agenda concertation, elaboration of shadow and alternative reports, follow-up of the observations and recommendations of the Human Rights Committees, and the generation of bills and policy instruments.

The Coalition is composed of the following organizations: Acción Ciudadana por la Democracia y el Desarrollo – ACDemocracia, Colectivo Político Luna Creciente, Cabildo por las Mujeres del Cantón Cuenca, Colectivo Nosotras, Confederación Ecuatoriana de Mujeres por el Cambio, Consejo de Mujeres Negras – San Lorenzo, Coordinadora Juvenil por la Equidad de Género, Coordinadora Política de Mujeres del Ecuador, Dirigencia de la Mujer – CONAIE, Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbíos, Frente Ecuatoriano de Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos, Movimiento de Mujeres de Sectores Populares Luna Creciente, Movimiento de Mujeres de Manabí, Mujeres de Frente, Observatorio Ciudadano de la Comunicación – Cuenca, Plataforma Nacional por los Derechos de las Mujeres, Red de Mujeres Políticas del Ecuador – REMPE, Fundación Desafío, Centro de Apoyo y Protección de los Derechos Humanos – SURKUNA y El Parto es Nuestro (EPEN).

This report has been elaborated by the Plataforma Nacional de Derechos de las Mujeres, one of our member organizations. The team responsible for this report included Cristina Burneo, Verónica Potes and Edu León.

The National Coalition of Women thanks the International Network of Human Rights (RIDH<sup>2</sup>) especially to Walleska Pareja Díaz (advocacy & gender coordinator), for its invaluable advocacy work in Geneva.

The Coalition is an actor of the civil society interested in sharing its points of view with the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. The Coalition does not hold consultative status with the ECOSOC.



With the support of:



<sup>1</sup> For more information: <http://www.informesombraecuador.com/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information: <http://ridh.org/en/>

## **Nankints: A Current Case of Official Racism, Dispossession and Rights Deprivation of the Shuar People in Ecuador, in particular the Shuar women.**

1. The situation we will describe here reflects a structural problem that needs urgent action by the Ecuadorian State. The facts contradict the promises of a “harmonic cohabitation in diversity and respect of nature” or Good Living in a plurinational society. Also, the facts, which take place in the mining concession area in Morona Santiago, reveal that the Ecuadorian State have not taken seriously its obligations to the Shuar People including the Shuar Arutam.
2. In the 1960s, the Ecuadorian State started an aggressive colonization policy in the Amazonia. This policy resulted in the appropriation of ancestral territories that ended up parceled to new owners: Ecuadorian settlers favored by the State policy. This occurred along the whole Amazonia, including the province of Morona Santiago, in ancestral territories of various peoples, including the Shuar and Achuar. Later in the 1990s, minerals were found in those areas and an increased interest in the lands emerged among both the State and extractive companies.
3. In 2006, landless families of the Shuar people established the Nankints community in the province of Morona Santiago in the mineral rich area mentioned above. Mining companies interested in exploiting those reserves had started an aggressive policy of veiled acquisition of land to settlers which resulted in increasing conflicts when it became evident who were behind those acquisitions. (This has been acknowledged by the General Comptroller in a report on mining projects in the area). In August 2017, without prior notice according to the Shuar, the Ecuadorian police evicted the families from Nankints (8 families, 32 individuals between adults and children) in a disproportionate deployment of force (captured in videos made public).
4. In November, a group of Shuar returned to Nankints (by then, the Ecuadorian state had renamed the site “La Esperanza mining camp” run by Explorcobres S.A. a Chinese mining company) and were evicted the following day. In December, amid violent and unclear incidents, a police officer ended up dead and two more were injured. According to Shuar versions, several Shuar individuals were also wounded but decided to hide in the jungle in fear of arrest. The Ecuadorian government declared the area in “state of emergency” and proceeded to militarize the area, terrorize the population, persecute and prosecute the leaders (the President of the Shuar Federation (FICSH) was detained under criminal charges including incitement to violence, along with other six individuals indigenous and peasants, the main office of FICSH was raided). In addition, nearby Shuar communities (Tsuntsuim, El Tiink), which had hosted the evicted families, were harassed by the armed forces (including through helicopter and drone overflies which terrorized the adult and children population). The Tiink population decided to guard a precarious bridge, the only land access to their community, as a desperate act of resistance which, at the same time, isolated them).
5. At the moment, evicted families and individuals are trying to return to the area. Nankints is gone forever, the houses and small agricultural sites buried under what

now are the premises of a mining camp. In nearby Tsuntsuim, the recently arrived are living under precarious conditions as not only they lost everything in Nankints but also are subject to their hosts goodwill and to poor conditions of basic survival (food and clean water are scarce, the school was destroyed, health conditions deteriorate as days pass by). They are all living in an already saturated environment, now also threatened by the State forces.

6. The situation described here evidences the unstable life conditions of this people, initially deprived from their territory by the State's colonization policy and more recently, by pure greed. This is yet another manifestation of how poorly the Ecuadorian State recognizes its duties towards Indigenous Peoples and how it (the State) privileges the use of force instead of constructive dialogue and consultation, as its own stated policies and constitutional framework requires. The land is the basis of the life of Indigenous Peoples and now not only they don't have it but they are being persecuted and harassed in what they claim as their ancestral territories.
7. Collective rights violated to the communities (Nankints, Tsumtsuim, El Tiink, Kutukús, etc) and, extensively, to the Shuar people in general include: rights not to be discriminated, rights to identity, to sense of belonging, ancestral traditions and social organization; rights to political and territorial self-determination; rights to property and to possession of ancestral lands and rights not to be displaced from those ancestral lands; rights to participation in decision and policy making that impact them including right to be consulted and to prior, free and informed consent over plans and projects that affect their lives and lands as well as participation in the benefits of resource exploitation; rights to indemnity for social, cultural, and environmental damage of their lands. Although the National Agenda for the Equality of Peoples and Nationalities includes a lands plan aimed to legalization of Shuar lands (Agenda, pages 116-117), this is not happening in this area, where the Shuar keep losing ancestral lands due to both absence of legal titling and the joint interest of the State and mining companies in accessing the mineral in the subsurface.
8. As a result, a series of related rights are compromised: life, education, food, habitat and appropriate housing, clean environment, integral health, work, culture. These are all individual and group rights recognized by the Ecuadorian Constitution in addition to international instruments and to which the State committed in several policy instruments including the National Agenda for the Equality of Peoples and Nationalities (Agenda, pages 118-119).
9. This situation exacerbates the condition of multiple vulnerability which already affects the elderly, women (including pregnant women), the youth, children, individuals with disabilities, in those communities, and which would be otherwise entitled to priority attention according to the Constitution.
10. The effects of this situation in the Shuar women reveals particularities. While men, as providers of sustenance, are tempted to work for the mining companies, women stay in the communities to care for the children and to work the land (ajás, in Shuar language). This means that Indigenous women have an even more particular relation and knowledge about the crops, the harvesting seasons, the soil

productivity and the search for agricultural lands. Not surprisingly, it is them who organized the resistance against mining plans and put themselves in the frontline of the violent evictions. As Mónica Ambama, a woman from Nankints, eloquently stated, “evictions destroy us, without land we cease to exist”.

11. In times of crisis in the community, it is women who sustain life. However, in areas already impacted by environmental degradation, sustenance conditions become harder: it is increasingly difficult to find sources of clean water and food safety. Women become overloaded with responsibilities, anxiety and guilt.
12. The mining companies’ tactics to enter the territories are also reinforcing gender roles and disempowering women in the communities. Not only, these processes are not prior consultation according to international standards but they are also ways to take advantage of gender differentiation. Companies usually avoid dealing with women who only know late in the process about the negotiations of land between the men and the companies.
13. As a result, communities, families and individuals in general, develop increasing dependence on the salaries that their members receive from mining companies. In basic economies, salaries become a powerful means of subordination (of Indigenous communities in relation to the companies, and of Indigenous women in relation to the male members of the communities). If any, jobs for women are always related to domestic service. Pregnancy means losing the jobs or impossibility to access them. There is discrimination and violation of labor rights.
14. Mining companies bring additional insecurity to Shuar women. Male foreigners, increase in alcohol ingestion, establishment of brothels (to channel male stress) results in violence in an already violent environment, including sexual exploitation of women and their bodies. As some activists eloquently put it, nature and women become spaces at the service of capitalism. Extractivism exacerbates patriarchy and the situation of multiple discrimination of Shuar women in Ecuador. Knowingly, the Ecuadorian State contributes to this situation by backing the mining companies.

Verónica Potes  
Ecuador