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Top 10 Corporate Criminals List



2015 Introduction

Many corporations are complicit in violating human rights and the environment. As the free trade market continues to push forward the global economy, holding corporations accountable for their poor practices becomes difficult. Unfortunately, corporations are working harder than ever to cover abuses instead of preventing them.

This does not have to be the reality. People can use their purchasing power to endorse Fair Trade and pressure companies and boycott those that violate human rights and the environment. In doing so there is potential to pressure these companies to put people ahead of profits.

Global Exchange has compiled a list of five new "most wanted" corporations of 2015 based on issues like unlivable working conditions and pay, violations of human rights, and contaminating the environment, just to name a few. [We also updated five corporations that we've highlighted before](#), as the corporate behavior this year merits repeat attention.

The Top Ten Corporate Criminals list is a guide to learn about what companies like Ralph Lauren, McDonalds, and others you might have heard less about are doing to undermine human rights and the environment so that you can get informed and involved in combating the injustice. The more you know, the less corporations can continue to act unfavorably in the public eye. Share the list with friends, family, and co-workers. Use the 'Who's Working On It' section to network with other non-profit organizations doing work on the issue.

We at Global Exchange encourage you to exercise your right as a global citizen to promote social justice and defend the Earth.

[See our Corporate Criminals alumni.](#)



The List

1. [Alpha Natural Resources](#) for pollution of rivers, streams, and groundwater; violation of the Clean Water Act; destruction of forest and wildlife habitats; and devastation of Appalachian communities. **2015 Update:** Obscuring climate change, revisionism.

2. [Felda Global Ventures](#) Violation of basic worker and human rights, withholding worker pay, wage manipulation, insufficient screening of work

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globalexchange: Significant development!! Game on for Fast Track (aka Trade Promotion Authority or #TPA) under USTR nominee #Froman <http://t.co/Zo4es8AyVD>

withholding worker pay, wage manipulation, insufficient screening of work contractors company is affiliated with, use of toxic pesticides

3. [FIFA](#) for forced evictions from homes and stores, damaging local business, tax evasion, labor abuse, corruption, and violating human rights including: right to adequate housing, right to free movement, right to work, right to protest, and right to labor protection. **2015 Update:** Corruption.

4. [Gap Inc.](#) for refusal to sign "Accord of Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh," refusal to compensate victims' families, workers' rights violations, and unsafe building conditions. **2015 Update:** Failing to sign the Fire Safety Accord

5. [Koch Industries](#) for thwarting public policy; forcing policies on funded politicians, judges, and organizations; working to destroy minimum wage, unions, and social security; re-segregation of public schools; toxic pollution. **2015 Update:** Trying to alter environmentally beneficial public policy.

6. [McDonald's Corporation](#) for limited (and relatively non-transparent) environmental policies; unethical marketing to children; and lack of willingness to reform worker wages.

7. [Nissin Foods Holdings Co., LTD](#) for weakly defined palm oil sourcing practices; compliance in conflict palm oil related human rights and environmental violations; absence of public commitment to protect the environment from unsustainable expansion of palm oil plantations.

8. [The Ralph Lauren Corporation](#) for unsustainable sourcing of raw materials in viscose fibers; deforestation; environmental damage; human rights abuses; lack of consumer transparency; increasing CO2 foot-print; cultural appropriation.

9. [TransCanada](#) for plans to construct Keystone XL Pipeline. **2015 Update:** Not taking no for an answer, moving to LNG.

10. [Vattenfall](#) for destruction of the environment and communities; political manipulation; legal abuse of international treaties.

1. **Alpha Natural Resources**

Chairman & CEO: Kevin S. Crutchfield

Corporate Headquarters:

One Alpha Place

P.O. Box 16429

Bristol, VA 24209

Phone: (276) 619-4410

Abuses: Obscuring climate change data, revisionism

Alpha Natural Resources first appeared on the **2014 Most Wanted list**. This is an update.

Due to sharply falling prices of coal in early 2015, Alpha Natural Resources was forced to file for bankruptcy in August 2015. Its bankruptcy filing revealed that, apart from the morally questionable business practices, the company was also involved in financial transactions with several political groups that favor environmental deregulation in non-renewable energy resource industries such as the Ripon Society, Thomas Jefferson Institute for Public Policy, the Heartland Institute (a think tank aggressively negating climate change) and the American Legislative Exchange Council – ALEC - recently drafted template legislation helping stop states from submitting compliance plans for the Clean Power Plan.

Working On It:

- [Sierra Club](#)

- [The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition](#)
- [West Virginia Highlands Conservancy](#)
- [Coal River Mountain Watch](#)
- [Green America](#)
- [onearth \(Natural Resources Defense Council\)](#)
- [Appalachian Voices](#)



2. Felda Global Ventures

CEO: Mohd Emir Mavani Abdullah

Corporate Headquarters:

Menara Felda, Platinum Park, No. 11,

Persiaran KLCC, 50088

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abuses: Violation of basic worker and human rights, withholding worker pay, wage manipulation, insufficient screening of work contractors company is affiliated with, use of toxic pesticides

Felda Global Ventures Holdings is a semi-autonomous agricultural and agri-commodities corporation founded by the Malaysian government. Felda specializes in the production of oil palm, rubber, soybean, canola oils, oleochemicals and sugar products. Measured by planted acreage, the multinational company is the third largest cultivator of palm oil in the world. Felda controls over 850,000 hectares of land devoted to palm oil plantations, leasing to and managing approximately 500,000 hectares of said amount for Felda smallholders. Felda has been a partner of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil - the RSPO is a certification scheme designed to ensure sound environmental and social business practices in regards to the cultivation of palm oil - since 2004. Presently, just over 300,000 hectares of Felda's plantations are RSPO certified, however the company has set itself a public commitment of certifying all its oil palm plantations by 2017 (so far, it has been on target for this goal). Among the more salient regulations of the RSPO are that all plantation workers must have adequate training, worksite protection and be paid a living wage (which is left to the discretion of local authorities). Felda appears dedicated to maintaining its position as a RSPO member in good standing: in a recent public memo, company CEO Mohammed Emir Mavani reiterated the importance of "[contributing] to the continued development of the [RSPO] standard" for Felda.

However, this claim appears contradictory in the face of [a recent undercover report by the Wall Street Journal](#) that uncovered massive human-rights abuses among foreigners employed at Felda's plantations in Malaysia - some 85% of Felda's work force is made up of foreign workers. Faced with little perspective of work or advancement opportunities at home, as many as 50,000 undocumented workers from developing countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar have entered Malaysia during the past two years to work in the country's booming palm oil industry which is in need of unskilled labour. Many of these workers are smuggled into the country under unsafe and dangerous conditions by human traffickers who frequently disregard or even openly violate their most basic human rights. Unfortunately, the government of Malaysia has made insufficient efforts to control human trafficking across its borders, subjecting it to heavy criticism from the international community: the U.S. State Department, for instance, placed Malaysia at the lowest rank (Tier 3) in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report for 2014. Incidentally, the same institution recently moved the country up to Tier 2 status to meet Trans-Pacific Partnership

the country up to Tier 2 status to meet Trans-Pacific Partnership requirements despite heavy criticism from Congress and humanitarian groups.

Upon arriving in Malaysia, the trafficked workers are given over to contractors who often confiscate their passports as a way of leveraging authority over them, leaving the workers undocumented. According to the report, such workers are then relocated to camps isolated in the rainforest where they are “provided” with shelter (cramped huts) in squalid living conditions. The relative isolation ensures workers are removed from stores or other facilities where they could use any money they potentially make to purchase goods at market prices. Instead, workers must purchase foodstuff and other essential goods from the contractors at their camp who set artificially (and often arbitrary) inflated prices on said goods to put the workers in debt and exercise further control over them. To make matters worse, contractors may withhold wages from workers: one worker interviewed for the report claimed he had not received any pay from his contractors since arriving in Malaysia over half a year ago, despite having worked seven days a week. These injustices are tolerated by the workers for fear of being reported to the police or even physically abused back at the camp by their contractors.

Regardless of such blatant violations of basic labor and human rights, the report found Felda had sourced workers on its plantations from such abhorrent contractors. Although it is unclear whether the workers interviewed for the report were employed at one of Felda’s RSPO-certified plantations, RSPO rules clearly state that member companies cannot have major non-compliances with RSPO’s principles and criteria anywhere in their operations, including on non-certified plantations. In response to these allegations, the company stated that it is working to employ a larger part of its workforce directly.

Indeed, those workers who are directly employed by Felda typically enjoy more entrenched worker rights than their migrant counterparts, such as the Malaysian minimum wage. However, to qualify for these benefits, workers must meet a monthly company quota of working at least 26 days a month. Workers interviewed by the Wall Street Journal complained that their supervisors sometimes refused to give them enough work time to meet the required threshold, thus deliberately depriving them of worker benefits. Assuming the workers’ claims are true, this is a clear violation of Malaysian law that requires plantations provide enough hours for full-time workers to make minimum wage, that is 900 ringgit or about \$240 per month. Some of the workers (a few of these held legal documents) went on record stating that their pay was often below the minimum. Per the report, the Wall Street Journal reviewed a number of recent pay slips bearing Felda’s name that showed monthly payments of only 700 to 800 ringgit (between approximately 170-190 USD) being issued to workers.

Furthermore, Felda doesn’t appear keen on supporting other fundamental worker benefits such as worker’s compensation: several workers (including those directly employed by Felda) said they hadn’t been given compensation when accidents occurred on-site at their plantations. In place of this, the company provided for some medical care, but ultimately left workers to pay for much of the medical expenses incurred, out of pocket. The final and perhaps most gross violation against workers occurring on Felda’s plantations involves the use of the herbicide Paraquat. Paraquat is highly toxic to humans and can damage major organs or even prove fatal to people at certain doses. Moreover, there is mounting evidence that extended exposure to it may contribute to the development of Parkinson’s disease. Consequently, the product is banned across the European Union, Switzerland, and a handful of countries in Africa and Southeast Asian.

In light of these facts, it is particularly unsettling that Felda makes no credible attempt to explain why it resorts to using such a toxic pesticide as part of its plantation operations or why it allows workers to administer it to crops. Instead, the corporation matter-of-factly asserts that it uses Paraquat “under specific conditions where regular herbicide is not able to give effective control.” The human cost of Felda’s unsavoury business practices reveals the company’s use of Paraquat to be savage to workers: a worker issuing a statement for the Wall Street Journal’s report revealed he got protective gear to handle the herbicide but no training and that handling the chemical made his head spin. What’s more is that others working on Felda’s plantations said their contractors didn’t bother to provide them with either gear or training, instructing them instead to buy their own protective gear if they so pleased.

Working On It:

Federasi Serikat Pekerja Minamas, Finnwatch, Firestone Agricultural Workers Union of Liberia, Forest Peoples Programme, General Agriculture and Allied Workers Union of Liberia, Humanity United, HUTAN, Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, International Labor Rights Forum, Land Empowerment Animals People, Link-AR Borneo, MONDIAAL-FNV, Malaysian Palm Oil NGO Coalition, OPPIUK, Oxfam, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific, Rainforest Action Network, Sabah Environmental Protection Association, Sawit Watch, SERBUNDO, Serikat Buruh Medan Independen, Serikat Buruh Mandiri Indonesia, Tenaganita, Trade Union Care Center, Verité, and Walk Free, as well as advisory support from CERES.

3. FIFA

President: Joseph S. Blatter

FIFA Development Office USA:
1800 Purdy Ave
Miami Beach, FL 33139
Phone: (786) 453-2125

Abuses: Corruption

FIFA first appeared on the [2014 Most Wanted list](#). This is an update.

In May 2015 authorities arrested fourteen high-ranked FIFA officials attending the 65th FIFA conference in Zurich, Switzerland for corruption charges. The officials were indicted in connection to an independent investigation conducted by the FBI and IRS’s Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CI) that had been tracking suspicious financial transaction (involving wire fraud, racketeering and money laundering) between continental soccer bodies and sports marketing executives. The corruption charges revolve around the alleged use of bribery, fraud and money laundering in issuing media and marketing rights for FIFA games. Moreover, the investigation alleged that bribery had been used to influence the 2011 FIFA presidential election, the selection process for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa and clothing sponsorship contracts. Among one of those indicted in the scandal was then-FIFA president Joseph ‘Sepp’ Blatter, who was accused of having used FIFA development money, allocated for promoting soccer in developing countries, to secure his election to position of president. In the midst of the fallout from the scandal, Blatter announced his resignation as FIFA chief.

Working On It:

- [Global Exchange](#)
- [Global Campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power](#)

[Global Exchange Top Ten Corporate Criminals List](#)

- [Amnesty International](#)
- [International Labor Rights Forum](#)
- [Public Eye](#)
- [Institute for Policy Studies](#)



4. Gap Inc.

CEO: Arthur Peck

Global Headquarters:

2 Folsom St.

San Francisco, CA 94105

Phone: (650) 952-4400

Abuses: Failing to sign the Fire Safety Accord

GAP, Inc first appeared on the [2014 Most Wanted list](#). This is an update.

Two years after the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh which killed 1,129 and injured some 2,515 workers, many multinational corporations have changed their business practices to reflect a broader commitment to improve labor conditions for workers. For instance, H&M has been inspecting its subcontractors' facilities and offering incentives for better working conditions, while Uniqlo has strengthened longer-term relationships with suppliers and compensated local partners for any lost production. Many of these same companies have also signed onto the Fire Safety Accord that would legally bind the companies to commit to independent monitoring and financing factory conditions for company employees in Bangladesh. However GAP, Inc has still stubbornly refused to alter business policies in Bangladesh or sign the agreement, claiming that such a concession would present a liability and expose the company to potential litigation against it in the United States.

Working On It:

- [Global Exchange](#)
- [International Labor Rights Forum](#)
- [Public Eye](#)
- [SumofUs](#)
- [United Students Against Sweatshops](#)
- [18MillionRising.org](#)
- [GAP Death Traps](#)
- [Not For Sale](#)
- [Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity](#)



5. Koch Industries

Chairman & CEO: Charles Koch

Executive VP: David H. Koch

Headquarters:

4111 E 37th St N

Wichita, KS, 67220

Phone: (316) 828-5500

Abuses: Trying to alter environmentally beneficial public policy

Koch Industries first appeared on the [2014 Most Wanted list](#). This is an update.

In early August, the EPA announced a new set of measures it would launch known as the Clean Energy Plan in an attempt to lower carbon emissions in the US (the plan particularly targeted existing American power plants). Despite being one of the top polluters in the United States, Koch Industries not only failed to attempt to lower their carbon footprint in the past few years, but have been actively funding lobby groups to shoot down this federal initiatives. Specifically, the corporation has invested in the front group Institute for Energy Research in an attempt to put pressure on politicians to abandon supporting the proposed bill: IER president Thomas Pyle, a former Koch Industry lobbyist, is currently aggregating a coalition of governors to defy the Clean Power Plan.

Working On It:

- [Corporate Accountability International](#)
- [International Forum on Globalization](#)
- [Greenpeace](#)
- [Koch Cash](#)
- [Democracy NOW!](#)
- [Institute for Policy Studies](#)
- [Sierra Club](#)

Documentary Resource: [Koch Brothers Exposed: 2014 Edition](#) by [Brave New Films](#)



6. McDonald's Corporation

CEO and President: Steve Easterbrook

Corporate Headquarters:
 McDonald's Corporation
 2111 McDonald's Dr.
 Oak Brook, IL 60523

Abuses: limited (and relatively non-transparent) environmental policies; unethical marketing to children; and lack of willingness to reform worker wages.

McDonald's Corporation is a U.S.-based, multinational corporation operating 35,000 business outlets across 119 countries. The restaurant serves approximately 68 million customers daily and currently employs 1.9 million workers, making it the largest private employer in the world, after Walmart. The global presence the corporation has established via its franchise, affiliate, or corporate-owned restaurants provides it with an incredibly lucrative income stream: according to McDonald's 2012 corporate income statement, the corporation racked in an annual revenue of \$27.5 billion with profits of \$5.5 billion.

McDonald's has taken clear steps over the past few years to move in a more environmentally sustainable direction through such efforts as committing to maximize energy efficiency, using more "green" forms of energy, and committing to more sound sourcing practices of raw goods (such as animal, coffee, and vegetable products). While such trends ought to be celebrated as positive, the regulations guiding these trends often do not adequately address the environmental concerns they are associated with, are impartially applied across business outlets, and lack sufficient transparency to inform the public. Regarding energy use for instance, it is virtually impossible to gauge how effective McDonald's' energy policies have been in regards to lowering their carbon emissions, as the company has refused to publish their

annual carbon footprint. In fact, in its Environmental Protection policy, McDonald's has failed to set a target or any substantive plan to reduce carbon emissions. And while the company has invested in alternative means of meeting its energy needs such as solar panels and biodiesel, it remains unclear what percentage of their total energy use is green or what the total waste footprint from using these forms of energy is.

Another grey area surrounding McDonald's' environmental policies concerns its sourcing practices. Some of the commodities McDonald's sources carry ethically certified labels from such organizations as Rainforest Alliance, Utz Kapeh, and the Marine Stewardship Council. However, the company does not practice ethical sourcing practices across all international markets equally: the Rainforest and UTZ certified coffee mentioned above for instance, is only sourced to markets in Europe and Asia Pacific. In other instances, beneficial policies that are applied to suppliers within the United States and Canada - a salient example concerns McDonald's sourcing of potatoes where farmers must forego the use of pesticides for McDonald's to purchase their goods - are not equal in other markets. Since data for other commodities such as cocoa and chocolate is even less forthcoming, it is impossible to verify how extensive (or limited) McDonald's ethical sourcing policies are. However, the fact that the company has so far failed to report a full effectuation of using certified sustainable sources for other commodities such as beef, palm, oil and soy may be telling.

The second greatest source of controversy surrounding McDonald's relates to the company's use of advertising targeting children. Despite heavy criticism levied against it for engaging in such practices from parents and consumer groups that claim the company manipulates children to engage in unhealthy nutrition decisions by fostering consumer preferences through ads aimed at aggregating brand loyalty, McDonald's has stubbornly refused to reform its marketing policies. The company has typically countered such demands by insisting that the health of children ought to be the responsibility of parents, yet the degree and length of exposure to McDonald's' marketing for the average child make such points largely moot. McDonald's targets children as young as two via web marketing off sophisticated websites such as Ronald.com or McWorld.com that feature up to 100 pages of advergames and virtual worlds. Conventional media airtime is also heavily saturated with ads targeting the child demographic: as early as 2009, the fast food industry spent over \$4.2 billion dollars on advertising, resulting in the daily viewing of 2.8, 3.5, and 4.7 TV ads by the average preschooler, older child, and teen respectively. It is estimated that approximately a quarter of all of the aforementioned TV ads observed originated from McDonald's. The company's pervasive marketing within schools is also worrisome. Regardless of McDonald's' claims that Ronald McDonald's presence at schools is "an example of local franchises helping the community", the company's true motives in doing so are PR-related at best and a particularly perverse way of strengthening brand loyalty at worst.

McDonald's practices a lack of initiative to raise its workers' minimum wage salaries to sufficiently allow them to afford basic living costs such as rent and groceries. According to economists, such "living wages" would amount to approximately \$10.50 per hour and could easily be met by fast food chains like McDonald's by having the company raise daily food prices by only 10 cents or the price of its \$4 Big Mac by 5 cents. Under heavy pressure from striking workers and labor unions, on April 1, 2015 McDonald's announced that it would raise its starting wage to at least 1 more dollar than the local minimum wage. While this certainly demonstrates an important step in the right direction for McDonald's, it still raises starting wages by too little for too few employees to have any substantial effect. Specifically, the announced hike only affects those business outlets that are directly operated by the company - this leaves out all workers employed at its franchises, currently

amounting to 90% of total McDonald's restaurants in the United States. Moreover, the hike would bring the average hourly wage of McDonald's workers from \$9.01 an hour, up to a projected \$9.90 an hour: an amount that, while an improvement, would still be insufficient to allow McDonald's workers to make ends meet.

To make matters worse, McDonald's has invested large amounts of money into funding the National Restaurant Association (which it is a member of) to perfidiously further its interests in keeping workers' wages from rising above minimum wage. The "other" NRA is a powerful lobby group that fronts as a "mom and pop" restaurant industry interest group while fundamentally representing the interests of such large food corporations as McDonald's, Wendy's, and Starbucks. Historically, the NRA has lobbied against laws that would implement menu labeling, soda taxes, trans fat bans, and lowering sodium levels at restaurants.

More recently, the NRA has been preemptively lobbying states from passing local laws that would require employers to grant earned paid sick leave to employees and, more saliently, state-wide regulations that would increase restaurant workers' minimum wage. Unfortunately, the NRA's lobbying efforts have been quite effective both in-state and federally: in 2013, the NRA had stopped 27 out of 29 states from following through with proposed minimum wage increases and it has successfully kept Congress from raising the minimum wage above \$7.25 an hour - coincidentally, the last increase of the minimum wage was in 2007 when it was raised from a paltry \$5.15 an hour (where it had previously remained for a decade). To keep politicians from forcing companies like McDonald's to increase worker wages, the NRA typically argues that wage increases would result in the loss of entry-level restaurant jobs, however for reasons discussed earlier, this issue could be resolved relatively simply. The NRA also works hard to maintain the paradigm of the fast-food industry as one that employs mostly teenagers in their first jobs, thus justifying continued inaction on raising worker wages. However, the reality is that the majority of workers at places like McDonald's are adults with families to support. In fact, salaries at such institutions are so low that the average restaurant employee is three times as likely to live below the poverty line as other workers in the American workforce and uses food stamps at twice the average rate.

Working On It:

[Corporate Accountability International](#)
[Center for Media and Democracy](#)

7. Nissin Foods Holdings Co., Ltd.

CEO and Chairman: Koki Ando

Corporate Headquarters:
 Osaka Head Office 1-1, 4 chome
 Nishinakajima, Yodogawa-ku,
 Osaka 532-8524
 Japan

Abuses: weakly defined palm oil sourcing practices; compliance in conflict palm oil-related human rights and environmental violations; absence of public commitment to protect environment from unsustainable expansion of palm oil plantations

Nissin Foods Holding Co. is a Japanese snack food manufacturing company headquartered in Osaka, Japan and one of the largest producers of instant ramen noodles in the world. The reported annual revenue of Nissin Foods was \$3.7 billion in 2014, with approximately 8% of that amount generated in the United States. The company operates within the sixth largest instant

the United States. The company operates within the sixth largest instant noodle consumption market under California-based subsidiary 'Top Ramen'. This packaged noodle product is estimated to contain up to 20% palm oil.

Due to changes in U.S. food labeling laws for trans-fats, consumption of palm oil-rich products such as Nissin Food's instant noodles has grown nearly six fold over the past decades with rapid expansion expected. Nissin Foods' ongoing lack of commitment towards manufacturing its food products with responsibly sourced palm oil makes it one of the "Snack Food 20", a group of the world's largest companies identified by Rainforest Action Network with links to conflict palm oil.

Unlike more ethically-sourced responsible palm oil, conflict palm oil is produced and cultivated under conditions that may promote the destruction of rainforests and carbon-rich peatlands, violate human rights, fail to respect land rights of indigenous or forest-dependent communities, and utilize forced or even child labor. Perhaps the most striking difference between the two, however, is transparency: responsible palm oil is always produced legally and can be relatively easily traced back through the supply chain to the plantation where it was originally grown. This is seldom the case with conflict palm oil: since the cultivation of palm oil is a relatively lucrative business, palm oil producers have seized opportunities to set up operations in tropical developing countries such as Indonesia where favorable meteorological conditions and relatively little legal accountability allow them to reap profits despite "collateral" damage to the environment.

In order to set up palm oil plantations in such locations, palm oil producers must first clear-cut large swaths of forest, causing deforestation and inflicting massive damage to local ecosystems. The increasing demands for palm oil have resulted in the massive expansion of palm oil plantations in such regions with (unsurprisingly) rapid, concurrent declines of areas covered by rainforests: in Indonesia specifically, the area covered by palm oil plantations grew 600% while lowland rainforests in the area shrunk by 40% since 1990. Such trends threaten to drive already critically endangered species such as the Orangutan and Sumatran tiger to complete extinction. Accordingly, scientists have identified the production of conflict palm oils as "the greatest imminent threat to biodiversity in Southeast Asia". Moreover, the unethical expansion of palm oil affect tens of millions of indigenous people across Indonesia and Malaysia, communities which rely on forests to sustain themselves and meet their needs for food, water, medicine, and timber.

To make matters worse, there have been over 3,000 conflicts registered by rural communities over land-related matters involving attempts by palm oil companies to illegally seize and privatize their land for use in palm oil plantations.

Forced captivity, deprivation of clean drinking water, withholding of workers' wages, physical abuse and other serious human rights violations against foreigners (both adults and children) working on such plantations have also been documented.

Yet the most pressing issue surrounding the conflict palm oil is the destruction of carbon-rich, tropical peatlands. Since palm oil trees cannot grow on the waterlogged soil of peatlands, these lands must first be drained in order to make the land suitable for palm oil plantations. However, this process is extremely detrimental to the environment: in draining the peatlands, ancient peat becomes exposed to the air where it readily oxidizes as carbon emissions, often for decades. In fact, it is estimated that a single hectare of drained peat under palm oil emits over 4,000 tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere over fifty years. At present, the U.S.' and China's heavy reliance on fossil fuels is the primary driver of global greenhouse gas emissions.

However, the unregulated expansion of palm oil plantations has largely driven Indonesia to trail behind the U.S. and China as the third greatest polluter of CO₂ in the world. With approximately 65% of the world's peatlands spread out across Indonesia and some 70 billion tons of carbon stored beneath them, the continued sourcing of conflict palm oil by large corporations like Nissin Foods presents a clear threat to the biosphere and global efforts to curb climate change.

Due to the negative publicity surrounding conflict palm oil, Nissin Foods has publicly pledged to reach "a goal of utilizing 100% usage of sustainable palm oil starting with the USA by end of 2015." Under this pledge, Nissin Foods has further promised to source palm oil from those growers that comply with relevant laws and regulations, use appropriate best practices, respect the human rights of their employees, and commit to environmental preservation.

Although this is a step in the right direction, there are several flaws in Nissin Foods' commitment it must address in order to sufficiently meet the challenges of phasing out conflict palm oil from its products. The most salient of these is to publicly commit to using only responsible palm oil in its products. Nissin Food's present commitment refers to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil's (RSPO) working definition of "sustainable palm oil". This is an important distinction, as certified RSPO-certified palm oil is still considered "sustainable" despite being potentially mixed with non-RSPO certified palm oil. Without explicitly committing to using only responsible palm oil, companies like Nissin Foods can claim to be sourcing palm oil sustainably while (intentionally or inadvertently) using palm oil in their products derived from producers complicit in human rights and environmental abuses. The absence of such a policy also reflects poorly on the company as it clouds transparency of their supply chains for consumers. Nissin Foods' is currently also lacking any commitment towards promoting environmental protection; considering the substantial purchasing power it possesses, the Nissin Foods company could do much more in the way of ensuring that Indonesia's rainforests, ecosystems, peatlands, and workers are better protected.

Working On It:

[Rainforest Action Network](#)

8. The Ralph Lauren Corporation

CEO and Chairman: Ralph Lauren

Corporate Headquarters:

650 Madison Ave C1

New York, NY 10022

(212) 318-7000

Abuses: Unsustainable sourcing of raw materials in viscose fibers; deforestation; environmental damage; human rights abuses; lack of consumer transparency; increasing CO₂ footprint; cultural appropriation.

The Ralph Lauren Corporation is a United States holding company based in New York City, NY. The company sells high-end apparel, accessories, and fragrances throughout the world in over 600 stores internationally. The company's 2014 earnings are listed as \$USD 7,450 million in the 2014 Annual Report. Unfortunately, its success as a producer of luxury goods overshadows the poor track record it has in relation to matters of environmental sustainability, human rights issues, and cultural-intellectual property rights.

The central controversy surrounding Ralph Lauren concerns the impact of its business practices on the environment. Despite taking steps since 2002

its business practices on the environment. Despite taking steps since 2002 to minimize carbon emissions such as investing in sustainable transport options and practicing energy efficient policies in their buildings, information compiled from company reports by consumer watchdog site [Rank a Brand](#) reveals that the Ralph Lauren actually increased its carbon footprint from 70,000 tons of CO₂ in 2013 to 72,000 tons in 2014 (a total increase of 2%). To date, the company has not announced any targets to reduce carbon emissions produced by its own operations or instituted a policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated by other actors involved in the product supply chain.

Another major environmental issue that Ralph Lauren needs to address more sufficiently is the use of hazardous chemicals. In a recent investigative report released by Greenpeace titled *Dirty Laundry: Hung out to Dry*, Ralph Lauren was among many of the firms implicated in leaking a chemical called nonylphenol ethoxylate (NPE), used in clothing manufacturing, into waterways in the Philippines. The use of this chemical is troubling as NPEs readily break down in rivers to form toxic Nonylphenols, a bio-accumulative chemical with hormone-disruptive properties for many organisms. Moreover, the dangers of NPE pollution are not solely limited to water supplies in the direct vicinity of manufacturing plants. When consumers purchase clothing treated with NPEs and subsequently wash these items, harmful NPEs are released in their local waterways. Shockingly, following a test wash conducted as part of Greenpeace's aforementioned investigation, a Ralph Lauren product was found to leak out approximately 94% of the total NPE it contained prior to being washed, into the environment.

In addition, the Ralph Lauren's business policies harm the environment by producing apparel using viscose (also known as rayon). Viscose is a synthetic (human-made) celluloid fiber that is sturdy, easily printed and dyed with bright colors, "breathes" actively and regulates temperature well. This versatility makes it an attractive material for use by textile companies. The problem with using viscose relates to how it is sourced. In order to give viscose its characteristic properties, it must be extracted from regular paper pulp via a complex chemical process involving sulfite - incidentally, one by-product of this procedure is the potentially toxic gas sulfur dioxide (SO₂) - that turns the regular paper pulp into dissolvable paper pulp. Unfortunately, this process is incredibly inefficient: by the time raw trees are processed into dissolvable paper pulp, the relative yield of viscose is only a paltry 30% (ergo approximately 70% of each tree used in the production of viscose is wasted). Due to the low yield of viscose extraction, companies such as Ralph Lauren require a relatively large quantity of pulp to meet market demands and must therefore source resources from unethical pulp producers such as Toba Pulp Lester that typically resort to quick, unsustainable clear-cutting practices in sourcing trees.

Apart from the obvious damage to the environment and local ecosystems caused by deforestation, the sourcing practices to produce viscose also have links to human rights abuses. Specifically, the expansion of large pulp plantations in Indonesia have had disastrous effects on indigenous and farming communities dependent on forests for their livelihood. For instance, there have been over 20 document cases of forcible land seizure and subsequent clear cutting by Ralph Lauren's aforementioned business partner in Northern Sumatra.

Ralph Lauren's business practices have not only infringed on the rights of aboriginal populations in the developing world, but in North America as well. In a recent online ad, Ralph Lauren photoshopped a dress shirt from a clothing line over an historic picture of a Native American man. [The ad drew angry responses](#) from critics who deemed it "reduced their culture to mere marketing props". Although Ralph Lauren issued a public apology and

removed the ad shortly after the scandal, it drew further scrutiny from the community when a sweater was released ornamented with traditional Cowichan tribal art. The event caused another scandal leading many Salish First Nations people to decry the act as an act of intellectual property right violation and cultural appropriation.

Working On It:

[Greenpeace](#)

[Rainforest Action Network](#)

9. TransCanada

Chairman: S. Barry Jackson

CEO: Russell K. Girling

Corporate Headquarters:

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Canada

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Abuses: Not taking no for an answer, moving to LNG

TransCanada first appeared on the [2013 Most Wanted list](#). This is an update.

Although popular opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline has prevented the project from being built, TransCanada continues to aggressively lobby federal and provincial decision makers to realize the erection of the pipeline.

In late spring 2015, the crude oil manufacturer announced that it expected to begin construction later in the year on Canada's first liquefied natural gas (LNG) pipeline worth some \$4.1 billion if given consent from a Petronas-led consortium interested in investing in the project. The announcement spurred a great deal of controversy in British Columbia along whose coast the pipeline is slated to transport LNG. The company's particular timing of said announcement is also in bad taste considering an oil spill from a tanker the city of Vancouver experienced in its port (English Bay) in April 2015. It is also worth noting that, in spite of attempts by TransCanada to promote its pipelines as inherently safe methods of transporting natural gas, the company is facing about a dozen new allegations of safety-code violations from Canada's National Energy Board as of March 2015.

Working on it:

- [Friends of the Earth](#)
- [National Resources Defense Council](#)
- [National Wildlife Federation](#)
- [Indigenous Environmental Network](#)
- [Green Peace Canada](#)
- [Council of Canadians](#)
- [350.org: Tar Sands Action](#)
- Documentary Resources: White Water Black Gold, The Oil Up There

10. Vattenfall

President and CEO: Magnus Hall

Corporate Headquarters:

Evenemangsgatan

13C SE-169 56

Solna Sweden

Abuses: Destruction of environment and communities, political manipulation, legal abuse of international treaties

Vattenfall is completely owned by the Swedish government and, since its founding until the mid-70's, its operations were mostly based in Sweden where it focused on hydroelectric power generation. However, after 1974, the company began delving into nuclear power generation and started constructing nuclear reactors across Sweden. From the 90's onward, Vattenfall rapidly expanded into other European markets - countries featuring larger investments by the corporation include Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Poland and the UK - acquiring stakes in several major European energy production companies. In the process of enlarging its area of operations, Vattenfall simultaneously branched out into other forms of power generation (such as coal-based power) and invested large sums of money in constructing hydro and coal-fired power stations, nuclear reactors, and other hydropower and heat generators across Europe.

Presently, the majority of the energy generated by Vattenfall's plants come from non-renewable and eco-destructive power sources: of the company's current total generating capacity, 45% is coal-powered, 33% is from nuclear plants, 21% is from hydro stations and under 1% is from clean-tech sources such as wind-power or biofuels. In Europe, power plants constitute the largest share of air pollution-related damage, costing the EU between 89.1 and 151.22 billion dollars annually to deal with the issue. Some studies have also estimated that as many as 500,000 deaths a year in Europe may be attributable to air pollution. Unfortunately, Vattenfall is a major contributor to such negative trends: the company owns four of the "dirty thirty" most polluting power stations in Europe.

Furthermore, a large, brown coal power plant the company operates in the German city of Jämschwalde is currently the third greatest polluting power plant in Europe (and second-largest brown coal power plant in operation in Germany). At full load, the 3000 megawatt plant burns approximately 80,000 tons of brown coal a day. Despite efforts to renovate the station and improve its energy efficiency, it has the fifth-lowest ratio of energy efficiency to CO2 emission in Europe. The process by which brown coal (or lignite) is used to generate electrical energy is among the least efficient and most polluting methods of achieving that end. In addition, the extraction of brown coal requires the rocks on which lignite is concentrated to be excavated through strip (or open-pit) mining, a process that can damage ecosystems around it and sometimes forces communities to relocate as mining operations are enlarged.

Vattenfall's heavy reliance on coal-fired power plants is so vast that certain environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace estimate that the company's power plants account for more than twice the greenhouse gas emissions as the rest of Sweden generates overall. In fact, if one adds the total amount of CO2 that is generated by Vattenfall's power plants outside of Sweden to the amount generated within the Scandinavian state, Sweden would be the fourth greatest per-capita emitter of CO2 in the world. Yet, despite the heavy environmental costs inherent to generating electricity through brown coal, companies such as Vattenfall find burning lignite to be a rather lucrative enterprise: post 2008, the price of penalties utility companies had to pay for emitting CO2 in the atmosphere crashed, allowing said companies to realize greater profits. The environmental consequences of Vattenfall's decision to pursue the use of lignite for electricity production have sharply conflicted with Germany's attempts to become a green energy powerhouse where CO2 emissions actually increased in 2012 and 2013 in face a massive drive by the government to cut carbon emissions and phase out nuclear power.

This issue has (among other things) drawn Vattenfall a lot of negative publicity and motivated the German public to call on the government to impose a special "climate fee" on coal-fired power plants.

Vattenfall also previously accumulated negative publicity in Germany in 2009, when it launched a \$1.9 billion investor-state claim against the German government under the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) over alleged permit delays for a coal-fired power plant in Hamburg. After the matter was litigated in German courts, the German government provided Vattenfall with the requested permits notably featuring provisions to protect the Elbe River. Instead of complying with the provisions however, the corporation took the Hamburg government to court again claiming that Hamburg's environmental rules violated Germany's obligation to afford foreign investors "fair and equitable treatment". While the Energy Charter is indeed based on the idea of facilitating mutually beneficial international flows of investment and technology in the energy sector between investors and countries, this claim was dubious as the treaty provides clear provisions for national sovereignty over energy resources (ECT Article 18). Nevertheless, the episode concluded with another settlement being negotiated between Vattenfall and the Hamburg government in 2010, now forcing any regulations to protect the Elbe river to be dropped and the opening of plant operations in Hamburg in 2014.

Incidentally, Vattenfall recently resorted to perfidious tactics to achieve concession from the Hamburg government again when it heavily lobbied the ruling SPD party to maintain ownership of Hamburg's power grid (a move that has drawn the company further public criticism). In another brazen show of force, Vattenfall launched a second investor-state claim against the Germany government in May 2012 demanding the state pay them a reported \$5 billion in taxpayer compensation for claimed losses relating to two Vattenfaal nuclear plants affected by Germany's decision to phase out nuclear power. However, the German government's commitment to abandon the use of nuclear energy by 2022 came in the unpredicted wake of a strong public outcry against nuclear power following the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi power plant disaster. Once again, Vattenfall claimed Germany's policy change violated its obligations to foreign investors under the Energy Charter Treaty.

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