



***Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance  
(VEJA)***

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A Not for Profit Organisation (NPO), NPO No. 153-572

**Press Statement**

**Vaal Community take to Mass Action**

**Challenging Corporate Environmental Injustices – Challenging [ArcelorMittal](#) and [Seriti Mining](#)**

*Vanderbijlpark, South Africa 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019:* Today, the Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance kicks off two days of mass action against corporate environmental injustices in the Vaal area. Corporates such as ArcelorMittal South Africa (AMSA) and Seriti continue with impunity their everyday business of polluting society that impacts upon people's health and well-being. Government is a co-conspirator for they fail to enforce laws that are there to protect the people of the Vaal.

The VEJA ([Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance](#)) [1] and members of the Vaal community will be in mass action on the 23<sup>th</sup> May outside the gates of AMSA Vanderbijlpark picketing at the main gate from 8am. On the 24<sup>th</sup> May at 9am, they will march from corner Deneyville Road and P10 Road to the gates of the of Seriti Coal Mine.

The Vaal Triangle was declared the first High Priority Area (HPA) by the Department of Environmental Affairs in 2006. Since then nothing has changed in terms of compliance with ambient air quality standards that harms people's health and well-being.

AMSA is the biggest steel manufacturing company in South Africa owned by ArcelorMittal based in Luxemburg and London. It has been one of the biggest polluters of air and water in South Africa, as it owns operations in Saldahana Bay, Newcastle, Vereeniging, Pretoria and Vanderbijlpark. For many years AMSA has refused to disclose their environmental plans to reduce their pollution to communities until, the [Centre for Environmental Rights](#), acting on behalf of VEJA took successful legal action and the [Supreme Court of Appeal forced ArcelorMittal](#) to release the information.

However even after the court case, AMSA has chosen to ignore communities and environmental damages, but has focused on profit making schemes and recently have asked for postponement of the Emission Minimum Standards, standards that compel them to reduce their air pollution and protect community's health. They rather choose to continue to dump their waste and toxic output on communities. There have also been various non-compliances with their water use licences.

Today, AMSA will be hosting their AGM at Vanderbijlpark and communities will be picketing outside the AMG and will hand a memorandum to AMSA management and shareholders. The memorandum will demand that the company comply and invest in the Vanderbijlpark works and other sites in South Africa to ensure that AMSA meets South African laws, rather than seek actively to undermine these laws. They must reduce toxic gases, including greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions. As a result of their emissions South Africa is the largest emitter of GHGs on the African continent and in the top 15 in the world.

Seriti Mining is a new mining company that has taken over the Anglo American New Vaal Collary to supply coal to Lethabo Power Station. The mine has been engaged in massive and aggressive expansion in Northern Free State without any clear public consultations and engagement. VEJA believes that we do not need more coal mining and coal fired power stations for that has ruined our environment, health and made energy unaffordable to the poor in South Africa. Major global capital is pulling out of coal and South African's continue investing in coal. We are going to be left with the legacy of mines after global capital have made their profits.

These are some of the areas of our concern in the Vaal:

- The lack of commitment and implementation of the Air Quality Management Plan in the Vaal Triangle Airshed Priority Area (VTAPA) by government and industry to reduce pollution and protect people's health;
- The fly ash content produced from industrial facilities and particulate matter produced by coal mines impact upon the poor air quality that poses health threats to onsite workers and residents in the at large;
- Mining and burning coal is amongst the major causes of climate change and local pollution. Yet there is no relief from these industries for people;
- Seriti must listen to the residents of the area they operate in when undertaking studies for expansion for local people know best what the socio-economic impacts are of mining and coal;
- Seriti must be transparent as a South African company and must make all their authorisations, applications and Social Labour Plan available to workers and the public; and
- Residents must not only be promised 'fake' jobs but should be provided with meaningful permanent jobs that does not impact upon their health and well-being.

These corporate operations have a negative health, environmental, and social impact in communities such as Boipatong, Bophelong, Sharpeville.

VEJA is part of and supports [AFRIKA VUKA](#) advocating for a 'Fossil Free Africa'.

Together with campaigns such as [Life After Coal](#) we are advocating for a Just Transition and a move to renewable energy alternatives. We believe socially owned renewable energy will empower the already marginalised communities, and this can only be achieved through a 'Just Transition'. Therefore, we urge the commitments on resource mobilisation be channelled towards progressive development that impacts positively on host communities rather than focus only on profit for shareholders.

#### Notes:

[1] VEJA (Vaal Environment Justice Alliance) is a non-profit organisations established in 2006 to respond to environmental pollution in the Vaal Triangle home to big pollution

multinational companies, such as Sasol, Natref, Total SA, ArcelorMittal, Anglo Coal now Seriti mining, Eskom, Samancor, now South 32 and other polluting industries.

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