

THE *'CANADA BRAND'* IN AFRICA

HUMAN RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CONFLICT IN EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents credible allegations of human rights abuse and environmental damage involving Canadian mining, oil, and gas companies that operate in Africa. The cases included in this report:

- involve 23 Canadian companies in 17 African countries;
- date from 1996 to the present; and
- feature companies that range from cash-strapped juniors to large multinationals.

The report describes international standards for corporate conduct, which many of the extractive companies featured in this report claim to respect. The document compares corporations' alleged conduct to these standards. The international standards set out in this report are voluntary, and there is no effective mechanism for their enforcement. For years, international authorities, civil society organizations, and impacted workers and communities have raised concerns about this accountability gap. Repeatedly, these groups have called on the Canadian government to regulate multinational companies and to provide meaningful avenues of redress for those who are harmed by Canadian companies and their affiliates. This report demonstrates the urgent need for such mechanisms. It builds on our 2016 report, *The "Canada Brand": Violence and Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America*, which has been widely cited as a reference for policy analysis.¹

OUR FINDINGS

DISPLACEMENT

- We document 12 cases involving the displacement of local communities to make way for Canadian extractive projects. The scale of the displacements is staggering: according to police, 200,000 people were affected at Sutton Resource's Bulyanhulu mine in Tanzania; nearly 17,000 people at IAMGOLD's Essakane mine in Burkina Faso; 36,700 people at Barrick Mining's Kibali mine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 22,000 households at its North Mara mine in Tanzania; and hundreds of additional families across multiple Zambian mines operated by First Quantum Minerals.
- Displaced populations, among them small-scale miners and subsistence farmers, report losing their livelihoods, land, and food security, with many falling further into poverty.
- We found documentation that verified over 300,000 people being displaced by Canadian extractive companies. The numbers come from police reports, news reports, and company records. But we could not find documentation for the majority of the projects in our report; therefore, the actual number of displacements may be considerably larger.

¹ Imai, Shin and Gardner, Leah and Weinberger, Sarah, *The 'Canada Brand': Violence and Canadian Mining Companies in Latin America* (December 1, 2017). Osgoode Legal Studies Research Paper No. 17/2017, available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2886584> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2886584>.

SILENCING CRITIQUES AND SUPPRESSING INVESTIGATIONS

- Canadian mining companies have benefitted from two problematic techniques that can have the effect of intimidating and silencing critics: Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP suits) and the suppression, criminalization, and censoring of journalists and human rights defenders.
- Barrick Gold sued a small Quebec publishing house when it released a book critical of the company's operations in Tanzania. The judge rebuked the company's aggressive tactics, suggesting that Barrick sought not merely to restore its reputation, but to intimidate its critics. The judge ordered Barrick to pay \$143,000 towards Écosociété's legal expenses because Barrick engaged in "protracted procedural tactics that would financially burden the defendants."
- In Tanzania, in 2024, at a meeting involving senior officials and Barrick Gold's CEO, the Tanzanian government announced a new directive that required NGOs and human rights activists to seek government approval before engaging with populations living near mine sites.

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS

- We document two cases, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan, where Canadian firms provided support to armed forces accused of committing human rights violations against civilian populations.
- In Mali, Barrick Mining Corporation, B2Gold Corporation, and Allied Gold operate mines co-owned by the government. The companies have sustained these operations amid a prolonged armed conflict, two military coups, and compelling allegations of human rights abuse by their partner, the government of Mali.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- Canadian extractive companies are frequently accused of exposing African workers and communities to dangerous pollutants.
- Examples include arsenic trioxide stockpiled near populated areas by Dundee Precious Metals in Namibia; uranium waste improperly stored by Barrick in Zambia; and years of toxic leakage into a river used for human and animal consumption from Barrick's North Mara mine in Tanzania. The Zambian auditor general reported that emissions from the Mufulira smelter exceeded legal limits by as much as 850 times while co-owned by First Quantum Minerals.

SECURITY AND VIOLENCE: THE NORTH MARA MINE

- Corporate activity can lead to violent conflict. At the North Mara mine in Tanzania, owned by Barrick Mining, security forces have allegedly killed almost 100 people and injured many more. According to a recent study, North Mara is one of the deadliest mines on the continent. Company lawyers have described the mine site as an “armed encampment.”
- African Barrick Gold acknowledged that its security forces at the mine raped 14 women and provided them with compensation.

WORKERS: CONSCRIPTION, CONFLICT AND DEADLY ACCIDENTS

- We document alleged violations of worker rights at Canadian mines, including the use of forced labour, fatal accidents due to foreseeable and inadequately addressed hazards, and the failure to respect collective bargaining.
- The Bisha mine was a joint venture involving Nevsun Resources and the notoriously repressive government of Eritrea. The project was allegedly constructed using forced labour. In 2014, former mine workers began class proceedings against Nevsun in British Columbia. The parties settled out-of-court in 2020.

CORRUPTION

- Canadian extractive companies are accused of serious acts of corruption, including bribing government officials, committing securities fraud, and offering employment to silence critics in Africa.
- Although Canada has legislation that makes the bribery of foreign public officials a criminal offence, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development describes its enforcement as “exceedingly low.” For example, Kinross Gold was fined US\$950,000 by the US Securities and Exchange Commission in 2018 for violating bribery laws, but Export Development Canada provided the company with up to \$850 million in loans from 2012 to 2019.

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ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY: CANADIAN SUPPORT TO EXTRACTIVE COMPANIES

- The Canadian government uses foreign policy, development assistance, diplomatic resources, and public financing to promote and defend the Canadian extractive sector in Africa, with apparent disregard for allegations of human rights violations or illegal conduct.
- Canadian embassy officials aggressively lobbied the Tanzanian government to secure the removal of hundreds of thousands of people from a mining concession owned by a Canadian company. No compensation or other supports were provided to those who were displaced.
- Kinross Gold was fined US\$950,000 by the US Securities and Exchange Commission in 2018 for violating bribery laws, but Export Development Canada, a Crown corporation, provided the company with up to \$850 million in loans from 2012 to 2019.