

Tanzanians sue Barrick Gold in Canada over alleged mine shootings by police

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A group of 21 Tanzanian nationals on Wednesday, 23 November filed a lawsuit in Canada alleging the world's second-biggest gold miner, Barrick Gold, was complicit in extrajudicial killings by police guarding its North Mara mine.



A small toy figure and gold imitation are seen in front of the Barrick logo. Source: Reuters/Dado Ruvic

The plaintiffs in the claim, filed at the Superior Court of Justice in Ontario, include relatives of five men killed by Tanzanian police assigned to the mine, according to the filing. Nine of the plaintiffs were themselves beaten or shot by the police, according to the filing.

A Barrick Gold spokesperson said the company received the Statement of Claim earlier on Wednesday.

"It is riddled with inaccuracies," they wrote in a response to Reuters questions. "We intend to vigorously defend against these allegations in the appropriate forum."

The Barrick spokesperson said the lawsuit "attempts to advance claims against Barrick Gold Corporation in Ontario based on alleged actions of the Tanzanian police, even though Barrick exercises no control or direction of any nature over the Tanzanian police".

North Mara, in northwest Tanzania around 30km from the border with Kenya, produced 260,000 ounces of gold last year.

The claim states that residents routinely enter North Mara's "waste rock areas" to retrieve rocks with trace amounts of gold which they process and sell. The lawsuit alleges that police at the mine have responded violently to people entering the mine.



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'Effective and practical control' over police

The lawsuit claims that Barrick "has had effective and practical control" over Tanzanian police stationed at the mine, and that the company's security agreements with the police effectively make them the mine's "private and heavily armed security force".

The police commander for the Tarime-Rorya district where North Mara is located did not immediately respond to a Reuters text or calls.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

With additional reporting by Nuzulack Dausen in Dar es Salaam.

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