

Questioning BHP Billiton's Record on Human Rights, Transparency & Ecological Justice

Today Friends of the Earth, in collaboration with communities and organisations across the world, have launched an Alternative Annual Report on BHP Billiton called *Other Sides to the Story: Threatening Lives, the Environment and People's Future*.

Natalie Lowrey, National Liaison Officer, Friends of the Earth Australia said, "The report examines a number of BHP Billiton's operations around the world from Australia, Colombia, Mozambique, Western Sahara, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Borneo and Cambodia, highlighting the disparity between BHP Billiton's 'Sustainability Framework' and the reality of its operations on the ground."

BHP Billiton still does not officially accept the principles of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) enshrined in the in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, namely that consent should be given free of coercion or manipulation, before the commencement of any activities, and with full disclosure of information that is understandable and accessible to communities.

"To date, BHP Billiton has merely noted that there are "a wide diversity of views" on FPIC", said Dr. Jim Green, Nuclear Free campaigner, Friends of the Earth Australia.

"Not only do we see Indigenous Rights ignored at BHP Billiton's operations in the Philippines and Cambodia we are also seeing them ignored here in Australia. BHP Billiton enjoys legal privileges exempting the Olympic Dam mine from the South Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act as well as environmental legislation."

"The company refuses to relinquish these indefensible legal privileges."

"It is no small irony that BHP Billiton has donated over \$2 million to an organisation called Reconciliation Australia, yet refuses to relinquish the indefensible exemptions it enjoys over the Aboriginal Heritage Act."

"This is a classic case of 'do as I say, not as I do'."

In Mozambique civil society groups are challenging a six-month authorisation allowing BHP Billiton's Mozal aluminium smelter to emit potentially dangerous fumes into the air without treating them first. Close to one million people live within 2 kilometres of the smelter, many are angered by BHP Billiton's double standards and inadequate public consultation.

Vanessa Cabanelas, Justica Ambiental - Friends of the Earth Mozambique said, "BHP Billiton's study on the dispersion and deposition of fumes and gas at it's Mozal aluminium smelter is complete rubbish, it cannot even be referred to as a study as it violates the most basic concept of what a scientific study should contain; it does not have any information on authors, dates and methodology or where, when and how the data was gathered. We find it impossible to have faith in such a document."

In the year 2009-2010 BHP Billiton has continued its involvement in many controversial mines. Community members documented in many of the case studies in the Report have seen BHP Billiton's responsibility as sufficiently serious to launch court actions or undertake other activities to raise their concerns at local, national and international levels.

"The people standing up and contesting the treatment of their communities and lands are incredibly brave", said Ms Lowrey.

"Many are also scared, but there is a clear message in their resistance: profiting from injustice and destruction is not a legitimate business."

Actions are taking place at BHP Billiton's offices in Sydney and Melbourne and outside BHP Billiton's Annual General Meeting in Perth in Australia. Noongyar and Wongatha Indigenous leaders, joined by a Colombian Unionist resisting against BHP Billiton's Cerrejon operation will be asking questions inside the meeting.

The report *Other Sides to the Story: Threatening Lives, the Environment and People's Future* can be downloaded at <http://bhpbillitonwatch.net>

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Update on the protest outside the BHP Billiton Annual General Meeting in Perth:

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