



# SARW

Southern Africa Resource Watch

Miners Campaign: Press Release 03 April 2020

## **Justice for Miners and Vulnerable Communities in the Time of COVID 19**

Noting the serious and unprecedented threat presented by the COVID19 pandemic, the Justice for Miners (JFM) campaign appeals to the general public, the government of South Africa and the governments of Lesotho, Mozambique, eSwatini, and Botswana to exercise special care and consideration when engaging with the regional population of 500 000 ex-miners who worked in the South African gold mines and who are affected by tuberculosis (TB) and silicosis.

These ex-miners and their families suffer from occupational lung diseases caused by working on gold mines. Today many of them are facing slow deaths in conditions of poverty while waiting to be paid the compensation owed to them. Already ill with lung diseases and having compromised immunity, they are particularly vulnerable to infection with diminished chances of survival should they become sick from the coronavirus.

These are the mining communities who dug the gold that built the wealth of South Africa. Noting the irony that those to whom society owes a special debt of care are now facing even graver threats to their lives, we appeal that they should receive special care together with their families.

We urge all members of the public to diligently follow all health directives when making contact with members of this, particularly vulnerable community.

We further urge neighbours and members of the public to support this community by sharing food, water and medical supplies while strictly adhering to the social distancing regulations that have been announced.

We call upon the Tshiamiso Trust, the MBOD, the Compensation Commission and the gold mining industry to intensify efforts to speedily put in place the structures and procedures needed to pay the unpaid statutory compensation due to sick miners in terms of the 5 billion rand out-of-court settlement. There is now greater urgency than ever to meet your obligations to bring relief to this community.



# SARW

Southern Africa Resource Watch

The coronavirus and the measures that have been put in place to contain it will severely affect not only ex-miners but also other vulnerable groups, including the unemployed, those surviving in the informal economy, mining communities, those who will lose their jobs as a result of the economic meltdown caused by the pandemic, the homeless and the elderly. To ensure that adequate support is provided to this population the Justice for Miners campaign endorses.

**A call from civic and community structures in South Africa** and calls on you, too, to support this call. The call can be viewed here: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-03-24-a-programme-of-action-in-the-time-of-covid19-a-call-for-social-solidarity/>

While people are in lockdown over the next three weeks the Justice for Miners campaign and Breathe Films will make available online the documentary, “Dying for Gold” at:

<https://player.vimeo.com/video/377487733>

[www.dyingforgold.com](http://www.dyingforgold.com)[www.justiceforminers.org.za](http://www.justiceforminers.org.za)

<https://www.sarwatch.co.za/>

[www.facebook.com/Dyingforgold/](https://www.facebook.com/Dyingforgold/)

[www.facebook.com/JusticeforMiners/](https://www.facebook.com/JusticeforMiners/).

The film tells the background story to the silicosis and TB class action that was settled out of court in June 2019. This story is a telling example of how those whose contributions to society create the foundations of wealth are rewarded with illness, poverty and suffering. The film is linked to the Justice for Miners campaign.

The Justice for Miners Campaign is an initiative of Breathe Films and the Southern Africa Resource Watch (SARW).