



RAMA-KRIOL TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT

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PRESS RELEASE

GTR-K AUTHORITIES ARE BEING PRESSURED TO APPROVE THE INTEROCEANIC CANAL

We hereby make known to the Nicaraguan people and the international community that officials of the State of Nicaragua—Michael Campbell of ProNicaribe; Danilo Chang, spokesperson for the Grand Interoceanic Canal of Nicaragua megaproject in the Southern Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region (RACS); and Rubén López, Chief Executive of the Government of the RACS—have been pressuring members of the Rama-Kriol Territorial Government (GTR-K) since January 8, 2016, to sign a document supposedly giving the ***“Free, Prior, and Informed Consent”*** of the indigenous Rama people and Kriol communities that make up the territory to the megaproject and its subprojects.

This has occurred during a meeting of the GTR-K Authority promoted and sponsored by these state officials on January 8-9, 2016, but, facing the refusal of the indigenous and Afro-descendant authorities to sign, the officials planned to transport them to Managua today, January 10, to make them sign the document there.

The megaproject would cross the Rama-Kriol territory, over which the State of Nicaragua on December 18, 2009, emitted a *“Title of Full Control”* to the nine communities of the Rama-Kriol Territory. This title included 406,849.30 hectares of their traditional territories as well as 22 cays and 441,308 hectares of maritime territory for the development of artisanal fishing. The title was turned over by Commander Daniel Ortega, President of Nicaragua, in a solemn ceremony at the House of the Peoples in July 2010.

But today, these officials hope that the GTR-K will turn over 263 km² (two-hundred sixty-three square kilometers) to the National Commission for the Development of the Grand Canal of Nicaragua for the implementation of this megaproject through a *“contract of perpetual lease,”* which, *“once approved, signed, and sealed, the **Present Free, Prior, and Informed Consent Agreement for the Implementation of the Grand Interoceanic Canal of Nicaragua and its Sub Projects, by both the Rama-Kriol Territorial Government and the National Commission for the Development of the Grand Canal of Nicaragua, this acquires the character of Law and shall be published in La Gaceta, Official Journal of the Nicaraguans.**”* All of this even though article 24 of Law 445 establishes: *“The State recognizes the Right that Indigenous and Ethnic Communities have over the lands they traditionally occupy ... and recognizes and guarantees their inalienability, unseizability, and imprescriptibility.”*

The GTR-K authorities denounce that public officials will not show them the full text of the supposed Agreement to be signed, and much less hand it over; and despite this, they are pressuring them to sign it; and even though they are telling them in numerous ways that this is not the procedure established under Law 445, Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization, and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the officials continue pressuring them to sign. The indigenous and Afro-descendant authorities have also requested the technical assistance of a trusted lawyer to help them understand the implications of the document to be signed, the presence of an international observer, and to see the results of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). But the officials tell them that the lawyer is not necessary and that they will explain the ESIA and send the agreement to the UN once it has been signed, all while continuing to pressure them to sign it.

Due to all of this, the GTR-K authorities call on the President of the Republic, Commander Daniel Ortega Saavedra, to stop this violation of human rights and constitutional guarantees that the abovementioned officials seek to commit, and to see to it that the right to the territory turned over by the State of Nicaragua in the 2010 property title is respected.