

Australian mining company denies role in murder of South African activist

Campaigners claim death of Sikhosiphi Rhadebe is an escalation of violence against opponents of a mine owned by Perth's Mineral Commodities Limited



Sikhosiphi 'Bazooka' Rhadebe was shot eight times at his home in Xolobeni, South Africa, on Tuesday. Photograph: Law Resource Centre of South Africa

[Joshua Robertson](#)

Thursday 24 March 2016 22.10 EDT Last modified on Thursday 24 March 2016 23.07 EDT

An Australian-owned mining company has denied any link to the murder of an activist leading a campaign against its plans to mine titanium in [South Africa](#).

Sikhosiphi "Bazooka" Rhadebe was gunned down at his home in Xolobeni on South Africa's Wild Coast on Tuesday, in what fellow activists claimed was an escalation of violence and intimidation against local opponents of a mine owned by Perth-based Mineral Commodities Limited (MRC).

MRC, which has repeatedly denied inciting violence involving its supporters, said it was "in no way implicated in any form whatsoever in this incident".

Mzamo Dlamini is a fellow activist who believes he is among the "prime targets" on the anti-mining Amadiba crisis committee following Rhadebe's death.

Despite fearing for his life, Dlamini vowed to continue organising resistance to a project that campaigners said would force the relocation of an estimated 100 households and up to 1,000 people.

“The assassination affects us all,” he said. “There will be more Bazookas long after we have died.”

Six people associated with the mining venture were subject to court orders last May after a clash over land access, during which a TEM director fired a “warning shot” in the air.

Four people, including an alleged employee of another MRC mine at Tormin, are due to face court next month over alleged assault and intimidation, including with firearms, of mining opponents in Xolobeni in December. These allegations are yet to come before a court and there is no suggestion these or any other employees were involved in Rhadebe’s murder.

Unathi Ximbi, the defence lawyer engaged by TEM to act in the first case, is also representing the men in the second. He told Guardian Australia the company had neither arranged nor paid for their defence. Ximbi said he could not recall whether any of them were company employees.

Rhadebe was shot eight times in the head in front of his son, who told investigators the killers had posed as police.

Less than two hours before his death, Rhadebe called fellow committee member Nonhle Mbuthuma to check on her safety, telling her there was a “hit list” that included both of them and Dlamini.

MRC in a statement said it was “not in a position to comment with any authority on the incident” but any claims it was in any way implicated were “simply unfounded”.

“Despite our own internal enquiries, we are no further informed as to any of the specific facts surrounding this incident other than what has been reported,” it said.

“The company does not condone violence in any form and it is tragic that a man has lost his life regardless of the circumstances, which ... are yet to be established.

“This company will not engage in any activity that incites violence.

“The company will cooperate fully with any investigations into this incident and takes this opportunity to extend its condolences to the family and loved ones of Mr Sikhosiphi Rhadebe.”

MRC’s executive chairman, Mark Caruso, did not respond to specific questions from Guardian Australia.

Dlamini said he had reservations about the police investigation after committee members and mining opponents were targeted in repeat raids looking for weapons following provocation by pro-mining “thugs”.

“I don’t see [police] doing anything about it at all,” he said.

Dlamini called on Caruso to act by dismissing any employee of TEM or Xolco linked to violence and intimidation of the company’s critics.

“Bazooka has been brokering peace” Dlamini said. “He met his [Caruso’s] brother Patrick Caruso to discuss the problems, who said they did not support the violence.

“They made us to understand they did not want violence, they want peace and then to develop the area. But ... people here are being killed.”

Lawyer Henk Smith of the Legal Resources Centre, which has acted for landholders opposing MRC’s Tormin mine, said the killing of Rhadebe, a “principled democrat”, had likely ended the prospect of conciliation meetings between the miner and its opponents.

“I think the company has made a few statements condemning the violence but it comes after the event and the company has never taken any steps to encourage conciliation or mediation or consultation even a meeting,” Smith said.

“In fact the company shies away from meeting the community which as a result, there’ll be little chance of simply starting a process of meetings now.

“The company is in effect refusing to accept that it’s got to negotiate with the community and are relying on an interpretation of the law in South [Africa](#) that they must consult affected people about mitigation of environmental impact and their responsibility goes no further.

“For the rest, they’ve got [to] swallow what the company offers.”

<http://www.financialmail.co.za/fmfox/2016/03/24/ultimate-price-for-coastal-protection>

Mining

Ultimate price for coastal protection

by [Sikonathi Mantshantsha](#), 24 March 2016,



Xolobeni. Picture: DAILY DISPATCH

“YOU can’t run away from death. I am going nowhere,” says Nonhle Mbuthuma, an anti-mining activist whose name allegedly now tops a hit list.

An hour before he was shot dead, Sikhosiphi “Bazooka” Rhadebe told his comrades: “This fight seems to be a lot bigger than we thought. I have just been informed that there is a hit list of anti-mining people to be killed. My name is at the top. Yours is the second. Look after yourselves.”

This is according to Nonhle Mbuthuma, spokesperson of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee, who received a call from Rhadebe on the evening of Tuesday, March 22. Rhadebe was chairman of the community group opposing the proposed mining of the 22km protected stretch of Wild Coast that includes Xolobeni and Mnyameni. (See [Between the Chains: Another Ngquza revolt](#)) “An hour later I received another call saying he’d been shot,” says Mbuthuma.

On March 23 the SA Police Service in Mzamba confirmed the murder, and added that it was conducting regular operations to prevent the outbreak of violence.

Rhadebe’s death brings to four the number of people killed in the 12-year feud between groups opposed to mining and those who are keen on the proposed mining of the Xolobeni mineral sands on their land.

“He was shot eight times in the head at his home in the evening,” says Mbuthuma of Rhadebe’s assassination.

Tensions have risen in the area since Australia’s Transworld Energy & Mineral Resources renewed its bid to obtain a licence to mine titanium group metals last year. Since late last year, there have been sporadic attacks and outbreaks of violence in the villages surrounding the proposed mining sites near the Sikombe and Mtentu rivers south of the Wild Coast Sun.

In March last year Transworld reapplied for the mining right, which was originally granted by the mineral resources department in 2008 but repealed three years later after the community successfully appealed against the licence.

“On behalf of the community we have lodged an objection to the new application, and the department will need to hold public hearings with the community before making a decision,” says Johan Lorenzen of law firm Richard Spoor Inc.

Together with the Legal Resources Centre, the firm represents the community in the 12-year-old fight.

The department of mineral resources is expected to hold public hearings to hear the community’s objection later this year before making a decision on whether to grant the mining licence.

Asked what measures members of the AmaDiba Crisis Committee will take to ensure their safety, Mbuthuma says they’ll stay put and legally fight all attempts to mine their land.

But she’s now on top of the alleged hit list. “There’s nothing I can do about that,” she told the Financial Mail.

<http://www.financialmail.co.za/opinion/Betweenthechains/2016/03/17/between-the-chains-another-ngquza-revolt>

Between the Chains: Another Ngquza revolt

by [Sikonathi Mantshantsha](#), 17 March 2016

ON JUNE 6 1960, the Pondo people paid with their blood on Ngquza Hill for rejecting an aggressive attempt to carve up their land and create Transkei independence. They are at it again, 56 years later, fighting to fend off another hostile attempt to take their land. The land seems fertile, rich in minerals. Pristine rivers flow into the Indian Ocean. Adults work in the hot sun, tending their green fields of maize, amadumbe (a kind of potato) and beans, surrounded by the lush greenery and the ocean to the east. On weekends, barefoot girls in tattered clothes, play games that have been played by generations, using old stockings and tins, while boys fashion a soccer ball out of anything that’s soft and won’t hurt their bare feet.

Other than their carefree laughter, the peace is punctuated only by the sound of waterfalls and of waves crashing against rocks, sending up spray.

But this peace lasts only during the day. On many a night the people of Xolobeni, Kwanyana, Mnyameni and Mdatya in the Bizana district have resorted to sleeping outside their huts. When they expect to be raided by the police and their opponents, they sleep in the forests. These forests are home to the rare butterflies that lovers of nature cite as a reason why the mining of titanium should not be allowed here.

While many of the locals also care about the plants and creatures unique to the area, they care much more about something even more sacred: agricultural and grazing land.

The proponents of mining speak of the dearth of jobs and infrastructure in their justification for wanting to violate the windswept sand dunes along the Sikombe and Mtentu rivers. Since 2004, when Australia's Mineral Resources Commodities first applied for a licence to mine the dunes, this side has pointed to the black stripes on the beach sand as evidence of the riches that lie unexploited. They argue the mine would bring about much-needed jobs to lift the locals out of poverty.

But the opponents of mining — the majority of people in the villages directly affected by the proposed mine — point to their well-fed livestock, green fields growing their food and favourite smoke, and the nearby tourism businesses as the most sustainable ways to keep hunger away.

Many of their rondavels have been turned into backpacker guest houses. Villagers say this is the best empowerment opportunity. The Mtentu Lodge next to the Mkambati nature reserve is built with the community's partnership and for its benefit. Villagers fear mining would kill tourism for little or no benefit.

At the nearby Mzamba river mouth, sections of the same community were forced to give up tracts of land to Sol Kerzner's Wild Coast Sun in the 1980s. The people of Xolobeni give the lack of compensation, and what they say is nonfulfilment of job promises at the resort, as their other reason for preferring their agricultural way of life.

Those keen on mining the marine protected area come from the villages further inland. Their lands will not be directly affected by mining.

During the past six months there have been outbursts of violence; three people have been killed. Many more suffered beatings and machete wounds in February, when rumour was rife the mining company would move in with heavy equipment.

For the past 12 years the community has been in and out of court, fighting the licence approvals granted by the departments of mineral resources and environmental affairs. These permits have been approved and then rescinded so many times that nobody knows exactly where the process is now.

The community, organised under the Amadiba Crisis Committee, organised itself in early March to block off the only route into the village when yet another rumour of the imminent arrival of their unwanted guests started flying. Another amaMpondo massacre may be brewing if the matter is not handled with care.

Campaigner against Australian-owned mine in South Africa found shot dead, reports say

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

By the National Reporting Team's [Jake Sturmer](#) and [Mark Willacy](#)

Updated Thu at 9:56am

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-03-24/campaigner-against-australian-mine-in-south-africa-shot-dead/7274636>

A prominent environmentalist who campaigned vigorously against an Australian-owned mineral sands mine in South Africa has been shot dead in his home, according to local media.

Sikhosiphi Rhadebe was a significant opponent of the Xolobeni mineral sands mine, owned by Perth-based company Mineral Commodities.

Mineral Commodities, through its South African subsidiary Transworld Energy & Minerals, plans to mine 2,900 hectares along South Africa's east coast.

Mr Rhadebe, nicknamed "Bazooka", was chairman of the Amadiba Crisis Committee which is opposed to the mine, claiming it is on ancestral land.

Do you know more about this story? Email investigations@abc.net.au

Police told South Africa's Times Media Group that two men claiming to be police officers arrived at Mr Rhadebe's house in Mbizana to arrest him.

They did not say what they were there to arrest him for.

"As he was preparing to leave with the two men, they shot him eight times in the head outside his house," Police spokesman Captain Mlungisi Matidane reportedly said.



[Photo: Activists say the mineral sands mine is on ancestral land. \(Mineral Commodities\)](#)

"He died on the spot ... and his wife and child have been hospitalised due to shock."

A statement from the Amadiba Crisis Committee said they would "not be intimidated into submission".

Mineral Commodities' executive chairman Mark Caruso said the company was "in no way implicated in any form whatsoever in this incident".

"Statements to the contrary are simply unfounded," Mr Caruso said in a statement to the ABC.

"The company is not in a position to comment with any authority on the incident.

"Despite our own internal enquiries, we are no further informed as to any of the specific facts surrounding this incident other than what has been reported.

"This company will not engage in any activity that incites violence ... [and] will cooperate fully with any investigations into this incident."

Global outcry for slain activist: rights groups around the world reach out

By ZWANGA MUKHUTHU on March 25, 2016 in [News](#) · [1 Comments](#)

World rights groups have condemned the apparent assassination of chairman of the Amadiba Crisis Committee Sikhosiphi "Bazooka" Rhadebe.

At the same time, the Right2Know campaign has set up a bank account for donations to assist the family of the slain community leader.

The killing of the chairman of the Amadiba Crisis Committee Sikhosiphi “Bazooka” Rhadebe has been condemned by rights groups accross the globe.

Rhadebe, 53, was shot outside his home by two unknown gunmen pretending to be policemen on Tuesday night. They remain at large.

His murder has been linked to a decade of work that he did with the committee in the Wild Coast in opposing open-cast titanium mining by the Australian mining company Mineral Commodity Limited (CMR).

Now a group of 82 organisations from around the world have come out in support of the Wild Coast community and have rallied behind Rhadebe’s family.

In a statement released by the Right2Know campaign and endorsed by organisations such as the 350Africa.org, ActionAid SA, African Centre for Biodiversity, Colombia Solidarity Campaign UK, Common Frontiers Canada and many more, the groups said they were shocked and outraged to learn of the brutal murder.

The organisations said they could not remain silent in the face of the attack and they called for:

- I The speedy arrest and successful prosecution of Rhadebe’s killers;

- I The minister of mineral resources to suspend all mining applications until there has been a full and independent investigation into Rhadebe’s murder;

- I Protection of Amadiba Crisis Committee members and families.

The organisations said: “Our hearts go out to Bazooka’s family and community.

“The assassination of Bazooka is a painful reminder that ... there is an existing pattern of criminal attacks on civil society formations especially those in townships, informal settlements and rural areas.

“For years, poor people’s movements in different parts of the country have experienced regular harassment, intimidation, detention and violence against their members. It is worst felt when the media are far away and the victims are poor, black or rural and when major industries stand to make billions in profit.”

“We will not be bullied and intend to speak out even more strongly than before. The key thing when civil society is being intimidated is to show no fear,” Right2Know spokeswoman Busi Mtabane said.

The solidarity fund account details are: Sustain the Wild Coast, First National Bank, Randburg, Acc no: 62157997639, Code: 254005, Swift FIRNZAJJ, Reference: Bazooka Cause.
— zwangam@dispatch.co.za

Daily Vox



The mining company behind the Xolobeni conflict has a history of dodgy dealings

The killing of Amadiba Crisis Committee chairperson, Sikhosiphi Bazooka Rhadebe has placed an Australian mining company and a longstanding mining conflict in the limelight. **STUART LEWIS** reports that the conflict has a long, violent history and a number of unsavoury players.

On the night of 22 March, Sikhosiphi Bazooka Rhadebe [opened](#) his front door for two men who claimed to be police officers. The men had arrived in a white VW Polo with a blue rotating light on its roof. They shot Rhadebe at least eight times in front of his wife and son, who are both now in hospital, before driving away.

The assassination of Rhadebe has garnered national media attention, especially since he was the chairperson of the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC). ACC has been embroiled in [a longstanding battle](#) with Mineral Commodities Ltd (MRC), an Australian mining company,

over MRC's ongoing attempts to mine sections of coastal dunes in the [Xolobeni area](#) along the Eastern Cape coast.

The battle has divided the local amaPondo community harshly. On one side stand those who want to see the mine built, led largely by a local man called Zamble Qunya who works for mining empowerment company Xolco and Chief Lunga Baleni of the Amadiba Tribal Authority. On the other are those who want the land to stay in local hands, like the ACC. It has also seen increasingly escalating incidents of violence and intimidation, generally directed towards mining opponents.

The history of violence goes back as far as 2003 when Mandoda Ndovela, a headman from Mpindweni on the Wild Coast, was [shot dead](#), allegedly for being openly critical of the Xolobeni Mineral Sands plan and includes multiple incidents of intimidation and actual physical violence. Last year December, anti-miners [were attacked](#) with pangas and knobkerries and in February this year, Chief Baleni [threatened](#) residents with violence if they attempted to stop drillers who ultimately failed to arrive.

The [Xolobeni Mineral Sands](#) development, and the chaos wrought around it, has also resulted in a book called **The Promise of Justice** and an award-winning documentary called [The Shore Break](#).

Rhadebe's assassination is only the latest incident in the Xolobeni saga. And, [as it turns out](#), this isn't even the only mining debacle MRC and its executive chairperson Mark Caruso have been involved in.

On the east coast of South Africa, near the town of Vredendal, MRC runs a zircon mine called [Tormin Mineral Sands](#). Multiple accusations of [environmental degradation and breaches of mining regulations](#), including causing the collapse of a cliff onto a nearby beach and pumping raw sewage into the ocean, have been levelled against Tormin. They have also been accused of degrading roads by sending trucks along ones that do not form part of their allocated route and of expanding the mine beyond its permit.

Tormin's general manager Gary Thompson [has also been accused](#) of ordering security guards to fire on a helicopter hovering over the mine, over which a criminal case has been opened. Thompson has also been accused of orchestrating unfair and illegal wage cuts and working hours, and of racism and sexism towards employees. He allegedly tells workers that when they enter the mine, they are in Australia and when they leave, they are in South Africa.

Meanwhile Caruso, who runs MRC, [has been accused](#) of threatening workers in an internal email, that includes a quote of the Samuel L Jackson version of Ezekiel 25:17 [from Pulp Fiction](#), where he states: "I am enlivened by [the] opportunity to grind all resistance to my presence and the presence of MSR [the South African subsidiary of Mineral Commodities] into the animals [sic] of history as a failed campaign."

Caruso's UK-listed company Allied Gold has also been implicated in intimidation and illegal mining practices in the [Solomon Islands](#) and [Papua New Guinea](#).

****Editors' note:** When The Daily Vox called the MRC South African office for comment, we were directed to Thompson's personal number. We were told he was in a meeting and that we should call back in 20 minutes. Since then, we have been unable to reach them. This article will be updated with MRC's comments as soon as possible.*

<http://www.thedailyvox.co.za/xolobeni-mining/>

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/stnews/2015/11/29/Aussie-company-threatens-biblical-smiting-in-ongoing-Cape-row>

[Sunday Times News](#) By BOBBY JORDAN, 2015-11-29

Aussie company threatens 'biblical smiting' in ongoing Cape row



Tormin mine denies causing the collapse of this cliff
Image: Supplied



Tormin mine denies causing the collapse of this cliff
Image: Supplied

- **Burning tyres, guards shooting at helicopters and a chairman raining down fiery biblical injunctions on the local community - things have gone from bad to B-grade Hollywood at the troubled Tormin mine near Vredendal in the Western Cape.**

Its Australian owner, Mineral Commodities, has been granted rights to mine mineral sands along a remote section of South Africa's coast - and has plans to mine offshore sands as well.

And while local residents rally against the mine's alleged wrongdoings, the company's executive chairman, Mark Caruso, has turned to scripture to admonish his opponents.

In an e-mail to local stakeholders last month, he threatened to "rain down vengeance" on anybody who opposed him.



Mark Caruso Image: Supplied

Caruso quoted the entire biblical passage made famous by a pair of assassins in the Quentin Tarantino movie Pulp Fiction.

"From time to time I have sought the Bible for understanding and perhaps I can direct you to Ezekiel 25.17," Caruso wrote, before giving the full verse, which includes the lines: "And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger, those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee."

Elsewhere in his e-mail he invites his detractors to continue their "campaign" against the mine: "I am enlivened by [the] opportunity to grind all resistance to my presence and the presence of MSR [the South African subsidiary of Mineral Commodities] into the animals [sic] of history as a failed campaign."

Some who have seen the mail say it illustrates the bullying tone the mine has adopted since opening amid great fanfare last year, in a ceremony attended by then mining minister Susan Shabangu.

Caruso declined to comment on the hostile tone of his e-mail.

Mineral Commodities is involved in another highly controversial project, at Xolobeni in the Eastern Cape, where its plan to mine a pristine dune belt has divided the community.



Tormin mine Image: Supplied

This week the Sunday Times visited the Vredendal area and established that:

- Mineral Commodities is accused of collapsing a section of coast near Vredendal where it opened a large offshore sand mining plant just two years ago. Aerial photographs appear to show evidence of cliff subsidence adjacent to the plant, which is 30km north of Vredendal. The mine claims the damage was caused by a storm;
- The company is refusing to allow the local municipality to inspect its coastal plant, which sits on municipal land;
- Relations between mine management and staff have nose-dived since a strike in September, which culminated in several arrests and mine security allegedly firing on a helicopter hovering near the plant. Police investigated a charge against general manager Gary Thompson. Strikers were demanding an end to what they said were unfair labour practices;
- Earlier this year the Department of Environmental Affairs alerted mine management to several mining permit contraventions, including mining in no-go areas and the use of unauthorised roads. The department instructed the mine's management to appoint an external auditor to compile a report on compliance, or the lack thereof; and
- Despite these contraventions, the Department of Mineral Resources has approved the mine's application for a prospecting licence to mine further along the coast and out to sea.

Environmental affairs this week referred queries to the Department of Mineral Resources, which in turn referred queries to its regional manager, who did not respond.

Earlier this year, the matter reached the attention of Cosatu's Tony Ehrenreich, who wrote a stinging letter to Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa, appealing for an investigation into "apartheid-era" violations at the Tormin mine.

Several Vredendal residents, including municipal officials, told the Sunday Times this week that they were disappointed in the mine, which had promised so much - and which employs about 300 people.

Former employee John van der Westhuizen said: "The community said they don't want a Marikana situation here. But if he [Thompson] remains here ... there will be tension. They need to treat people properly."

Caruso declined to respond to specific questions.

He said the company had invested R500-million in mine development and generated "in excess of R500-million annually in export revenue and direct investment in the community through use of 100% South African service providers".

jordanb@sundaytimes.co.za

Perth miner caught up in stoush over South Africa cultural site

Date

July 13, 2015

Anne Susskind

Perth's Mineral Commodities is at the centre of a dispute in South Africa's Eastern Cape.

- [Fatal extraction: Australian mining in South Africa](#)

A Perth mining company, Mineral Commodities (MRC), is at the centre of a simmering conflict in South Africa, and has been accused of creating divisions and fomenting violence in an unspoilt and "idyllic" coastal community in the Eastern Cape.

At stake is a 22-kilometre-by-1.5-kilometre strip of red sand dunes on the pristine "wild coast", which MRC says is home to the world's 10th-largest heavy mineral deposit – minerals such as ilmenite, rutile and zircon, used to manufacture titanium dioxide pigments.

The company and its South African subsidiary, Transworld Energy and Mineral Resources (TEM), have prospecting rights for four out of five blocks in the strip. Mining rights previously held for the fifth and richest block were last year reversed on appeal, but the company in March applied to the Department of Mineral Resources for rights in all five blocks.

Advertisement

While MRC executive chairman Mark Caruso says "the majority of the community" want the mining because it will deliver over 600 jobs and huge social and economic benefits in an impoverished region, the lawyer for the villagers in or near the strip, Richard Spoor, tells another story.

He says they will not back down and, this being South Africa, "there will be police, there will be batons, there will be bloodshed" should the mining proceed.

In May, shots were fired and a 61-year-old woman was "grievously injured" with a bush knife in a confrontation between pro and anti-mining forces after a convoy of four-wheel-drives entered the village of Xolobeni and a neighbouring village.

Spoor, a well-known human rights lawyer who has represented miners with silicosis and asbestosis, says this is the tribal land of 200 or so families, occupied for centuries, with "sacred sites", archaeological remnants and graves.

What the Australian company is proposing is the "moral equivalent of mining Ayers Rock for granite", he says.

Their hope for the future – small-scale ecotourism – is already under a cloud and will be ruined by mining and associated infrastructure.

It's a different kind of South African story, says Spoor, who is working with South Africa's largest public interest law clinic, the Legal Resources Centre, on the case.

"Many removals are of people in poverty and squalor with grim lives to begin with, but this community is in a stunningly beautiful area," he says.

"They live well and just wish to stay, and do what they've done all the time – fishing, crayfishing, and horse trails and small backpacker hostels – all of which are threatened by development."

What Australian investors and outsiders do not understand, is that it is "inconceivable" that they will give up without a fight.

Court papers show that on May 13, following the confrontation earlier in the month, the South African High Court granted an order to prevent six pro-mining people from "intimidating, threatening, harassing, victimising and/or assaulting" members of the community "and/or bringing firearms or causing firearms to be brought into community meetings or into the Umgungundlovu area and from inciting any person to do so".

The six, Spoor says, are "closely associated with MRC" with "material interests" in the Xolobeni project – four as directors, former directors or employees of MRC or its subsidiary, TEM, or the Xolobeni Empowerment Company (Xolco), which is TEM's "black economic empowerment" partner.

The papers also show the area's tribal chief, Lunga Baleni, to be on one side while his relative, Xolobeni headwoman Duduzile Baleni, is on the other.

As the chief anti-mining applicant, Duduzile Baleni, said in her affidavit, the situation was "very tense" with "great potential for imminent and escalating violence".

In affidavits from the respondents, Xolco director Ntethelo Madikizela said the two shots he fired on May 3 were only "warning shots". He and other respondents say they were acting in self-defence against villagers armed with traditional weapons who had set up a roadblock but had no right to deny them access.

MRC and its associates, Spoor says, are creating "a community at war with itself" by employing prominent community members and providing them vehicles and other resources to distribute to locals to win them over. People who are pro-mining, he says, generally lived more inland and in the main will not be directly affected by MRC's Xolobeni Mineral Sands project.

In a statement, MRC's Mark Caruso says that, as in most countries, mineral wealth belongs to the state.

The government and its departments are custodians for the resources and "proper due processes" will be followed, including environmental and social impact assessments by independent consultants, and public participation, he says. TEM had a full legal right to access the area to conduct studies, and it was unfair to prevent that process.

"Foreign direct investment is critical to the development of the South African economy. Any investment and any development must be given the certainty of due process and the security of tenure," he says.

MRC and TEM supported consultation between the anti and pro-mining lobby, Caruso says, and have no intention of mining traditional cultural or historical burial sites. Steps have been taken towards excising environmentally sensitive estuarine areas and other environmentally sensitive locations.

"[We] do not condone violence of any sort, under any circumstances. We have worked tirelessly within the Amadiba communities to communicate the benefits of development of

mining and dispel the misinformation that has been spread with the intent of causing fear and anxiety," he says.

"We do not agree with other views that the 'villagers will not back down'."

In the meantime, Spoor is investigating a constitutional challenge to the Xolobeni project, and another challenge on the basis that the strip was declared a conservation area by Chief Bantu Holomisa under the old apartheid Bantustan system.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/business/mining-and-resources/perth-miner-caught-up-in-stoush-over-south-africa-cultural-site-20150712-giahfx.html#ixzz43zo7FuNd>

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The Robinson/Caruso connection, and the Promise of Justice on Friday

- John Clarke
- 12 Feb 2015 12:28 (South Africa)

After the delegates to the annual Mining Indaba have all left and after President Zuma has delivered his SONA, The Labia Theatre will host an event rich in historical irony: A book launch for 'The Promise of Justice' in a theatre whose stones have a tale of injustice to tell. It is a story that does not flatter President Zuma or the mining industry, but shows that human rights must trump mining rights if we want a better state for the South African nation in the future.

When my daughter was given the details to complete a flyer to send to people inviting them the Cape Town book launch event for my book *The Promise of Justice*, she thought I was kidding when I told her it was at the Labia Theatre.

"Do you really mean 'labia' as in...um... part of the female genitals, Dad?"

My Pietermaritzburg-based publisher found it funny, too. "Next they'll be holding a Ball in the Scrotum Hall."

He was unaware that before it became the Labia Theatre, the venue was in fact a ballroom! It was once the Italian Consular ballroom, before being refurbished into a theatre for live performances. It was opened in 1949 by Countess Ida Labia, wife of Count Natale Labia, the Italian Consul General. Countess Labia had donated the money for the extensive

refurbishment from her substantial inheritance from her mining mogul father, Sir JB Robinson (1840 to 1929).

For those familiar with the reputation of this infamous 'Randlord', they will get the irony of a book being launched there that relates a dramatic tale of yet another unscrupulous mining entrepreneur who in 1996 obtained mining rights, but with scant regard for human rights.

So what is the Robinson/Caruso connection?

First Robinson. Named 'the financial father of Johannesburg' according to one writer, Sir JB Robinson accumulated a fortune from gold mining but made few friends. While Chair of the board of Randfontein Estates Gold Mine Ltd, he had secretly purchased land through a private front company for £60,000 which he sold a few weeks later, back to the company that he chaired, for £275,000. A fellow director, Solly Joel (nephew of Barney Barnato) found out about his secret dealings and took him to court for failing to declare his conflict of interests, insisting that he turn over the profit. After a protracted legal battle, the Supreme Court of Appeal eventually ruled against the aging Robinson in 1921, defining the absolute requirement to ensure "a man's interests do not conflict with his duty". Robinson was ordered to pay over the illicitly acquired profit of £215,000 plus interest. The happiest parties in the whole process were the legal teams. Legal fees of around £1 million eclipsed the actual amounts at stake.

Mark Caruso fits the same archetype. He is a typical Perth entrepreneur who launched a venture capital company MRC Ltd on the Australian Securities Exchange in 2000 after being promised mining rights for the Xolobeni Mineral Sands deposit on the Pondoland Wild Coast. To help him on his way, the South African Department of Trade and Industries lent him some seed funding totally R18 million which he used to launch a prospectus and attract further investors. After a decade of attempted under-the-radar prospecting which wreaked havoc among the local community and created a storm of controversy, Caruso was finally awarded limited mining rights by the former DG of DMR Sandile Nogxina, whom it so happens is from the area and owns property in Port Edward nearby. Alas, the Minister of Minerals (at the time Buyelwa Sonjica) was forced to suspend the mining rights in September 2008 after a now much-celebrated protest from local residents ably supported by the Royal Family of amaMpondo. The story I tell reveals inter-alia that Sandile Nogxina had also "allowed his interests to conflict with his duty", by failing to declare his interests as a local resident and property owner who stood to handsomely benefit once the mining commenced.

My book tells that story in all the sordid detail. But the irony of having the launch at a place developed with money from JB Robinson's estate goes a lot deeper. It is deeply personal and mysterious tale. It so happens that my great-grandparents were, according to the narrative handed down through the generations, swindled out of their family fortune by JB Robinson.

Here's how the story pieces together. My maternal great-grandparents Michael and Alice O'Connor and their two young children were among the first 3,000 residents to settle in "The Goldfields" (Johannesburg had not yet been named such) to seek their fortune.

On Monday 16th May 1887 he had left Tsitsa Drift in the Nomansland region of the Eastern Cape on the border with a still independent Pondoland, where they ran a trading store. I know this precise date because his older brother, Captain John Thomas O'Connor, former police officer with the Frontier Armed Mounted Police, commander of the Cape Mounted Rifles and veteran of the 1880 Gun War, was by then Colonial Magistrate at Tsolo, details it in his diary, which I found in the Cory Library in Grahamstown.

"This is a most auspicious day and deserves to be noted in a peculiar manner as possessing peculiar events, which may anon be productive of peculiar and most important results to many of us, especially the immediate actors in the present phase of this life.

My dear beloved brother and his wife Alice and their son Jack have actually started purport last en-route to Goldfields!! Yes they are gone. They have left a great void behind, a sense of keen loneliness, and it seems now as though the last remnant of my beloved family, the last relic of my dear old mother, my only and beloved brother has separated from me and left me forever!! O may Almighty God speed and prosper thee, and thine, my beloved brother, and bring thee safe to your distant destination, and prosper ye there and grant in mercy that ere long we may all be reunited again in health and happiness.

Surely these sudden and wondrous changes must show that the world is not our home, and is only our temporary abiding place, and that there is undoubtedly another better world where separations and sorrows never come, and where all will again meet after playing the part assigned to us in this."

These are sad words, all the more so because, as far as I have been able to establish, the two brothers and their wives and families were never reunited, at least not in health and happiness.

Michael O'Connor secured an early claim but lacking the capital needed to successfully mine the deeper levels of gold seam, JB Robinson bought up his and many other claims "at a fraction of their real worth" according to the family narrative, to create the Randfontein Estates Gold Mine Ltd.

My grandmother was born in 1889 in Luiperdsvlei. Three more children were to be added to the O'Connor family before hostilities commenced between Boer and Brit war in 1899. With six young children (my grandmother was ten) the family left the Transvaal as refugees to the Eastern Cape (imagine that). Unfortunately Captain O'Connor had passed away earlier in the year. For three years, Great-Grandpa and Grandma ran a trading store near Lusikisiki, not far from the Qaukeni Great Place, the residence of the Mpondo Royal Family, that I have visited on countless occasions over the last decade, in service to King Mpondombini Justice Sigcau and his Queen.

After the war ended in 1902 the family returned to Johannesburg, but the dream of making a fortune from their gold claim had long vanished. Michael O'Connor was fortunate to obtain humble employment in the new Transvaal Government civil service. He died in 1915 while serving as the night watchman at the Johannesburg Law Courts. My grandmother

never finished school. She married my grandfather Vincent Collingwood and together they brought eleven children into the world, one of whom was my mother Margaret Mary.

When I first became involved as a social worker in the struggles of the amaMpondo in 2007, I was only dimly aware of this family history. Prompted by a startling revelation from my ailing mother on her deathbed that “your grandmother grew up in Pondoland”, I was drawn into an absolutely fascinating narrative. While familiarising myself with the history of amaMpondo to equip myself better for my social work support, I discovered a fascinating intertwining with my own family history in the Eastern Cape 19th Century frontier history.

When I related the story of my hapless ancestors to one of the community leaders, Jabulani Mboyisa (since deceased sadly) a very strange awareness dawned to propel me to an ever-deeper quest for understanding the History (His Story) and Mystery (My Story). Jabulani was vehemently determined to stop Caruso from mining his ancestral lands. Jabulani’s father had been active in the Pondo Uprising of 1960 and imparted to his son the same passionate sense of land identity and ancestor reverence. Jabulani was a well-respected Sangoma.

“Well that explains why you are here, John,” Jabulani said without a shadow of doubt or hesitation. “My ancestors and your ancestors have both suffered exploitation by mining people. Our ancestors have decided you will work with us to stop this mining thing.”

Nowhere in my social work textbooks is there any guidance on how to handle such a process of professional contracting.

That was in 2007, on the eve of a visit by the SA Human Rights Commission to investigate the allegations of human rights violations that Jabulani had contracted me to put to the commission on behalf of the Amadiba Community.

Four years later the mining rights were revoked, establishing an irrevocable truth. Given that environmental rights are entrenched in the Bill of Rights detailed in the Constitution, human rights must trump mining rights.

The Robinson/Caruso connection will be further explained (fittingly) on Friday.

The *Promise of Justice* launch is scheduled to start at 10am, at the Labia Theatre with a special screening of the documentary film *The Shore Break*, which features many of the characters in *The Promise of Justice*, directed by Ryley Grunenwald and co-produced by Ryley and Odette Grunenwald. You can see more [here](#). **DM**

Are We Attracting the Wrong Kind of Mining Entrepreneurs to South Africa? The Case of MRC, Xolobeni and Tormin

By [Glenn Ashton](#) · 17 Jun 2015



Picture: Anti-Mining Protestors in Xolobeni courtesy United Front

South African wealth is founded on our extraordinary mineral bounty, conservatively valued at over \$3 trillion (R36 trillion). Our future is dependent on how we manage this geological legacy. We can either harness the full spectrum of opportunities or lay ourselves open to what is known as the “resource curse” where natural resources are exploited by unscrupulous or corrupt entities, with minimal national benefit. A recent example provides some insight in how we appear to be headed down the wrong path.

Most people familiar with the mining landscape are aware of the well-publicised attempts to gain mineral rights to access the apparently lucrative wild coast heavy mineral sands, known as Xolobeni, that have repeatedly failed. Not only is this resource located amidst a rich, relatively pristine ecosystem but this is hosted within an equally rich and dynamic social fabric, protective of its cultural and natural heritage.

The erstwhile developer of this resource is a relatively unknown minor listed Australian mining company, Mineral Commodities Limited, known as MRC, headed by one Mark Caruso. Caruso creates the impression of the archetypal “ocker,” a rough and ready Australian bloke, prepared to get things done come what may.

Over the past 18 months Caruso has commissioned a new mineral sands mine called Tormin, some 350 kilometers north of Cape Town. Permission and rights to operate Tormin were gained by the former MD, South African Andrew Lashbrooke. These two have subsequently fallen out and have become embroiled in legal action in Cape High Court, where Lashbrooke seeks substantial financial redress and damages.

Tormin has also been at the centre of serious allegations that its methods of operation are illegal and irregular. It has removed tens of thousands of tonnes of garnet and ilmenite that it has not received the requisite permissions to extract. These materials have illegally been stored in informal stockpiles on agricultural land.

From an environmental perspective, a lack of suitably careful mine management has seen cliffs adjacent to the treatment plant collapse onto the beach. The company has changed its mining methods without due permission or consultation and also built illegal hard breakwaters and jetties on the beach.

On top of this, the trucks delivering materials from the mine have seriously damaged hundreds of kilometres of road by transporting materials down minor backroads instead of using the approved route. Some of the materials are radioactive and require prominent identification but vehicles are allegedly improperly identified, monitored or managed.

Local communities in Lutzville and Koekenaap are up in arms because promised benefits from the mine have failed to materialise. Instead of local job creation, workers have been brought in from Xolobeni in order to curry favour from that community.

These community tensions have resulted in allegedly illegal protests. In November the police arrested 28 community members who await finalisation of the case, with the next hearing due in July. Community leaders accuse mine management of arrogance and of only dealing with selected ward councillors who are compromised through “benefits” provided by the mine. The community feels let down by the justice system and elected leaders.

MRC has pursued a similar modus operandi in Xolobeni, where for years it has pitted members of the community against each other in order to gain permission to access the resource. False petitions have been compiled, and violence and intimidation has recently resulted in a restraining order being issued against “leaders” associated with MRC. These conflicts have been [widely covered](#) in the media and have even become the subject of an award winning film, [“The Shore Break.”](#)

However MRC, and Caruso in particular, came to South Africa having apparently learned some [useful tricks in ingratiating local officials](#) and appointees during previous mining ventures with his UK listed company, Allied Gold, in the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific. Caruso gained the rights to the largest known gold resource in the Solomons, Gold Ridge, where the land rights had [controversially](#) been signed away by the resident community in a deal which created longstanding and significant [social rifts](#). After Allied sold Gold Ridge the mine was subsequently shut down because infrastructure was insufficiently robust to deal with local flooding. [Similarly poor community relations](#) have dogged MRC’s other investments in gold mines in Papua New Guinea and Sierra Leone.

It is notable how these patterns echo the experiences of those involved in both the Tormin and the Xolobeni mineral sands resource projects. Not only has MRC been instrumental in setting community and even family members against each other at Xolobeni, through sly selection and appointment of various community proxies who have been given vehicles and benefits such as executive positions in subsidiary companies Blue Bantry and Xolco, but it has spread its influence far wider.

For instance well-supported allegations exist that MRC’s attempts to exploit the Xolobeni resource is intimately linked both to the highly contentious wild coast N2 toll road debacle, as well as to a bizarre political decision by the President to illegally interfere in regional traditional leadership matters by removing rightful amaPondo chiefs in the area. This matter was eventually decided by the Constitutional Court, which reinstated the very leaders who happened to question both the controversial N2 toll road and the Xolobeni mineral sands mine.

The link between the mine and the toll road relates to the necessity for a suitable route to transport nearly half a million 40 tonne truck loads of resource to the Durban port. It also aligns with government's insistence that mega-projects will deliver improved living standards, despite numerous studies showing otherwise. The fact that MRC has established intimate relationships with various key political and traditional leadership stakeholders is not co-incidental.

South Africa needs to manage investment and exploitation of our mineral resources in environmentally and socially responsible and sustainable ways. We need to maximise the benefits and beneficiation of our resources. Good behaviour must be encouraged, bad practice curbed.

It appears we have failed to follow these fundamental precepts in the case of MRC. The company has created zero local beneficiation, in fact the MRC/ Lashbrooke court case centres on export of the garnet resources that were to be locally beneficiated. Now MRC simply ships its ill-gotten gains offshore to China and Australia, while creating significant social and environmental externalities.

Judging from this case it appears the Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) is not a suitable agency to promote and monitor the planning and implementation of mining. Extensive interaction has proven the Department to be remarkably un-transparent and non-responsive to enquiries about MRC's mining operations, which should be in the public domain. Since DMR assumed oversight of environmental compliance the flow of information on mining in general, and Tormin specifically, has essentially dried up.

If we are to maximise the benefit of our resources we cannot countenance the non-transparent oversight of mining and the externalisation of social and environmental impacts. Our mineral resources must benefit the nation, not just the entities exploiting them. In order to do so we need transparent due diligence processes, not a free for all where resources are exploited by unscrupulous opportunists.

Ashton is a writer and researcher working in civil society. Some of his work can be viewed at [Ekogaia - Writing for a Better World](#). Follow him on Twitter [@ekogaia](#).

Mining

Xolobeni mine: Digging in their heels

by [Charlotte Mathews](#), 21 May 2015, 09:01

[May 21 - 2015](#)

VIOLENCE erupted at Xolobeni in the Eastern Cape two weeks ago, a fresh demonstration of decade-long opposition to the new titanium mine planned by Australian dune-sands miner Mineral Commodities (MRC).

From various accounts it appears that on May 3, mine employees travelling in a convoy tried to drive through Mtentu village to reach one of the prospecting areas and were stopped by a blockade. The mine employees said they were attacked, while villagers said there was firing at random and some people were beaten with pistol butts.

Asked for the company's version of events, MRC chairman Mark Caruso said: "We will not be in a position to comment on the incident you refer to."

Nonhle Mbuthuma of the Amadiba Crisis Committee says a meeting was convened by the Bizana police at the Mpisi police station last Thursday, which was attended by local residents and mine representatives. It broke up in disorder, as had others before it, after which MRC employee Zamide Qunya said on local radio that it had been agreed that the mine could go ahead. Mbuthuma says there was no such agreement.

For years the matter of the mine's development has split the local community and the royal family. Some argue that the mine will bring jobs, infrastructure and secondary industries. Others say developing the area for tourism will be less disruptive than mining and provide longer-term, sustainable jobs.

The East London Daily Dispatch wrote in a recent leader that 13 years after the mine was proposed, no tourism development had yet taken place, and so local sentiment towards mining was becoming more favourable. But Val Payn of action group Sustaining the Wild Coast says the matter is more complex. She says that with foreign funding, a hiking trail was developed several years ago and local guides were trained, but the chairman of this initiative was recruited by the mine and "purposely undermined" the scheme.

Some communities have established their own hiking trails with accommodation in local homes, but this is on a more modest scale, Payn says.

Mbuthuma confirms that the larger-scale tourism venture was "sabotaged". She says: "They wanted to ensure there was no other option but the mine."

In March, MRC said in a release issued by the Australian Securities Exchange that it held prospecting rights to four of the five blocks on the Xolobeni mineral sands project. There were objections to the prospecting right on the fifth block, Kwanyana, but MRC was optimistic that approval would be granted. It had lodged an application for a mining right.

"While the level of consultation undertaken in respect of the objection to date has been extensive, the company has undertaken initial work as a display of good faith and its commitment to develop and operate Xolobeni transparently and sustainably in the interests of all stakeholders," it said.

MRC said the Xolobeni deposit was seen as one of the world's largest undeveloped mineral sands resources, with about 9,3Mt of ilmenite (a source of titanium).

State to foot environmental bill for abandoned mines

18 Mar 2016 00:00 [Sipho Kings](#)

The department of mineral resources has been left with a R30-billion rehabilitation bill to clean up the damage left by failed mining firms.



Six thousand of the more than 7 500 mines in South Africa are abandoned and the government must spend R30-billion to fix the environmental damage caused by them.

The other mines pay a fee to the department of mineral resources to cover their own rehabilitation. The department told the *Mail & Guardian* last year that this amounted to R45-billion, but in a court case it claims not to know how much has been handed over by the mines.

This claim was made after a Promotion of Access to Information Act (Paia) request by the nongovernmental Centre for Environmental Rights. It asked for a list of the environmental

specialists used by the department, and for details about the money that it has been given by the mines for rehabilitation. No answer was forthcoming.

It took the Pretoria high court to order the department to release “records detailing the total quantum of financial provision held by the department of mineral resources”. The order said, if these records did not exist, the department should file an affidavit that confirmed “under oath” that the records “do not exist”.

An affidavit to that effect was filed.

“The records have to exist. It would be negligence if they do not,” says Catherine Horsfield, the head of the Centre for Environmental Rights’s mining unit. “But what does it say about the record keeping of the department if it cannot find documents that it needs to give oversight?”

The centre has applied for similar records from the provincial offices of the department, and has received similar answers. In Mpumalanga, where the majority of new mining applications are being filed, a Paia request has been waiting two years because officials say their documents are stored in another office.

Horsfield says these documents are needed if mines are to be inspected regularly – so that what they are doing may be compared with what they said they would do. “Without the details, you cannot have oversight.”

Oversight is at the heart of the department’s mandate to promote mining. But there is a corollary – it has to ensure that the mining is safe and does not do undue damage to people and the environment. This is anchored in environmental legislation, which says the “polluter-pays principle” applies to anything that affects the environment.

This process starts when a mine applies for a licence. Each mine has to provide an environmental management plan, setting out what impact the mining will have and how this will be managed to cause the least damage. This allows officials from mineral affairs to check operations against the promises made in the plans, and also to check their work when a mine is closed. The end goal is to rehabilitate the mined area, and the management plan includes a fee for this.

Big mining companies have teams of specialists who can work out how much it will cost, for example, to fix a diverted river, or return a graded gravel road to veld. Smaller miners do not have this luxury. They use the department’s Guideline Document for the Evaluation of the Quantum of Closure-Related Financial Provision Provided by a Mine.

This was released in 2005, and the costs have not been updated. Departmental officials use the same guideline when evaluating new rehabilitation plans. Calculations by the auditor general show that, by using the outdated figures, mines can be underestimating the rehabilitation costs of their operations by 50%.

An investigation into mining rehabilitation by the civil society group World Wide Fund for Nature found that the department has little in the way of standardised checks on mining

applications and rehabilitation funds. This means “plans containing deficiencies have nevertheless been approved” by the department.

Dozens of applications made no mention of rehabilitation, and hundreds were so vague that the mines could close without doing serious rehabilitation, it said.

Rehabilitation is a requirement when a mine wants to close. Legally, operations only end when a closure certificate is issued – when the area has been returned to as close to its original state as possible, and negative environmental and health impacts have been dealt with.

In submissions to Parliament, the department says few of these certificates have been issued. Instead, it says it is dealing with the 6 152 mines that have no owners. Rehabilitation will cost R30-billion, with most of this being spent on the 1 730 mines it classifies as high risk. The first to be dealt with are the 200-odd abandoned asbestos mines, because of health risks.

But this number only factors in the cost of closing old mines. It does not look at the ongoing health and environmental costs of current and old mines. Many smaller studies link mines with all sorts of diseases.

In addition to making people sick, new and old mines cause ongoing environmental damage. In 2012, the small Mpumalanga town of Carolina had to turn its water plant off because acid mine water had overwhelmed its treatment works and was eating through municipal pipes.

A recent report by the auditor general estimates that R5-billion is needed to build the infrastructure to process acid mine water in Gauteng. This will require hundreds of millions of rands a year to operate.

Civil society groups say mining companies have become experts at shifting environmental responsibility – and rehabilitation costs – on to the state.

Mariette Liefferink, of the Federation for a Sustainable Environment, says mines have historically operated under the knowledge that they can exploit failures in governance to escape rehabilitation.

“They are experts at playing the game and DMR [the department of mineral resources] allows them to do so because they want mines and exports more than a healthy environment.”

Mines make a mockery of user-pays principle

Blyvoor, southwest of Johannesburg, used to be an incredibly productive gold mine. In the 1960s, its accompanying town Blyvooruitzicht had the highest per capita income in South Africa.

But dwindling profits meant it kept being sold, eventually ending up belonging to DRDGold. A year after saying it would be profitable past 2030, the company sold Blyvoor to Village Main Reef. Shortly after taking over, Village claimed the sale had not gone through and the mine went into liquidation. Neither company admits to owning the mine. This means they both deny responsibility for rehabilitation.

Work to control its negative environmental impact, such as pumping water out of mine shafts and dampening its dust so it does not blow over homes, stopped.

The water and environment departments say they cannot enforce any remedial action because it is up to the mineral resources department. But that department says it cannot do anything because the mine is in liquidation, and now falls under the jurisdiction of the Companies Act.

This allows the mine to be closed without a closure certificate, or rehabilitation. The R35-million rehabilitation fee – down from the R111-million set out in its mining licence – has gone into the liquidation pot, to be given to creditors. Rehabilitation is, in practice, at the end of that queue.

Sipho Kings is the Mail & Guardian's environment reporter

http://mg.co.za/article/2016-03-17-state-to-foot-environmental-bill-for-abandoned-mines?utm_source=Mail+&+Guardian&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Daily+newsletter&utm_term=http%3A%2F%2Fmg.co.za%2Farticle%2F2016-03-17-state-to-foot-environmental-bill-for-abandoned-mines#.VvOnnIR2ZyQ.facebook

Numsa condemns murder of Wild Coast anti-mining activist

By TMG Digital on March 24, 2016 in [News](#) · [0 Comments](#)

The execution style killing of a leader of the Wild Coast anti-mining campaign has been condemned by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa.

Sikhosiphi 'Bazooka' Rhadebe, chairperson of the Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC), was shot eight times in the head, in front of his wife and 15-year-old son, by assassins who claimed to be police officers, it was reported on Wednesday.



Numsa has condemned the murder of Wild Coast anti-mining activist

Two men driving a white vehicle with blue lamps came to his home, claiming to be police officers, and told Rhadebe they were there to arrest him.

The ACC and Wild Coast residents have been battling for about 10 years to stop Australian mining company Mineral Resource Commodities (MRC) and its local subsidiary, Transworld Energy and Minerals (TEM), from mining titanium on the Xolobeni coastal dunes.

Some residents have links to the Australian-owned company and support the bid to mine the area.

MRC chairman Mark Caruso has denied that the company was linked to Rhadebe's murder.

The ACC said: "Our beloved Bazooka made the ultimate sacrifice defending our ancestral land of Amadiba on the Wild Coast. The Australian company and all the criminals in high positions, who are eager to cut their piece of our land and fill their pockets with blood money, shall know that the Amadiba coastal community will not be intimidated into submission."

The crisis committee said while they are shocked by the murder, it was not unexpected, following shootings in May last year in Xolobeni and over Christmas in Mdatya. Prior to his murder Rhadebe said there was a hit-list and that he was the number one target, according to the Numsa statement.

Numsa said in its statement that the anti-miners are under attack from powerful capitalist interests in league with local thugs.