



Gold mining company Horizonte Minerais accused of not complying with agreements signed with communities in Manica

- In recent years, the mining industry has faced criticism due to numerous reports of human rights abuses committed by companies operating in various regions. These abuses range from land expropriation, environmental degradation to breaches of contractual commitments. The case of Mining Company Horizonte Minerais is yet another example of these recurrent issues in the mining sector.





It is crucial that the Government demonstrates its commitment to the well-being and rights of its citizens by taking decisive action to address alleged human rights abuses and environmental degradation associated with mining activities, thereby promoting a sustainable and inclusive approach to resource extraction in Mozambique.

The mining company Horizonte Minerais, a mining company owned by Chinese investors that explores gold in Manica Province, is accused of breaching contracts it entered into with the local population of Tchimedza¹. The company would have obtained gold exploration concessions by exploiting land that was traditionally used by local residents for agriculture and grazing.

According to the victims, the contracts involved compensation for the use of their land during the gold extraction process. However, after agreeing to these terms, the local population claims to have been surprised by the later abandonment of the area by the company. Furthermore, the company has failed to restore the soil as promised, and Chinese security guards prevent local residents from gaining access to their land. This resulted in the interruption of their agricultural activities, compounding the risk of food insecurity.

In addition to contractual disputes and land grabbing, Horizonte Minerais is also accused of environmental pollution. The company is accused of being the main polluter of local rivers due to its gold refining practices. Locals claim that during the day the company uses water-holding basins to process the gold. However, during the night these basins are supposedly opened, releasing water contaminated with waste and mercury into local rivers.

One of the affected rivers is the Revué, which plays a vital role in supplying water to the Chicamba dam, which supplies water to the company Água da Região Centro do País (ADRC). The pollution caused by Horizonte Minerais has compromised the quality of the river's water, putting the environment and the health of the local communities dependent on it at risk.

An investigation conducted by "Integrity", a Mozambican online newspaper, revealed that Horizonte Minerais had entered into precarious contracts with local residents². Bento Guirande, one of those affected, said that Chinese investors

had approached him to explore for gold on his land, promising compensation and restoration of the soil as soon as the extraction was completed. However, Guirande alleges that the company has not fulfilled these promises, leaving its land abandoned and inaccessible. Furthermore, he was denied the possibility to continue with his agricultural activities.

The Constitution of Mozambique recognizes citizens' rights to a healthy environment, access to natural resources and participation in decision-making processes that affect their lives. In addition, Mozambique is a signatory to international human rights treaties that emphasize the protection of community rights, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Likewise, the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights affirms that the State has a crucial role in protecting its population against human rights abuses committed by companies that exploit natural resources³. The Government has a crucial role and a legal duty to safeguard the well-being and rights of its citizens, in particular those living in communities affected by mining activities. The Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy, in collaboration with other relevant government agencies, is responsible for overseeing the mining sector and ensuring compliance with national laws and regulations.

In cases where companies are accused of human rights abuses, such as the allegations against Mineradora Horizonte Minerais, the Government has an obligation to investigate the allegations, take appropriate legal action and enforce mining regulations. This includes holding companies accountable for a breach of contract, land grabbing and environmental pollution. In addition, the Government must actively engage with affected communities, promoting frank dialogue and consultations to address their concerns and work to find equitable solutions that respect the rights of all parties involved.

By upholding the rule of law, enforcing regu-

¹ <https://integritymagazine.co.mz/arquivos/13917>

² <https://integritymagazine.co.mz/arquivos/13917>

³ https://site-antigo.socioambiental.org/sites/blog.socioambiental.org/files/nsa/arquivos/conectas_principiosorientadoresuggie_mar20121.pdf

lations and prioritizing the protection of communities, the Government can play a key role in mitigating the negative impacts of mining and ensuring that the industry operates in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. It is crucial that the Government demonstrates its


commitment to the well-being and rights of its citizens by taking decisive action to address alleged human rights abuses and environmental degradation associated with mining activities, thereby promoting a sustainable and inclusive approach to resource extraction in Mozambique.



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