To: California Air Resources Board

I write to demand that you definitively reject California’s so-called “Tropical Forest Standard” and immediately cancel your cap and trade program, which already includes in-state and national carbon offsets. California’s Forest Protocol and forest carbon offsets allow for clear cuts, logging and monoculture tree plantations. This clearly shows that carbon offsets are not about protecting forests, they are about destroying forests.

California’s international carbon offsets pretend to cover over a third of the world’s tropical forests in 39 provinces and ten countries. The vast majority of these forests still exists thanks to the Indigenous Peoples and local communities that have reverently cared for them for centuries. Even before the TFS hearing, the adverse social and environmental impacts of the prototypes for California’s Tropical Forest Standard and REDD in the State of Acre, Brazil; the State of Chiapas, Mexico; and Cross River State, Nigeria prove that carbon offsets constitute carbon colonialism.

For example, in Acre, a California REDD[[1]](#endnote-1) pilot project with rubber trees[[2]](#endnote-2) has raised the specter of the slavery of Indigenous Peoples and rubber tappers during the colonial rubber boom. According to the Xapuri Declaration, REDD is reminiscent of “schemes that refer back to semi-slavery and debt bondage… in colonial times.”[[3]](#endnote-3) Forest offset projects are already resulting in people getting “fined, criminalized, indebted, without conditions to maintain their ways of life.”[[4]](#endnote-4) The Xapuri Declaration also denounces how “the residents of the rubber tree areas Valparaíso and Russas, who [were] coerced to submit to a REDD project; are threatened with expropriation of the lands"[[5]](#endnote-5) and how logging companies are doing REDD. In addition, Amazonian Indigenous Peoples who oppose REDD have received death threats.

In the State of Chiapas and in Mexico, REDD is resulting in “expulsions, privatizations and indebtedness.”[[6]](#endnote-6) The Friends of the Earth report, [*REDD+, the carbon market and the California-Acre-Chiapas cooperation: Legalizing mechanisms of dispossession*](http://www.foei.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/REDD_The-carbon-market-and-the-California-Acre-Chiapas-cooperation.pdf)[[7]](#endnote-7) summarizes the adverse impacts of REDD. “[T]he logic of REDD allows them to seize control of the territories of traditional communities, thereby enabling corporate access to plants and animals that are being appropriated by the pharmaceutical industry...REDD is being denounced… for being responsible for the violation of the rights of indigenous and traditional peoples. Territories… are being expropriated through the promotion of private property, and traditional skills, livelihoods and collective practices are being eliminated.”[[8]](#endnote-8) Furthermore, “the safeguards are merely an instrument of rhetoric and a way of neutralizing criticisms of REDD projects.”[[9]](#endnote-9) The Tzeltal People of the community of Amador Hernandez has asked the governor of Chiapas to “suspend the state REDD+ project in the Lacandon Community Zone, as it constitutes a counterinsurgency plan that promotes conflicts between neighboring communities.”[[10]](#endnote-10)

In Cross River State, Nigeria, REDD is already contributing to the persecution and criminalization of activists, where the State of California as well as the World Bank and the UN-REDD programme intend to do REDD projects. ​Odey Oyama​, Executive Director of the Rainforest Resource and Development Centre (RRDC) in Cross River State, Nigeria suffered harassment and intimidation from state security agents and​ had to flee is home for several weeks in the months of January and February 2013 for opposing REDD activities and other similar land grabs. “One of the activities placing me in confrontation with the Cross River State Government of Nigeria is​ my stand against the REDD programme. My reason for rejecting the REDD programme is because it is geared towards​ taking over the last vestiges of community forest​ that exist in Cross River State of Nigeria,” denounced Mr. Oyama.

California’s forest offsets are a total travesty, but not an exception. Throughout the world, forest carbon offset programs, be they called REDD+ or any other name, are already violating the collective and individual rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities of the world as well as threatening their cultural survival. Furthermore, carbon offsets have already caused grave human rights abuses such as militarization of REDD-type projects with armed guards, land grabs, forced displacement, loss of access to food; destruction of traditional ways of life; as well as new forms of violence against women.[[11]](#endnote-11) Over a thousand homes of the Indigenous Sengwer People of Kenya have been torched by the AK-47 machine gun touting Kenya Forest Service in Kenya to make the Embobut Forest “ready” for World Bank-funded REDD+.[[12]](#endnote-12)

Carbon trading and offsets are clearly false solutions to climate change that make deforestation and global warming worse, constitute a human rights time bomb and imperil the future of the planet and all of Life. The State of California as well as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Civil Aviation Organization, which hope to link to the Tropical Forest Standard, must immediately and definitively desist from buying and selling the Sky, privatizing Nature and pursuing such genocidal policies. Carbon trading and carbon offsets are crimes against humanity and Mother Earth and must be immediately canceled.

Cassandra Smithies

Researcher

Global Alliance against REDD

<http://no-redd.com/>

cc Governor Jerry Brown of California;

cc Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres;

cc President of the World Bank Jim Yong Kim;

cc Secretary General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), Dr. Fang Liu;

cc Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Patricia Espinosa;

cc United Nations Special Adviser on Prevention of Genocide and Responsibility to Protect Adama Dieng

cc United Nations Committee on Decolonization.

1. REDD Monitor, “Just what REDD Needed. Carbon Offsets and another Abbreviation. Welcome R-20”. November 19, 2010.

<http://www.redd-monitor.org/2010/11/19/just-what-redd-needed-carbon-offsets-and-another-abbreviation-welcome-to-r20/#more-6500> *[Accessed July 28, 2018]* [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Governors’ Climate and Forest Taskforce Database. Acre, Brazil. “Acre Rubber Purchase Agreement - Folha Desfumada Liquida.” (no date.) <http://www.gcftaskforce-database.org/Partnerships/brazil.acre> *[Accessed July 28, 2018]*

“Description: The company VERT / VEJA has agreed to 10-year purchase agreement native rubber (Liquid smoke sheet-FDL) from extractavists in Acre. In total a 90 tonne purchase agreement from sustainable rubber extractivists through 2020. Partners Empresa VERT/VEJA (France) [Veja Sneakers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veja_Sneakers) Initiative Type: Private investment, Preferential sourcing Initiative Status30 tonnes purchased” [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
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4. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. REDD Monitor. “Californian REDD in Acre and Chiapas: Legalizing Mechanism of Dispossession”. January 26, 2018. <http://www.redd-monitor.org/2018/01/26/californian-redd-in-acre-and-chiapas-legalising-mechanisms-of-dispossession/> *[Accessed August 5, 2018]* [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Friends of the Earth. Fabrina Furtado. “The Carbon Market and California-Acre-Chiapas Cooperation: Redd+ Legalizing Mechanisms Of Dispossession”. June 2017. [file:///T:/Downloads/REDD\_The-carbon-market-and-the-California-Acre-Chiapas-cooperation.pdf](file:///T%3A/Downloads/REDD_The-carbon-market-and-the-California-Acre-Chiapas-cooperation.pdf) *[Accessed August 5, 2018]* [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Climate Connections, “Environmental, Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights Groups Reject International Offsets in California’s Global Warming Solutions Act”. August 23, 2011. <http://climate-connections.org/2011/08/23/environmental-indigenous-peoples-and-human-rights-groups-reject-international-offsets-in-californias-global-warming-solutions-act/> *[Accessed August 5, 2018]* [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Global Alliance against REDD <http://no-redd.com/> [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
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 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2014/jul/03/world-bank-un-redd-genocide-land-carbon-grab-sengwer-kenya> *[Accessed October 24, 2018]* [↑](#endnote-ref-12)