



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

HAUT-COMMISSARIAT DES NATIONS UNIES AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME • OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
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19 January 2026

Excellency,

I write to inform you that the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (“the Committee”) received information under its early warning and urgent action procedure in relation to the situation of the VaTombe Indigenous People in the Masvingo Province.

According to the information received:

- The VaTombe Indigenous People inhabit the Hanyanya area in the Bikita district and have religious and cultural ties with their traditional territories. The VaTombe Indigenous People has developed a traditional leadership system and a decision-making process based on consensus from leaders of the three main families and on consultations with the heads of the villages.
- As of early 2022, there has been an increase in issuing mining and exploration licences by the Zimbabwe Investment Development Agency (ZIDA) over the ancestral lands of the VaTombe Indigenous People. Nevertheless, many irregularities are reported in the consultation process with them, including bypassing their traditional decision-making process and leadership system, and thus not obtaining their free, prior and informed consent regarding the expansion of the mining operation on their territories.
- The expansion in mining operations, particularly by Bikita Minerals, entailed the development of new mining pits, construction of new processing plants, and construction of a slime dam within the traditional lands of the VaTombe Indigenous People. Overall, these operations have resulted in displacing members of the VaTombe Indigenous People out of their ancestral territories without providing them with fair and just compensation for the lands, territories and resources. Furthermore, the mining activities are causing irreversible damage to their communal lands and resources, including rivers, preventing them from accessing clean water and distributing their undertaking farming activities.

The Committee is concerned that the allegations of the adverse impacts of expanding mining operations in the Masvingo Province, if verified, would infringe the rights of the VaTombe

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Indigenous People protected under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Specifically, the Committee is concerned about the adverse impacts of expanding the mining projects on their right to own, develop, control and use their communal lands, territories and resources, and their right to health and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. It is also concerned about the reported irregularities in the consultation process with the VaTombe Indigenous People and the lack of obtaining their free, prior and informed consent regarding the mining and exploration activities impacting their territories. Lastly, the Committee is concerned about the reported challenges faced by members of the VaTombe Indigenous People in accessing effective protection and remedies, particularly fair and just compensation for their lands, territories and resources impacted by the mining projects.

In this regard, the Committee recalls its General Recommendation [No. 23 \(1997\) on the rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) and its previous concluding observations concerning Zimbabwe ([CERD/C/ZWE/CO/5-11](#), paras. 25 and 26).

In accordance with Article 9 (1) of the Convention and Article 66 of its Rules of procedure, the Committee kindly requests the State party to provide information on the above-mentioned allegations, particularly the impacts of expanding mining operations in Masvingo Province on rights of the VaTombe Indigenous People, by 17 April 2026.

Allow me, Excellency, to reiterate the wish of the Committee to continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Government of Zimbabwe with a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Balcerzak" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michal Balcerzak
Chair

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination