

“We Know Our Lives are in Danger” – Environment of Fear in South Africa’s Mining-Affected Communities



17TH APRIL 2019

In March 2016, activist [Sikhosphi “Bazooka” Rhadebe](#) was killed at his home after receiving anonymous death threats. [Bazooka](#) was the chairperson of the Amadiba Crisis Committee, a community-based organization formed in 2007 to oppose [mining](#) activity in Xolobeni, [Eastern Cape](#) province. Members of his community had been raising concerns that the titanium mine that Australian company [Mineral Commodities Ltd](#) proposed to develop on [South Africa’s Wild Coast](#) would displace the community and destroy their [environment](#), traditions, and livelihoods. More than three years later, the police have not identified any suspects in his killing.

[Nonhle Mbuthuma](#), another Xolobeni community leader and spokesperson of the Amadiba Crisis Committee, has also faced harassment and death threats from unidentified individuals. Nonhle recalled talking to [Bazooka](#) the day before he was killed. He told her he had seen a hit list that included three people — Nonhle, [Bazooka](#), and another person from the Amadiba Crisis Committee — making rounds in the community. Nonhle fled her home and went into hiding in the days following [Bazooka](#)'s death.

Other [mining](#) areas in [South Africa](#), including [Limpopo](#), KwaZulu-[Natal](#), and [Northwest](#) provinces have had experiences similar to that of Xolobeni. While [Bazooka](#)'s murder and the threats against Nonhle have received domestic and international attention, many attacks on activists have gone unreported or unnoticed both within and outside the country.

People living in communities affected by [mining](#) activities across [South Africa](#) are exercising their human rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly to advocate for the government and companies to respect and protect community members' rights from the potentially serious [environmental](#), social, and [health](#)-related harms of [mining](#). In many cases, such activism has been met with harassment, intimidation, or violence

This report documents threats, attacks, and other forms of intimidation against activists in [mining](#)-affected communities in KwaZulu-[Natal](#), [Limpopo](#), [Northwest](#), and [Eastern Cape](#) provinces, and in domestic nongovernmental organizations challenging [mining projects](#), between 2013 and 2018. Between January and November 2018, two South African nongovernmental organizations working on [environmental](#) justice issues, the Centre for [Environmental](#) Rights and groundWork, and two international nongovernmental organizations, Human Rights Watch and Earthjustice, conducted over 100 in-person and telephone interviews with activists, community leaders, environmentalists, lawyers representing activists, and police and other government officials.

Report by the Human Rights Watch 

<https://www.polity.org.za/article/we-know-our-lives-are-in-danger-environment-of-fear-in-south-africas-mining-affected-communities-2019-04-17>