

Ten Killed by Police At African Barrick Gold Mining Operations in Tanzania

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Woman panning for gold at North Mara. Photo: Plenty's Paradox. Used under Creative Commons license.

As many as [10 people have been killed by police this year at African Barrick](#) Gold's operations in Tanzania, according to a new report from two NGOs – MiningWatch Canada and Rights and Accountability in Development (RAID) in the UK.

The North Mara gold mine in northern Tanzania is located in an area where some 70,000 Kuria people live in seven villages not far from the Kenyan border. Most of the villagers are very poor and thousands make a living by bribing local police and security officials at the mine to allow them to scavenge for gold flakes in the waste dumps. (The practice of small scale mining has been taking place for years even before [Barrick](#) began mining operations)

The new deaths were revealed almost 18 months after [Leigh Day, a UK law firm, filed a lawsuit against the company on March 28, 2013](#), in the High Court of England and Wales on behalf of the the families of six men who were killed at the mine and a seventh who was left paraplegic. The lawsuit was filed against UK-based African Barrick, which is a subsidiary of [Barrick](#) Gold, a Canadian company.

MiningWatch Canada and RAID say they interviewed over 30 victims and their family members between June and July of this year. "Most of them had been [shot by police or assaulted by the mine's own security guards](#) within the last five years," says Catherine Coumans of MiningWatch Canada.

"We are deeply concerned not only about the clear patterns we discern in the excessive use of force at the mine, but also about the intimidation, persecution, and invasion of privacy suffered by victims and their families in the aftermath of violence by mine security," Patricia Feeney of RAID said in a press statement.

"The [numbers who have been shot and injured on the mine is just extraordinary](#)," Shanta Martin, a partner at Leigh Day, told the Guardian. newspaper. "In 2014 we should be sending the message to all that there is no place to hide if you violate human rights."

Barrick told the Globe and Mail newspaper in Canada that the number of deaths [does "correspond with incidents reported to the mine."](#) The company insists however that they are not sure if the deaths are a result of accidents or infighting among the people searching for gold.

The company says it has begun [\\$15 million worth of community projects to help the villagers](#) and is constructing a three-metre-high (ten-foot-high) concrete wall that stretches 14 kilometers (9 miles) around the mine to keep scavengers out and reduce the violence. [Barrick](#) also says it has provided training to the Tanzanian police on “international standards” of human rights.

However the activists say that despite the claims of helping the community, the company has also tried to sabotage the legal proceedings. “[Out of the blue, our clients were served with legal papers on their doorstep](#),” says Richard Meeran from Leigh Day, who is representing the villagers. ““These papers demanded our clients appear in a Dar es Salaam court, which is over 1200 kilometres and a two-day bus ride away from where they live. This was a pre-emptive legal strike by this very powerful company to try and obtain an unfair advantage over our clients.”

Last December Justice Green, the UK judge, overseeing the case, ordered [Barrick to withdraw the Tanzanian counter suits](#).

Meanwhile the international media attention has galvanized Tanzanian officials to come out against the excesses. Ernest Mangu, Inspector General of Police told the media that “strong disciplinary measures would be taken against any police officers engaging in unethical practices when assigned to guard the mine” while Mathias Chikawe, Tanzanian home affairs minister “declared zero tolerance against unethical police officers.”

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