



Those who have been harmed by Canadian mining, oil and gas operations abroad should be able to seek justice in Canada.

Phone or visit your MP and demand that Canada be Open for Justice.

IT'S TIME FOR CANADA TO BE OPEN FOR JUSTICE.
www.amnesty.ca/open-for-justice

If your family member was injured, your child got sick, you were kicked off your land or your water was poisoned, wouldn't you expect that there would be somewhere you could go to seek redress against the company who you believed was responsible? Wouldn't you expect that an independent, impartial figure would hear you out and help to make things right?

Unfortunately, many people who have suffered this kind of harm have discovered that when it comes to Canadian mining, oil and gas companies operating overseas, there is nowhere to go to seek justice: not in one's own country, not in international arenas, and not in Canada.

For example, in 2011 workers at Excellon Resources' La Platosa mine in Mexico brought a complaint to Canada's CSR Counsellor's Office because they had been unable to get the company to listen to their concerns about training, unsafe working conditions, a lack of long-term community benefits from mining, incidents of violence and intimidation inside the mine, and retaliation against workers wanting to establish a democratic union. The Counsellor determined that their request "was a good faith, bona fide request ... to discuss a wide range of concerns and issues... [and]... met all of the criteria for consideration under the Office's mandate."¹ However, when the Federal Government created the CSR Counsellor's Office in 2009, it didn't give the office any real powers. No matter how credible a claim is, the CSR Counsellor's Office can not undertake a review unless the company agrees to it. Excellon Resources refused to participate and that simply ended the process.

The Result: Communities and workers have been shown that they cannot access justice and remedy in Canada.

We need a mandatory extractive-sector Ombudsperson in Canada with the power to independently investigate complaints and make recommendations to both companies and the Government of Canada.

Another powerful example is the struggle for justice by villagers from Kilwa, Democratic Republic of Congo, who attribute harm they suffered to the international operations of Anvil Mining. In October 2004, approximately 73 civilians were massacred by Congolese armed forces during an attack on their village. The company admitted to providing logistical support to the Armed Forces prior to and during these attacks.² A highly criticized Congolese military court trial did not bring justice for the victims.³ In 2010, the Canadian Association against Impunity launched a class action lawsuit in Quebec against Anvil Mining for these abuses. The Quebec Court of Appeal determined that Quebec lacked jurisdiction to hear the case.⁴

Canada currently is not a place where justice will be done. We need legislation giving access to Canadian courts to people who have been seriously harmed by the international operations of Canadian companies.

* Photo credit: Development and Peace

¹ CSR Counsellor's report available at: http://www.international.gc.ca/csr_counsellor-conseiller_rse/assets/pdfs/Closing_report_MEX.pdf

² For more on this see: http://raid-uk.org/docs/Kilwa_Trial/MONUC_report_oct05_eng_translated_by_RAID.pdf

³ Louise Arbour, then HR Commissioner, was one commentator who questioned the legitimacy of the proceedings.

⁴ <http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/9828B052BBC32B08C125730E004019C4?opendocument>

¹ In November 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada dismissed an application for leave to appeal that decision





A CANADIAN PROBLEM REQUIRING ACTION IN CANADA

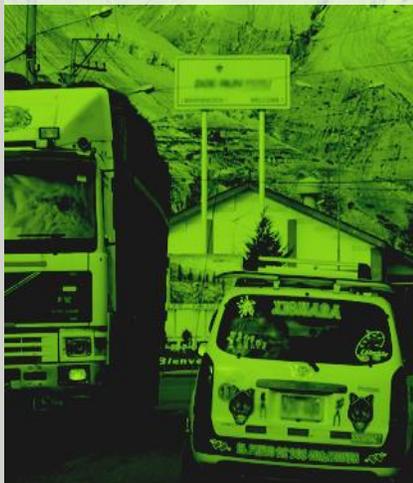
The fact is, most mining, oil and gas companies in the world are, at least in some way, Canadian: they're registered here, they're listed on our stock exchanges, they have headquarters here, many receive considerable support from the Canadian government. The TSX and TSX Venture, for example, have more energy and mining companies listed than any other global exchange, representing 58% of the world's public mining companies and 35% of the world's public oil and gas companies. Canada has a huge stake in this issue and a corresponding responsibility to ensure that Canadian companies act in a way that respects human rights and the environment.



WHAT IS CAUSING THIS PROBLEM?

Human rights, labour rights and the environment are not being protected by the international system that currently governs resource extraction. This system is based entirely on voluntary guidelines and codes of corporate conduct. In other words, it does not provide any clear consequences if a company fails to respect international standards. It is a system that allows companies to choose what, if any, guidelines they will follow. It is a system that history has shown us does not work.

Those who have been harmed by the operations of Canadian extractive operations overseas need to be able to defend their rights, and protect their livelihoods and ecosystems. When their rights are not respected, they need to have somewhere to go to seek recourse. Currently, given the international accountability gap that exists with respect to multinational mining, oil and gas companies, many people who are harmed simply have nowhere to go.



While offering considerable support to Canadian extractive companies, the Canadian government has not legislated measures to ensure corporations respect human rights. Over the past decade, the government has repeatedly heard expert testimony about the negative impacts of unregulated Canadian extractive operations overseas.⁵ On more than one occasion, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination has informed Canada that its inaction amounts to a violation of Canada's international human rights commitments.⁶ The international community, in supporting the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, has made it clear that corporations must respect all human rights and that home states have an important role to play.⁷



WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ARE CALLING ON CANADIANS TO TAKE ACTION

The Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability is a network of human rights activists, environmentalists, union members and people of faith from across Canada who are advocating for federal legislation to establish mandatory corporate accountability standards for Canadian extractive companies operating abroad, especially in developing countries. Formed in 2005, our network seeks to ensure that the fundamental rights of all peoples are respected by Canadian mining and oil and gas corporations, no matter where they operate. Many of our member organizations have been working on the issue of corporate accountability for decades and have longstanding relationships with communities, workers, indigenous peoples, environmental and human rights defenders from around the world.

* Photo credits: Development and Peace

⁵ For example, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development's 2005 hearings on *Mining in Developing Countries* and 2011 hearings on the role of the private sector in development as well as the 2006 *National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries*.

⁶ See, for example, the Concluding Observations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination of May 25, 2007, CERD/C/CAN/CO/18, at para 17 and of March 9, 2012, CERD/C/CAN/CO/19-20, at para 14.

⁷ For more on this see the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre at <http://www.business-humanrights.org/SpecialRepPortal/Home>.



THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP IS CAUSED BY THREE MAIN FACTORS:

1. Barriers to justice in “host countries”

In many cases, in the country where the mining, oil or gas company is operating (so-called “host country”) there is very weak regulation of extractive activities. Where regulations exist, there is often a lack of enforcement. Canada has played a role in weakening mining codes in several countries.⁸ Legal barriers, cost and corruption also make it difficult for those who suffer corporate abuse to seek justice in host countries.

2. Barriers to justice in international arenas

With few exceptions, those who suffer corporate abuse are unable to access recourse in international courts or tribunals. Mechanisms that exist at the international level, for example through the United Nations, are primarily voluntary or primarily aimed at nation states, not corporations – in other words there are not real, enforceable consequences for a company’s failure to comply with standards.

3. Barriers to justice in “home countries”, like Canada

Existing mechanisms in Canada to address overseas extractive-sector corporate abuse don’t work because they are either inaccessible or ineffective.

WHAT MECHANISMS EXIST IN CANADA AND WHY AREN’T THEY ENOUGH?

Toothless Offices: the CSR Counsellor’s Office and NCP

Two out-of-court mechanisms exist in Canada: the Office of the Extractive-Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor and the National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises (NCP). Both of these mechanisms are so weak that they don’t offer an effective remedy to victims.⁹

Review by the CSR Counsellor’s Office is not guaranteed: a company needs to agree to be the subject of a review. You can probably guess what has happened so far: in 2 of the 3 cases¹⁰ brought to the CSR Counsellor’s Office, the company has simply walked away and that has ended the process. Even if a complaint were to go through a full review process, the Office’s mandate is so weak as to be ineffective: the mandate does not include making determinations of fact, determining if harm has been caused or guidelines breached, and the Counsellor cannot make recommendations for remedy or sanction. **We need a real extractive-sector Ombudsperson in Canada.**

Canada’s NCP is also not a full answer. Central flaws with the Canadian NCP are that it is not mandated to carry out independent fact finding and does not make public determinations about whether the OECD Guidelines have been breached. Its guiding principles are voluntary in nature. Its processes are kept secret until the very end of the process. As it is housed within government, its independence is questionable. It does not have the power to recommend sanction or reparation.

Canadian courts aren’t accessible

When people have attempted to sue Canadian mining companies in Canadian courts for harm they believe to have been caused by these companies overseas, Canadian courts have generally been unwilling to hear these cases. In fact, in virtually all cases to date, Canadian courts have decided that a Canadian court is not the most appropriate place to hear these claims.¹¹ In other words, no determination has been made about whether there is merit to the claim being filed, but only a decision that it would be more appropriate for the case to be heard in a court outside of Canada.¹² There is frequently no reasonable possibility that a plaintiff would be able to receive a fair trial in the judicial system of their own country.

⁸ For more on this, Elizabeth Blackwood, Veronika Stewart (2012) “CIDA and the Mining Sector: Extractive Industries as an Overseas Development Strategy” in Stephen Brown Ed. *Struggling for Effectiveness: CIDA and Canadian Foreign Aid*, (Ed.) McGill-Queen’s University Press, 217-245.

⁹ For a more detailed examination of why these offices aren’t strong enough, see CNCA Briefing note, available at: <http://cnca-rcrce.ca/wp-content/uploads/Access-to-Remedy-Canada-needs-an-ombudsperson-CNCA.pdf>

¹⁰ Note: at the time of writing we are aware that 3 new cases have been brought to the CSR Counsellor’s office. When there are developments in those cases we will update our online materials.

¹¹ Three precedent-setting cases will be proceeding to trial in Ontario’s Superior Court of Justice. In those cases, however, Hudbay Minerals Inc. withdrew its arguments that Ontario was an inappropriate forum in which to hear the claim. This means that while the cases were not prevented from proceeding to trial on the issue of jurisdiction, they do not set a precedent on the issue of jurisdiction and future plaintiffs may face barriers to accessing our courts. For more on this see www.chocversushudbay.com.

¹² For more on this, see CNCA Briefing Note *Access to justice*, available at <http://cnca-rcrce.ca/wp-content/uploads/Access-to-Justice-Allowing-Canadian-courts-to-hear-cases-of-overseas-corporate-wrongdoing-CNCA.pdf>.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

Those harmed by the activities of Canadian mining, oil and gas companies should have recourse to justice here in Canada.

We need both:

1. Legislated access to Canadian courts for people who have been seriously harmed by the international operations of Canadian companies. There have been very few court cases in Canada concerning Canadian companies and overseas human rights abuse, despite a growing number of allegations. Canadian courts have been reluctant to hear cases brought forward by foreign plaintiffs, effectively denying them access to justice in Canada. Federal legislation should be adopted in Canada that allows non-Canadians who are affected by the overseas operations of extractive companies to bring civil lawsuits before Canadian courts. The statute should clarify that Canadian courts are an appropriate forum to hear claims against extractive companies that are registered in Canada; and
2. An extractive-sector Ombudsperson in Canada. This mechanism needs to have the power to receive complaints, undertake independent investigations to determine if a company has acted inappropriately and, if so, to make recommendations to the company and to the Canadian government in order to remedy the situation. The Ombudsperson should make its findings public and should be able to recommend the suspension or cessation of political, financial and diplomatic support by the Government of Canada. Unlike the CSR Counsellor's Office, the Ombudsperson needs to be mandated to perform these functions irrespective of a company's willingness to participate.

MORE INFORMATION

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