



Forced removal of 4,000 artisanal miners who explore gold in Chifunde could result in conflicts

- Around 4,000 artisanal miners who are part of the Samora Moisés Machel Artisanal Miners Cooperative are being forcibly removed from gold extraction areas in the Chifunde district, Tete province. As reported by Televisão de Moçambique (TVM), the public television channel, the affected artisanal miners were given just 24 hours to vacate the region¹. With no time to react, miners described how authorities arrived with heavy machinery to demolish their homes and clear the area.



¹ <https://bnn.network/breaking-news/mozambique-thousands-of-artisanal-gold-miners-forcably-removed-in-chifunde-tete/>



A The Brazilian mining company Vale, which operated in the region, displaced entire communities to make way for its coal mining operations without due compensation³. Examples of conflicts between communities and mining companies are recurrent in Tete.



The government recognized the legal constitution of the cooperative with more than four thousand members and also confirmed that the company Ouro Mulamuli is the holder of the gold mine concession. However, he emphasized the importance of complying with the rules contained in the mining concession title, calling the parties to the need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. “The company assumed the commitment that, throughout the exercise of its activities, it would integrate that community so that it would be part of the process. This is clear in the license,” said a government representative in statements to TVM. “It is also clear in the charter that, if there are conflicts, they must be analyzed at district, provincial and national level”, he added.²

The removal of artisanal miners in Chifunde reveals the challenges faced by thousands of Mozambicans working in the artisanal mining sector. Without licenses for mining, without the formalization of their activities and without legal protection, artisanal miners become vulnerable to the expropriation of areas where resources occur by large companies linked to the political elite and international financial capital. More than calling for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the Government must address the concerns of the artisanal miners and explore alternative ways to ensure that their livelihoods are safeguarded.

Tete province, where Chifunde district is located, has a long history of human rights violations associated with the extractive sector. The region’s vast mineral wealth, including coal and precious metals like gold, has attracted mining activities over the years. However, exploiting these resources often comes at a high cost for local communities and individuals living near mining sites. The Brazilian mining company Vale, which operated in the region, displaced entire communities to make way for its coal mining operations without due compensation³. Examples of conflicts between communities and mining companies are recurrent in Tete.

Last year, civil society organizations in Tete demanded that the multinational Vale compensate communities affected by its operations. The com-

pany sold the Moatize coal mine to Vulcan, after 20 years of operation. According to a member of the Association for Legal Support and Assistance to Communities (AAAJC), the government was unable to restore the communities’ rights and complained about the lack of hiring local labor. In addition, he denounced cases of torture against the local population committed by the police.

The displacement of communities resulted in the loss of their homes, farmland and livelihoods. Many residents were not adequately compensated for their losses and were left without access to basic services. Displacement had a negative impact on the community and their way of life. In addition, mining operations in Tete caused significant environmental damage, including pollution of water sources and deforestation. These environmental impacts further exacerbate the already dire situation of local communities, who depend on land and natural resources for their livelihoods.

The Chifunde incident serves as a reminder of the need to promote fair and sustainable practices in mining communities. This entails recognizing and safeguarding the rights of artisanal miners, implementing robust regulations and establishing mechanisms for responsible mining practices. Collaboration between government authorities, mining companies and local communities is critical to achieving a balance between economic development and social well-being. Efforts must be intensified to create an enabling environment for artisanal miners and communities.

The responsibility lies with the State, which has a duty to protect its population against human rights abuses perpetrated by companies involved in the extraction of natural resources. Still, the State has failed to fulfill this duty, leaving communities vulnerable to the harmful actions of these companies. Despite the legal establishment of mining cooperatives and supposed commitments to community integration, the rapid removal of these artisanal miners reveals the vulnerability and lack of protection faced by those working in the artisanal mining sector. It also reveals the need for greater responsibility, respect for human rights and sustainable practices in the extractive industry in Mozambique.

² <https://www.tvm.co.mz/index.php/noticias/nacional/item/11175-extracao-de-ouro-de-nsengueredzi-mais-de-4-mil-mineiros-artesanais-retirados-compulsivamente>

³ <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/sociedade-civil-exige-que-a-vale-resolva-pendentes-com-comunidades/a-60516853>



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