

Papua New Guinea: Barrick Gold Pays Rape Victims Not to Sue the Company

By [MiningWatch Canada](#)

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Barrick Gold is thumbing its nose at a [recommendation by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) calling for an independent review of Barrick's handling of victims of rape by security guards at Barrick's Porgera mine in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Rather, Barrick's remedial programme is reportedly processing rape victims this month and requiring legal waivers in exchange for benefits packages.

In August, MiningWatch Canada received a thirteen-page 'opinion' from the UN High Commissioner in response to letters MiningWatch had written to alert her to the fact that Barrick's handling of rape victims at its mine in PNG is further undermining their rights. Barrick is making indigenous rape victims [sign away their rights](#) to sue the company in return for benefits packages. The compensation packages themselves are not proportional to the magnitude of the injuries the women have suffered.

Following a field visit in March, 2013, MiningWatch and other human rights experts concluded that Barrick's remediation programme does not meet international human rights criteria and that the packages Barrick is offering the women are not 'rights-compatible'. In particular, MiningWatch discovered that the rape victims themselves had not been consulted as to the remedy they might receive from Barrick. The women told MiningWatch that the items they had been offered, such as baby chicks to raise or second hand clothes to sell, did not meet their expectations or needs.

"Women told me that a culturally appropriate remedy would be mature pigs and cash with values considerably higher than those of the items being offered by Barrick," says Catherine Coumans of MiningWatch Canada. "Some women also sought remedies that would address the consequences of their rapes, such as loss of housing due to being ostracized."

The UN High Commissioner is sufficiently concerned to have called for an independent review of Barrick's remediation programme by a party that is considered credible by "key stakeholders." MiningWatch Canada supports this call and has offered to participate in such a review. "Barrick should not process rape victims before submitting the programme to an independent review," says Coumans.

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