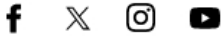


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Colombia's largest oil company accused of hiding environmental damage

By EHN Curators • Mar 24, 2025 • 1 min read



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A whistleblower report reveals that [Ecopetrol](#), Colombia's state-controlled oil giant, concealed hundreds of pollution incidents, maintained secret surveillance on environmental activists, and wielded undue influence over regulators.

A whistleblower report reveals that [Ecopetrol](#), Colombia's state-controlled oil giant, concealed hundreds of pollution incidents, maintained secret surveillance on environmental activists, and wielded undue influence over regulators.

[Mie Hoejris Dahl reports for Mongabay.](#)

In short:

- The Environmental Investigation Agency and Earthworks analyzed leaked documents showing that [Ecopetrol](#) hid over 600 major environmental damage incidents between 2010 and 2016, failing to report nearly 90% of known environmental harms to shareholders.
- The company allegedly tracked 1,200 individuals in areas where it operates and spent \$22 million in 2018 on national security forces, with activists reporting threats and intimidation.
- Despite complaints to authorities, no action has been taken against [Ecopetrol](#), which remains a dominant force in Colombia's economy.

Key quote:

"There are places where nature is completely degraded and polluted" from oil extraction and refining.

— Óscar Sampayo, displaced environmental activist

Why this matters:

Ecopetrol's alleged cover-ups highlight the ongoing struggle to hold major fossil fuel companies accountable for environmental harm. Oil spills and methane emissions contribute to pollution and climate change, while activists face intimidation for exposing wrongdoing. In Colombia, [where environmental defenders are frequently targeted](#), corporate influence over regulators raises concerns about enforcement of environmental protections.

Beyond Colombia, the case reflects a broader global challenge: ensuring transparency in the fossil fuel sector. While companies pledge to curb emissions and protect ecosystems, investigations often reveal discrepancies between public commitments and on-the-ground realities. In a country where the oil industry plays a central role in the economy, the balance between development and environmental stewardship remains fraught.

Related: ['Living under this constant threat': Environmental defenders face a mounting mental health crisis](#)

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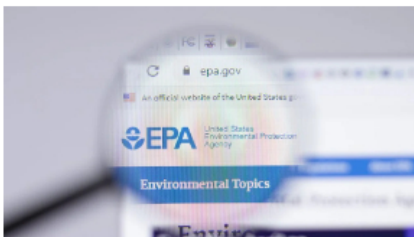


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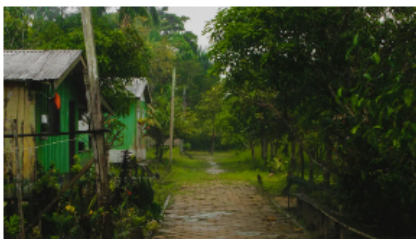
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