

SWC Statement. Wild Coast Mining Conflict 8/05/2015

When will No mean No?

Sustaining the Wild Coast (SWC) is gravely concerned about recent violent confrontations at Xolobeni between local community members and supporters of MRC's Wild Coast mining proposal.

The Amadiba communities of the Pondoland Wild Coast have repeatedly stated, in the strongest possible way, that they do not want mining in their area. They have held a beach protest march, they have told every government minister and official who has ever come to 'consult' about the issue that mining must 'voetsak'. They have said **No to Mining** at numerous conferences, commissions, hearings and in public consultation processes, and have made their wishes clear on documentaries, a fund raising calendar, and to any journalist who cared journey on the bumpy dirt roads to visit the area. They have taken the government agency SANRAL to court to challenge a proposal for the development of a national road through the area because they fear the road will open up the area to mining. And they have faced personal harassment, threats and violent intimidation because of their opposition.

The Amadiba communities do not want mining because, to them, allowing mining would be similar to allowing rape. Mining would be a rape of the land they get their sustenance and sense of cultural identity from; it would be a rape of their community, their history, their way of life, and their vision for the future as Mpondo people. The constitution of South Africa states that government should be based on "the will of people and every citizen is equally protected by law" and that people "may not be denied the right to enjoy their culture (31(1)". The AmaMpondo strong cultural and historical links to the land means, to them, that mining would deny them the right to enjoy their culture.

Yet the Department of Mineral Resources seems blind when it comes to recognising that No means No. They persist in entertaining the idea that mining is a desirable proposition for the area, and dismiss all objections as being the views of a small and troublesome group of dissenters. Recently the Australian owned company MRC was granted leave to re-apply for a new prospecting licence, opening the way for a new application for mining. This after their previous application for a mining licence was denied for its lack of compliance, and despite MRC facing a multi-million Rand lawsuit over ruthless and socially and environmentally non-complaint activities at their West Coast based Tormin mine. Local people feel extremely frustrated that their views have persistently been ignored and their democratic rights infringed by authorities, and mining regulations, that favour powerful mining interests over the rights and interests of common citizens.

SWC will continue to support and stand in solidarity with the Amadiba Community in their ongoing struggle to uphold their democratic rights.

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