



Centre for Research and Development
 1 St Helens Drive Mutare
 Tel: 0202065411
 Email: crdzim@gmail.com

The Provincial Mining Director
 Ministry of Mines and Mining Development
 7th Floor
 Fidelity Life Centre
 Mutare
 Zimbabwe

29 October 2021

Dear Sir

Office of the President & Cabinet
 Min. of State for Provincial Affairs
 03 NOV 2021
 Manicaland Province
 Zimbabwe

PROVINCIAL MINING DIRECTOR
 MANICALAND
 RECORDS & INFOR. SECTION
 03 NOV 2021
 15:15
 P.O. BOX 850, MUTARE
 ZIM. TEL: 020-62859/1

03 NOV 2021
 P.O. BOX 188, MUTARE
 ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe National Water
 CATCHMENT MANA
 08 NOV 21
 SAVE CATCHME
 T PARK ROA
 P.O. BOX 210, ML
 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY
 REGISTRY
 MANICALAND PROVINCE
 - 3 NOV 2021
 P.O. BOX 595, MUTARE, ZIMBABWE
 TEL: (020) 62529/65010

RE: Illegal hammers mills and cyanidation around Penhalonga

We the undersigned are residents of Penhalonga and representatives of Community based organisations(CBOs) and Civil Society Organisations(CSOs) advancing Environmental Social and Economic rights of Penhalonga and surrounding communities.

We raise concern on the establishment of illegal gold hammer mills(HMs) and cyanidation sites along river streams flowing along residential areas of Penhalonga and surrounding farming communities. We recently observed that a total of 129 hammer mills and 6 cyanidation sites were illegally processing gold at 6 different locations in the mentioned communities in violation of S.1 258 of 2018 Environmental Management (Control of Alluvial Mining) (Amendment) Regulations which prohibit processing plants, washing plants, ore stockpiles, slime dams or settling ponds to be constructed within 500 metres from the river bank or the highest flood line of any water course. The law also prohibits the lining of slime dams and settling plants without an approved EIA. In Toronto, a farming community opposite Hillcrest College, 6 HMs were illegally processing gold ore along a tributary stream that flows into Mutare River.

After Imbeza turn off we also sighted 24 HMs processing gold ore along Imbeza river. In this area 4 cyanidation sites were operating with 1 cyanidation site under construction. At one of the unfenced cyanidation site we observed mud from cyanidation tailings flowing into Imbeza River.

We were disheartened to learn from the workers at the site that inspectors from the Environmental Management Agency(EMA) regularly had visited the site but without taking corrective measures as required by law. Statutory Instrument (S.1)268 of 2018 Environmental Management (Control of Hazardous Substances) Regulations prohibit the use of any hazardous substance in a manner which would present a direct hazard to the public and the environment. The Mining (Management and Safety) Regulations S.1 109 of 1990 compels every mine to keep so fenced and enclosed any water containing cyanide or other poisonous chemicals used in the treatment of minerals and tailings. The law also compels miners to put in place notice boards warning persons against using such water. At Sithole farm next to Tsvingwe Secondary School, 14 HMs were illegally processing gold ore along Tsambe river. Another milling site with 16 HMs was also running along Tsambe River less than 500 metres from Tsvingwe medium density residential area. Down the hill of St Augustine High School, we counted 5 sites with 28 HMs that have been established along both sides of a tributary stream that

flows into Tsame river. At one of the milling sites, cyanidation of gold was taking place. In Fairview farming community we observed a site with 10 HMs and 1 cyanidation works.

During this exercise we established that the illegal millers were processing gold ore using mercury, cyanide and other toxic chemicals. We noticed that the milling sites were unprotected, exposing people and livestock to toxic chemicals. Our closer look at the milling sites showed toxic waste from makeshift ponds flowing into water streams. More so, contaminated soils around the milling plants were also transmitting toxins to the environment through soil erosion. We also observed that deadly chemicals from cyanidation tanks were also being released to the environment through vaporisation. We came to the conclusion that these illegal milling processes were contaminating the environment through water and air pollution exposing thousands of Tsvingwe residents and downstream communities to deadly toxins. Penhalonga is surrounded by farming communities hence the presence of livestock grazing around the mining areas. Accumulation of toxic metals in livestock is a threat to food security and public health. Mercury and cyanide have long term toxic effects on the nervous, digestive and immune systems on human lives. Section 73 of the constitution of Zimbabwe protects citizens from an environment that is not harmful to their health and wellbeing. The section also compels the state to take measures to prevent pollution, secure ecological sustainability and use of natural resources to promote economic and social development of citizens. It is our firm belief that government through its ministries including the Ministry of Mines which your office falls under, upholds these constitutional obligations and constitutional founding values of transparency, justice, accountability and responsiveness.

We also observed tonnes of gold ore from Redwing mine being offloaded from small trucks and private vehicles at all the illegal milling sites. Hordes of artisanal miners could also be seen walking from Redwing Mine ferrying sacks of gold ore to nearby milling sites. Some of the millers confided with us that on a daily basis they receive an average of 20 groups of artisanal miners with gold ore from Redwing mine. We also concluded that the illegal gold processing operations relied on gold ore being looted from Redwing mine as there were only 2 sites running mining operations out of a total of 136 illegal gold processing structures. We also discovered that it was almost impossible for the state to account for the gold produced at these illegal mills because it was not being recorded. We observed that upon processing the gold was whisked away by illegal miners to a readily available black market operating around Penhalonga and City of Mutare. Reliable information that we received indicated that a well organised network of gold buyers were mopping all the gold coming through these illegal processing mills. On 29 October 2021 we came across a support police patrolling unit of about 9 police officers from Old Mutare police base popularly known as (paMawoyo) at Sithole farm. We observed the unit moving from one illegal milling site to the other engaging one or two workers in the process. We observed that there were no arrests made. When we asked workers at the mill on the purpose of the police visit, one lady replied that in order to avoid arrests, each illegal mill paid the officers up to US\$10 every Tuesday and Thursday when they patrolled the area.

The illegal milling activities taking place in Penhalonga and surrounding communities are not only violating human rights but have become a breeding ground for conflict, tax evasion and money laundering. Reluctance by your Ministry and other relevant government agencies like EMA and the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to combat these criminal activities limit Zimbabwe's chances of readmission to the London Bullion Market (LBM) and optimise its earnings from gold. Zimbabwe is losing approximately US\$ 1.5 billion annually through gold smuggling to international destinations like Dubai. Revenues obtained from smuggling is lining the pockets of individuals at the expense of citizens' rights to economic development from exploitation of their minerals.

The mandate of the Ministry of Mines is to ensure that proper mining methods are followed. It is our firm belief that you are aware of the existence of these illegal gold processing plants in Penhalonga and surrounding communities. It is undeniable that their operations are illegal because they do not have certificate of registration/mining licences and approved siting of work plan (SOWPs) from your Ministry. As residents and representatives of affected communities we are appalled by your Ministry's dereliction of duty which is a violation of the constitution. We hereby demand;

- that your ministry and relevant government agencies such as EMA, ZRP, RBZ, Fidelity Printers and Refinery and ZINWA immediately clamp down on illegal gold processing operations that are endangering the environment and human lives in Penhalonga and surrounding communities.

- We demand application of the Environmental Management Act by EMA and other Statutory Instruments regulating the environment such as S.I 258 of 2018 on alluvial mining, S.I 268 of 2018 on control of hazardous substances to hold perpetrators of environmental crimes accountable for pollution and rehabilitation.
- We demand the ministry of mines to apply the law as directed by the Mines and Minerals Act and subsequent regulations on Mining (Management and Safety), Mining (Health and Sanitation), Mines and Minerals (Custom and Milling Plants), Minerals and Mining(Explosives) and the Gold Trade Act to stop illegal gold mining, curb revenue losses through tax evasion, mineral leakages and smuggling.
- We demand that ZRP uphold the constitution and enforce the law against illegal mining activities in Penhalonga and surrounding communities without fear or favour. The ZRP must effectively collaborate with citizens' groups to combat all forms of crime including money laundering in gold mining in Penhalonga and Manicaland Province.
- We demand that government walk the talk on name droppers to allow government agencies to function without political interference and victimisation.

Yours Sincerely

Centre for Research and Development

Penhalonga Youth Development Trust

Penhalonga Residents and Ratepayers Trust

Cc: Provincial Manager, Environmental Management Agency, Mr Kingstone Chitotombe

Cc: Zimbabwe National Water Authority, Save Catchment Manager, Engineer Tendai Muyambo

Cc: Mutasa Rural District Council, Mr Bandure

Cc: Officer Commanding Manicaland Province, Commissioner P Makotose

Cc: Provincial Development Coordinator, Manicaland Province, Mr Seenza

Cc: Minister of Provincial Affairs and Devolution, Manicaland Province, Hon. N. Matsikinyire

Cc: Fidelity Printers and Refiners

Cc: Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor; John Panonetsa Mangudya

Cc: Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Prof Mthuli Ncube

Cc: Minister of Mines and Mining Development, on Winston Chitando

Cc: Commissioner General of Police, T.G.Matanga



A



B



C

Looted gold ore from Redwing mine and toxic waste from gold processing mill flowing into a tributary river near Hillcrest group of Schools in Toronto



D



E



F

One of the illegal and unprotected cyanidation site near Imbeza river in Penhalonga