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Catalan, Spain:

The day after Scotland's historic vote, the Catalanian parliament voted to allow the Catalan region of Spain to vote on independence on Nov. 9, according to the BBC. The vote was suspended this week by the Constitutional Court after an appeal from the central Spanish government, which contends that a referendum for independence is not compatible with the constitution. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has said "nobody and nothing will be allowed to break up Spain."

California, USA:

California became the first state to ban non-reusable plastic bags, according to the BBC. The law only affects stores selling food or drink (grocery stores and liquor stores, for instance) and pharmacies. It also bans paper bags unless the store charges at least 10 cents per bag. Larger stores will have until next July to comply, while smaller stores have until July 2016. The new law was condemned by the executive director of the American Progressive Bag Alliance, Lee Califf, who claimed the law would "jeopardize thousands ... of jobs, hurt the environment and fleece consumers for billions."

Iguala, Mexico:

Forty-three people are missing after an attack by police in Southern Mexico that left six people dead, according to Vice News. The police opened fire on a bus of students from a teachers college for reasons that remain unclear, although the police claim to have stopped the bus because they thought the students had kidnapped the driver. Three hours later, another armed group killed two more students. At the same time, police or another armed group attacked a second bus, believing it to also be carrying students. State forces have arrested 22 members of the local police force.

Hong Kong, China:

Since Friday, protestors have gathered in Hong Kong to advocate for a more democratic system, according to The New York Times. They began after an announcement that the city chief executive would be selected by vote, but only after approval from Beijing, giving the power mostly to the ruling Chinese Communist Party. Many see this as a corruption of Hong Kong's tradition of separate and free governance from the rest of China. Police attempted to clear protestors using tear gas, while protestors shielded their faces with surgical masks, umbrellas, and cling wrap.



Illegal logging in Peru and Brazil hurts indigenous communities and ecosystems

BY JULIET MAGOON
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According to World Wildlife Fund International, nearly 80 percent of Peru and Brazil's logging exports are obtained illegally.

"Tala ilegal," or illegal logging, disrupts indigenous culture by devastating native land, introducing foreign disease, and exploiting reserved forests.

Most of the effects are observed in the dangerous border region separating the two countries.

"Illegal loggers bring guns and force people out of their land," said Rogger Parra, a Manu, Peru, native and environmental law student. "Communities are destroyed because people with arrows can't defend themselves against guns."

Parra is from the Amazon and witnessed firsthand many of the consequences of deforestation.

About a month ago, illegal loggers whose lumber was seized in Pucallpa on the Ucayali River murdered four anti-logging indigenous leaders of the Ashéninka community — Edwin Chota, Jorge Rios Pérez, Leoncio Quincicima and Francisco Pinedo.

"The loggers will kill the boss of local organizations who try to protect the land (to gain power)," said Parra.

Loggers use unmatched force to take control of communities, making it impossible for indigenous people to protect themselves.

Chota was an outspoken activist for his community. He reported several death threats from logging boss Hugo Flores preceding his murder.

"Someone from Saweto will die, and I will denounce you as a drug trafficker," Flores allegedly wrote to Chota, according to National Geographic's News Watch.

On top of creating environmental and cultural stressors, loggers are taking advantage of local girls.

"The government has done very little to preserve the rainforest, the ecosystem within the forest in addition to the culture and welfare of the people who live there," said Laura Koes '14, who is currently living and volunteering in Cusco, Peru, with the

Peru for Life organization. "When loggers come to these remote areas, they do not only slaughter the forest but also commonly sexually assault girls as young as 12."

Nor are loggers the only danger — the devastation they leave behind also affects the local communities.

"The first problem are the rivers," said Parra. "In January and February, when it rains, the river destroys the land because there aren't trees around. The river goes from 40 meters wide to 200 meters wide. People live there and get washed out ... On the beach we have farmers (who sell) bananas, corn and yucca. When there are no trees, the crops get washed away."

These less-patrolled areas of Peru are stripped bare of the essential factors by

which they function. In order for change, there needs to be more protection or some sort of refuge.

"It seems all too familiar," said Bronwyn Tucker, sustainability coordinator. "The problem is much of the logging around the world happens in parts of undeveloped countries, where it's not realistic to have constant supervision. Not only is there a lack of supervision ... these rangers are paid so much more to turn a blind eye (rather) than to do the right thing. The temptation is often too much."

The indigenous tribes of the Peruvian Amazon and surrounding regions struggle to gain recognition and protection as their land is maliciously seized.

"We have projects from Europe and

some (Peruvian) government projects about reforestation, but the actions are little," said Parra. "There is much more illegal activity and destruction. The government action only covers around 20 acres. It's nothing."

Nearly 80 percent of Peru's logging exports are shipped to the U.S. in violation of Lacey Act of 1900, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services.

"This industry has dismantled culture, social structures and the complex ecosystem that allows many vital life forms to thrive in the Amazon," said Koes. "Losing plant and animal species, the danger of irregular weather patterns and the dehumanization by loggers who come to remote areas of the jungle demonstrates that this is a human rights issue."



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