

As yet another Canadian mining giant faces human rights lawsuit, advocates call on Ottawa to act

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Canadian social justice groups are urging Ottawa to fulfill a pledge to crack down on human rights abuse involving Canadian multinationals after legal action was filed today against Barrick Gold in an Ontario court.

Twenty-one Tanzanian nationals, who are members of the Indigenous Kuria community, are suing the Toronto-based mining giant over claims of police violence at the North Mara mine in northern Tanzania. The case concerns allegations of brutal killings, shooting and torture committed by police contracted to guard the mine.

This is the seventh human rights case to be [filed by foreign plaintiffs](#) against a mining company in Canada since 2010.

“We stand in solidarity with these plaintiffs and will be closely following the case. At the same time, we’re asking Ottawa to step up and pass a law to prevent abuses from happening in the first place,” says Emily Dwyer, policy director of the [Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability](#). “This is what UN human rights experts, legal scholars, rights-holders around the globe, and the dozens of civil society groups within our network are calling for.”

The government [pledged](#) in 2021 to adopt legislation to “ensure Canadian businesses that operate abroad are not contributing to human rights abuses.”

“For years, we have [documented](#) security-related human rights abuses at the North Mara mine. Over and over again, people are seeking justice for alleged violence by police or security personnel at Canadian-owned mines,” says Catherine Coumans, research coordinator at [MiningWatch Canada](#). “It’s high time for the government to do something about these abuses, and either adopt a mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence law or support the one already tabled in Parliament.”

In March an opposition MP tabled [Bill C-262](#), which would require companies to undertake effective due diligence to avoid causing or contributing to human rights violations abroad. Firms that fail to comply could be held liable.

“People have had to fight for years just to convince Canadian courts to hear these cases,” says Karen Hamilton, director of [Above Ground](#). “A mandatory due diligence law would remove critical roadblocks by imposing a statutory duty on firms like Barrick Gold to protect people from harm at their facilities abroad.”

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The Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA) is a cross-country, non-partisan network of 40 organizations advocating for stronger accountability for Canadian businesses working abroad. In 2021 the CNCA published model legislation for mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence. The network is advancing the call for such legislation through its “Human Rights and Accountability: Non-negotiable” [campaign](#).

MiningWatch Canada has been raising concerns about Barrick Gold’s North Mara mine since 2014. See their related publications [here](#).

Above Ground works to ensure that companies based in Canada or supported by the Canadian state respect human rights and the environment worldwide. It is a project of [MakeWay](#).