

May 1, 2026

Last April 2, 2026, Barrick Mining Corporation [disclosed](#) that they are slowing down activity and reviewing security risks around the Reko Diq project in Balochistan, Pakistan until mid-2027. While this development is crucial given the ongoing war in West Asia, the Reko Diq project has been exacerbating risks for human rights defenders, fueling conflict and insecurity, and leading to environmental and social destruction in Balochistan.

In this letter, focused particularly on the human rights concerns, we – the undersigned organizations – present some of the most recent security incidents and we urge the development banks which are financing or considering the project – including the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Development Finance Corporation (DFC), the United States Export-Import Bank (US EXIM), Export Development Canada (EDC), Germany’s KfW IPEX-Bank GmbH, Sweden’s Export kreditnämnden (EKN) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) – to suspend the project until key human rights and environmental concerns are independently assessed and addressed; ensure transparency and compliance with safeguards (including recognizing the rights of the affected Baloch communities as Indigenous Peoples and ensuring oversight of the security forces deployed in the project area); and establish independent monitoring mechanisms to assess the project impacts.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE UN’S UNHEEDED WARNINGS

For several months, civil society organizations (CSOs) have raised concerns that the Reko Diq mine may further exacerbate the already fragile and complex situation in Balochistan. In August 2025, a [joint statement](#) signed by more than 35 CSOs called on international actors to reconsider their involvement in the project in light of the escalating risks to local Baloch people and workers associated with operating in the region.

In November 2025, civil society organizations made a submission to several UN Special Procedure Mandate Holders. Following this submission, the mandate holders issued communications to [Barrick Mining Corporation](#) (which owns 50 % of the Reko Diq Mining Company), the [Asian Development Bank](#) (ADB), the Governments of [Canada](#) and [Pakistan](#), and the [International Financial Corporation](#), among others. These communications highlighted serious concerns regarding the human rights situation in Balochistan, including the arrest and detention of human rights defenders, excessive use of force, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings.

Over the past year, civil society organizations have also engaged financial institutions through multiple rounds of correspondence and outreach, both before and after investment decisions. These communications sought to provide investors with information on the situation on the ground in Balochistan and to highlight the potential human rights, legal, and reputational risks associated with involvement in the project. However, despite mounting evidence and civil society’s sustained engagement, the project has continued to move forward without any change in their operations.

DETERIORATION OF SECURITY IN BALOCHISTAN

The security situation in Balochistan has deteriorated significantly in recent years, with an increase in large-scale violent incidents affecting transportation networks, public infrastructure, and urban centres across the province. These incidents have resulted in the loss of life, injuries to civilians, and significant disruption to daily life for communities in the region. At the same time, intensified security operations have also raised serious human rights concerns, with documented patterns and escalating instances of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, and other abuses affecting local residents and human rights defenders. Together, these dynamics have contributed to a highly volatile environment that poses risks not only to infrastructure and economic activity but also to the safety, rights, and livelihoods of individuals and communities living in Balochistan.

Recent incidents illustrate the severity of the security challenges. In November 2024, a [suicide bombing](#) at a railway station in Quetta killed at least two dozen people and injured many more, marking one of the deadliest attacks in the city in recent years. In March 2025, armed attackers [halted](#) a passenger train after damaging railway tracks and opened fire on the train, leading to a hostage situation and a major military operation. The incident resulted in at least 31 deaths, including soldiers, railway staff and civilians. Soon after, a suicide car bombing [struck](#) a convoy transporting security personnel, killing at least seven people and injuring others.

In May 2025, an explosive attack targeting a school bus [killed](#) at least 10 people, including several children, and injured more than 50 others. On 31 January 2026, a [series](#) of large-scale coordinated attacks across multiple districts, including Quetta and Gwadar, resulted in the deaths of more than 30 people, including civilians and security personnel, and triggered extensive security operations across the province.

GROWING MILITARIZATION

Due to ongoing conflict brought about by resource extraction and wide-scale human rights violations in Balochistan, the Reko Diq project has also been heavily militarized, with [both public and private security forces](#) guarding the site. According to the Security Services Framework Agreement, the government has deployed the Frontier Corps Balochistan and Levies (which has been recently [merged](#) with the Balochistan Police), while the Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC) has employed the private services of Askari Guards Limited, which has [ties](#) to the Pakistan military. The RDMC has taken on the responsibility of training and ensuring that security forces adhere to international human rights and security standards, including conducting due diligence when deploying members of the armed forces.

With the recent attacks and widescale unrest, in February 2025, Barrick Mining [reviewed the project's security arrangements](#). This entailed allocating a significant amount of money — a total of [Rs 1.79 billion](#) (approximately USD 6.4 million) — for the deployment of security around the project site. The government says this

would support the [establishment](#) of a dedicated Frontier Corps to guard borders with Iran and Afghanistan, as well as strengthening its intelligence network in the name of security.

The proposed security arrangement reportedly “aims to safeguard” mineral extraction and investments, thereby further militarizing the region, particularly Chagai, the host district of the Reko Diq project. With the amount of influence and control of the security forces over the project, the local Baloch have raised concerns regarding the militarization of their land. This has already contributed to intensified conflict and unrest, as Baloch movements continue to challenge the control over their territories and resources.

The presence of military and security forces has also contributed to a climate of fear, given the [role that the Levies, Police and Frontier Corps have played](#) in arresting, disappearing, and killing Baloch people in order to suppress dissent. Information around attacks, arrests and disappearances against the Baloch people, as well as the location of detention facilities, is rarely disclosed.

The growing militarization of this region is particularly concerning because of the Baloch’s close ties to their land and their rights as Indigenous Peoples. Despite the Pakistani government, Barrick Mining, and the financiers failing to recognize them as such, [UN Special Rapporteurs](#) have asserted that the Baloch people are Indigenous according to the criteria of self-identification, traditional lifestyle, distinct language and culture, unique social organization and historical connection to the land. This assessment is based on the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the context of the Reko Diq mine, the failure to recognize the Baloch as Indigenous Peoples also draws into question the adequacy and legitimacy of the project’s impact assessments and consultation processes, particularly with respect to international safeguard standards for Indigenous Peoples that require Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

SPECIFIC SECURITY INCIDENTS RELATED TO THE REKO DIQ MINE

In this section, we report three recent security incidents that are directly related to the Reko Diq project. It is important to note that, due to the ongoing conflict, it is extremely difficult to independently verify information about security incidents. Bank staff, as well as journalists, human rights defenders and civil society organizations, cannot easily and safely access the mine site. As investors over-rely on information from RDMC, they lack oversight of project implementation. Therefore, they cannot independently assess project risks and ensure compliance with their safeguards and commitments.

SUICIDE BOMBING IN NOKKUNDI

Baloch activists, such as [Sabiha Baloch](#), have warned that it was only a matter of time before armed Baloch insurgents would organise an attack against the project,

considering the uptick in violence in the region and the fact that the project was moving forward amidst the opposition of the Baloch community.

On 30 November 2025, as reported by [The Diplomat](#) among others, a suicide bombing coupled with an armed attack targeted a compound housing foreign staff and engineers working for the Saindak and Reko Diq projects in the city of Nokkundi. The Balochistan Liberation Front claimed responsibility for the attack.

ABDUCTION OF TWO REKO DIQ EMPLOYEES

As [reported](#) by local media, on two separate occasions over the weekend of 23 November 2025, Pakistani security forces abducted and forcibly disappeared two Reko Diq employees. Both were taken from the company's vehicles.

The project developer, the Reko Diq Mining Company, informed the ADB that one of the employees was eventually released while the other was put on trial, but that the disappearances were “unrelated to the project and were carried out by a wing of law enforcement outside the project's Security Framework Agreement.” However, there is no information on where the detained employee is being held, what charges he is facing, and under what conditions the other employee was held. This is extremely concerning, given the well-documented and [systematic](#) abuses by Pakistani security forces targeting ethnic Baloch, including [arbitrary detention](#), torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions. Local and international CSOs are concerned about the detained employee's conditions and whether his right to a fair trial is being respected.

For Reko Diq Mining Company in particular, questions arise about what it is doing to ensure the safety of Indigenous Baloch employees, and whether they can work without fearing being arbitrarily targeted by the authorities. As one local [news report](#) pointed out, the Security Services Framework Agreement between Reko Diq and the Pakistan government entrusted the Balochistan Frontier Corps with “apprehending illegal immigrants and countering terrorist activities, including securing the Reko Diq project.” [Local](#) and international human rights organizations reported the Frontier Corps was responsible for most of the abductions in Balochistan, including 56 cases out of 107 enforced disappearances [reported](#) by the Human Rights Council of Balochistan in January this year. This clearly indicates a risk for collusion of Reko Diq security with other Pakistani security services targeting the Baloch people.

DETENTION OF MINING COMPANY PERSONNEL

On 13 March 2026, Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) fighters [temporarily detained](#) personnel of a “mineral exploration company” at the Wadh area of Chagai, damaged their vehicle and seized their weapon. While the personnel were released safely, BLF has warned that such instances will continue unless mineral exploration and extraction of natural resources in Balochistan is ceased immediately. As mentioned in BLF's official press release about the incident, if companies do not stop such activities, “they will be responsible for the consequences.”

BARRICK'S HUMAN RIGHTS TRACK RECORD

Finally, local and international CSOs are concerned about Barrick Mining's track record in other projects and fear the same patterns might be replicated in the Reko Diq mines. In particular, in other cases where Barrick relies on security arrangements that include armed national police forces, there are ongoing and well-documented allegations of serious human rights abuses. For example, at the North Mara Gold Mine in Tanzania, allegations of excess use of force against local Indigenous peoples have led to four [transnational lawsuits](#). Two have been settled on behalf of the Indigenous Kuria plaintiffs while the other two are ongoing. It is deeply concerning that Barrick appears willing to settle lawsuits rather than address the allegations about its security arrangements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The heavy militarization of the project area, the documented pattern of human rights violations in the region, the limited possibility for independent monitoring, and unresolved concerns regarding Indigenous Peoples' rights raise serious questions about whether the project can be implemented in a manner consistent with international human rights standards and the environmental and social safeguard commitments of its financiers.

In light of these concerns, we urge the development banks involved in, or considering, financing the Reko Diq project – including International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United States Export-Import Bank (US EXIM), Export Development Canada (EDC), Germany's KfW IPEX-Bank GmbH, Sweden's Export kreditnämnden (EKN) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) – to take the following steps to ensure compliance with their environmental, social, and human rights commitments:

- **Suspend disbursement of funds and reconsider financing to the project until key human rights and environmental concerns are independently assessed and addressed:** Financiers should ensure that independent and credible environmental and human rights impact assessments are conducted to determine whether the project can proceed without exacerbating harm to local communities and Indigenous peoples.
- **Ensure full transparency regarding project financing and safeguard implementation:** Financiers should publicly disclose relevant project documentation, including loan agreements, environmental and social monitoring reports, their own due diligence process and agreements governing cooperation with security forces, in order to allow for meaningful public scrutiny and accountability.
- **Clarify how the project's human rights management plan and security arrangements have been adapted to the current security environment in Balochistan:** In particular, financiers should provide information on the safeguards and

oversight mechanisms in place to ensure that security forces deployed to protect the project operate in accordance with international human rights standards.

- **Ensure that project safeguards fully recognize and address the rights of the Baloch people as Indigenous Peoples:** Project assessments and safeguard frameworks should be aligned with international standards relating to Indigenous Peoples, including requirements for meaningful consultation and participation in decisions affecting their lands, territories, and resources.

- **Provide full transparency regarding the ongoing review and the security arrangements around the project:** Financiers should disclose the number and mandate of security personnel deployed in connection with the project, the vetting and oversight mechanisms used to ensure that these personnel have not been implicated in human rights violations, and any financial or logistical support provided by the project to public security forces.

- **Establish independent monitoring mechanisms to assess the human rights and environmental impacts of the project:** such mechanisms should allow for regular reporting, meaningful engagement with affected communities, and the participation of independent civil society organizations and human rights experts.

SIGNATORIES

1. Accountability Counsel
2. Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE)
3. Asian Forum For Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
4. Association of Women for Awareness and Motivation (AWAM)
5. Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability
6. Centre for Human Rights and Development
7. Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC)
8. Defence of Human Rights
9. Defenders in Development campaign
10. Human Rights Council of Balochistan (HRCB)
11. Inisiasi Masyarakat Adat (IMA)
12. International Accountability Project (IAP)
13. Korean House for International Solidarity
14. KOTHOWAIN
15. MiningWatch Canada
16. Oyu Tolgoi Watch

17. Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)
18. Progressive Voice
19. Public Association "Dignity"
20. Recourse
21. Recourse Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU)
22. Rivers & Rights
23. Rivers Without Boundaries, Mongolia
24. Urgewald