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AMERICA/CHILE - A community divided in two in order to protect the environment threatened by the Pascua Lama project

Copiapo (Agenzia Fides) - The Bishop of the Diocese of Copiapó, Mgr. Gaspar Francisco Quintana Jorquera, C.M.F., attended the meeting of the Commission appointed to investigate the Pascua Lama project and highlighted the lack of ethics in the conduct of the Canadian company Barrick Gold in the management of an initiative that has already generated an irreversible environmental damage.
In this regard, Mgr. Quintana has given his support to the citizens' complaints on the social effects generated by this company in the Huasco Valley, situated in the Atacama region.
"Certainly, this project has divided people. It has caused a very painful division of the people who until now have lived a deeply open and friendly lifestyle, and now the community is divided into two groups. Basically, one group received gifts by the company and the other, who was never in agreement with the Pascua Lama project, has been isolated from social life. I noticed this in person during my visits to the Valley", the prelate explained in a statement sent to Fides .
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On 25 September 2013, the Chilean Supreme Court issued a ruling that blocked the works of Barrick Gold, the world's largest producer of gold. In particular, in line with the decision of the Court of Appeal in Copiapo, Barrick Gold was required to complete the Pascua Lama water management system in order to meet the criteria imposed by the Superintendency of the Chilean environment. The Court's decision ends a legal action which began in September 2012 at the request of four indigenous communities.
Barrick Gold said it was satisfied with the decision because it allows the start of the Pascua Lama project again and has filed a draft of water management that could be completed by the end of 2014.
Pascua Lama is a mining project situated on the border between Chile and Argentina at an altitude varying between 3,800 and 5,200 meters to take advantage of one of the world's largest reserves of gold and silver. The estimated reserves of gold are 17.9 million ounces and those of silver 676 million ounces. This means that the mine will be exploited for at least 25 years. (CE) (Agenzia Fides 23/11/2013)

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