



Report Reveals Serious Human Rights Violations as First Quantum Enters Annual Shareholder Meeting

Protests over the Canadian company's Panamanian copper mine were met with violence

Ottawa, Panama City / May 9, 2024 — Today Panamanian organizations released a report documenting the rights violations and criminalization of activists during last year's large-scale protests over First Quantum Minerals' copper mine, Cobre Panamá. The report, [*Human Rights Violations, Abuses, and Incidents Registered During the Protests Against the Mining Contract in Panamá, October-November 2023*](#), was commissioned by the Foundation for Integral Community Development and the Conservation of Ecosystems in Panama (FUNDICCEP) and the Panamanian National Network in Defense of Water, and was conducted by journalists Rekha Chandiramani and Ana Teresa Benjamín M.

The report details:

- Over 20 interviews and first-hand accounts of the excessive use of force by the police against public university students, environmentalists, union members, and Indigenous people, among others;
- Hundreds of reported injuries and four deaths during the protests;
- More than 1,500 cases of arbitrary detentions;
- The ongoing criminalization and legal charges facing 23 activists, protesters, and community leaders for exercising their right to protest; and
- Punitive measures and acts of retaliation towards groups, such as teachers and other unions, that participated in nationwide strikes.

According to **Olmedo Carrasquilla Aguilar** of the Ecological Voices Collective, which is a member of the Panamanian National Network in Defense of Water, "The 2023 national strike is the product of a collapsed system and socio-environmental ungovernability. This report must become a cornerstone of justice so that no people in the world are repressed or killed just for aspiring to better models of life."

Since First Quantum acquired the project in 2013, the Toronto-based company has ignored the devastating environmental impacts of the copper mine. In 2017 and again in 2023, Supreme

Court rulings declared two consecutive contracts unconstitutional, citing concerns over the mine's environmental impact and the lack of a transparent tendering process, in which companies are invited to bid on a project.

As report co-author **Rekha Chandiramani** states, "The protests paralyzed the country for upholding the same corrupt system that granted the original contract that was declared unconstitutional in 2017 for the first time. In both cases the concession was granted directly, without the bidding process required by law."

The 2023 protests, which built off of decades of anti-mining movements and environmental defense around the country, resulted in First Quantum's most recent contract also being declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Following the court ruling, President Laurentino Cortizo ordered the mine closed and approved a moratorium on all future mining activities.

[Jose Raul Mulino](#) was elected president in Panama's national election on May 5 on a pro-business platform that promises to increase foreign direct investment in the country. He has yet to comment on the issues related to the First Quantum mine.

"The Panamanian people have repeatedly and firmly said that they do not approve of metallic mining because of the negative impacts on biodiversity and for the quality of water for hundreds of communities," said **Damaris Sanchez Samudio** of FUNDICCEP. "We denounce and reject all forms of aggression against environmental defenders who are protecting life, forests, rivers, coasts, and mangroves."

"First Quantum Minerals and the Panamanian government must refrain from further criminalizing protesters, present a plan to safely close the mine, and uphold the mining moratorium," said **Paulina Personius** of Earthworks.

Despite the human rights abuses documented in the report, the Canadian Government announced that First Quantum's Panama operations have its full [support](#) and First Quantum has announced that it hopes to reach an [agreement](#) to reopen the mine with Panama's newly elected administration.

"The Canadian government has said it will go to bat for First Quantum Minerals, even as Panamanians have been violently repressed for their legitimate opposition," said **Viviana Herrera**, Latin America Program Coordinator for MiningWatch Canada. "This contradiction should be top of mind for shareholders today and should raise serious alarms about what's in store if First Quantum persists in trying to reopen this mine."

On May 14, 2024, the coalition Panama Vale Más Sin Minería together with its international allies, MiningWatch Canada and Earthworks, will present the report virtually in a bilingual event in Spanish and English. More information [here](#).

Key Documents:

- Executive Summary [in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [French](#)]

- Full Report [in [Spanish](#)]
- [REGISTER](#) for a presentation on the report findings with Panamanian organizations and activists

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