

Nominated for the Public Eye People's Award 2012

by Indonesia Human Rights Committee, www.indonesiahumanrights.org.nz:

Freeport McMoRan

Headquarters: Arizona, USA
Industry: mining
Revenue / Profit: USD 19 billion / USD 4.3 billion (2010)
Owned by: publicly-listed corporation
Employees: 29'700
CEO: Richard C. Adkerson
Website: www.fcx.com

Summary

Precious metals in exchange for death and exploitation: The Arizona-based mining corporation has operated the Grasberg Mine, the world's largest gold and copper mine in West Papua, for 45 years without regard for nature and people. The mine produces 230,000 tons of tailings contaminated with heavy metals every day, resulting in a blanket of copper-laden waste covering over 200 square kilometers (90 square miles) and up to 15 meters (50 feet) deep that kills everything in its path and threatens a World Heritage site. Freeports activities lead to frequent and blatant human rights violations, including the torture of mine opponents. In a large strike at the end of 2011, two strikers were shot dead by the police and union members received death threats. Switzerland is the fifth-largest trading center for Freeport's precious metals (after the U.S., Japan, Indonesia and Spain).

Irresponsible Corporate Behavior

Freeport McMoRan has been exploiting West Papua for four decades. Thanks to 1967 deal with then-dictator Suharto, the corporation has been able to brazenly help itself to the vast gold and copper reserves of West Papua . As a result, Freeport contaminates the environment, drives the indigenous population into slums, and ruins their religious and cultural sites. They have removed a mountaintop considered sacred by local indigenous people to create the world's largest copper and gold mine. The activities of Freeport lead to social disintegration and the creation of ghettos. This form of economic colonization inhibits the development of society, drives people to prostitution, and promotes the sharp rise in HIV infections in the West Papuan population.

Consequences

The mine produces 230,000 tons of tailings contaminated with heavy metals every day, resulting in a blanket of cement-like waste covering over 200 square miles and up to 15 meters (50 feet) deep

that kills everything in its path. The Lorentz National Park, a World Heritage site, is increasingly threatened by Freeport's toxic waste. The displaced population lives in slum-like conditions: In the mining town of Timika, more than half the population lives below the poverty line. Crime, prostitution and HIV infections are steadily rising. This adds oil to the fire in West Papua's already unstable political climate. The potential for conflict surges, with repeated riots, injuries and deaths. More than 160 people have been fatally shot by the military in the surroundings of Freeport's Grasberg Mine.

Current Status and Demands on the Company

Thousands of underpaid mine workers went on strike at the end of 2011, temporarily paralyzing the mine. In light of Freeport's catastrophic practices, the company's financial partners must distance themselves from Freeport; the Norwegian Government Pension Fund has already taken this step. The Indonesia Human Rights Committee claims Freeport cannot operate the Grasberg Mine without committing human rights violations and irreversible environmental destruction, and therefore calls for the closure of the mine.

Further Information

The Indonesian Human Rights Committee:

www.indonesiahumanrights.org.nz

Occupy Phoenix against Freeport:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvJxy2GvOHE

Asian Times on the 2011 strike:

www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/MK02Ae01.html

The Norwegian Government Pension Fund's Disinvestment from Freeport:

www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/fin/press-center/Press-releases/2006/Two-companies---Wal-Mart-and-Freeport---.html?id=104396

Report by the NGO Etan:

etan.org/news/2008/09freeport.htm