

Protesters Invade Kenmare Mine, Raising Alarm in Mozambique's Extractive Sector

- On Thursday, December 5, protesters stormed the Kenmare mine in Moma, Nampula province, escalating tensions between the mining company and the local communities of Topuito. The protests, initially sparked by unfulfilled promises, quickly escalated to the invasion of Kenmare's headquarters and staff accommodations. The situation became so dire that company executives were evacuated via a private plane. However, demonstrators reached the airstrip, threatening to set the aircraft on fire, which only managed to take off on a second attempt.





This incident has sent shockwaves through Mozambique's business community, particularly within the extractive sector. As Kenmare struggles to maintain its social license to operate, other extractive companies in the country are likely reassessing their community relations strategies to avoid similar crises.



A Crisis of Broken Promises and Community Distrust

Video footage circulating on social media captures the striking moment when protesters forced Kenmare's director to publicly commit to constructing a bridge using the company's resources. This act has become emblematic of the community's deep frustration and loss of trust in

conventional negotiation processes. The demand for such a tangible and immediate commitment underscores how far relations have deteriorated. Despite attempts to foster meaningful dialogue, these unresolved issues have eroded trust between the company and the local population.

A Broader Warning for Mozambique's Extractive Sector

This incident has sent shockwaves through Mozambique's business community, particularly within the extractive sector. As Kenmare struggles to maintain its social license to operate, other extractive companies in the country are likely

reassessing their community relations strategies to avoid similar crises. Such incidents pose significant risks to Mozambique's investment climate, highlighting the urgent need for effective governance.

Kenmare's Predicament: A Symptom of Broader Governance Failures

Kenmare's predicament reflects a deeper governance crisis that extends beyond the immediate community to a national level. The fragile state of public governance in Mozambique, particularly within Nampula province, highlights the failure to address long-standing issues of social accountability, equity, and community engagement. This governance vacuum has not only exacerbated local frustrations but has also created an environment where businesses operating in resource-rich areas face escalating risks tied to unresolved grievances.

At the core of this crisis is the absence of effective mechanisms to mediate between corporate entities and the communities they impact. Promises remain unfulfilled, and compensa-

tion agreements are left in limbo, undermining trust and fostering resentment. When governance structures fail to uphold the rights of citizens and enforce corporate responsibility, tensions inevitably boil over, as evidenced by the recent upheaval in Moma.

This situation also exposes the vulnerabilities of Mozambique's business climate. Extractive companies, such as Kenmare, become easy targets for community anger, even as they grapple with fulfilling their contractual and ethical obligations. The incident serves as a warning to the broader extractive sector: without systemic governance reforms that balance the scales of power and prioritize human rights, businesses will continue to operate in a volatile and unpredictable environment.

Bridging Economic Development and Community Well-Being: A Call to Action

The Kenmare protests underscore the critical need to balance economic development with the well-being of local communities. As tensions escalate due to unfulfilled promises and a lack of inclusive governance, it has become evident that sustainable development in Mozambique's extractive sector cannot be achieved without genuine collaboration among governments, businesses, and civil society. Transparency, accountability, and inclusive dialogue must be at the heart of these efforts to foster trust and ensure long-term stability.

Recognizing this need, the **Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD)** has been actively working on two key fronts to address these challenges:

1. **Business and Human Rights**
2. CDD is advancing initiatives aimed at enhancing community participation and accountability in decision-making processes tied to the extractive sector. By empowering communities to actively engage with businesses and local authorities, these efforts ensure that community voices are heard and that their concerns are integrated into economic development plans. This work emphasizes the importance of respecting human rights as a cornerstone of sustainable development.
3. **Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights**

With the support of the Swiss and UK governments, CDD has played a pivotal role in promoting the **Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPSHR)**. These

principles provide a framework for companies operating in the extractive industry to align their security practices with respect for human rights. Through this initiative, two working groups have been established:

- A **national working group based in Maputo**, focusing on creating policies and frameworks that guide responsible business conduct across Mozambique.
- A **regional working group in Cabo Delgado**, addressing the unique challenges faced by communities in conflict-prone and resource-rich areas.

Both working groups aim to foster accountability, improve security measures, and mitigate human rights risks in business operations. They also create platforms for dialogue, bringing together stakeholders to collaboratively address issues and find sustainable solutions.

The protests in Moma highlight the urgent need to accelerate such efforts. Stakeholders must commit to upholding community rights, delivering on promises, and fostering transparency in all aspects of governance and business operations. Only through these collective actions can Mozambique's extractive sector fulfill its potential to drive sustainable development while safeguarding human dignity and well-being.

CDD remains dedicated to bridging these gaps and advocating for a model of development that places human rights and community interests at its core. By aligning economic goals with the principles of justice and accountability, Mozambique can pave the way for a more inclusive and resilient future.




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