



AGENDA ITEM

INTERVENTION IN RESPECT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN AFRICA

OBS /386

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE NPC

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Madame Chairperson, I intend to address the issue of the assassination of human rights defenders who challenge business interests and submit that even though the examples arise from the mining sector, the point of this intervention is to focus on the rights of the human rights defenders as such.

In March this year, Madame Chair, two people were assassinated in cold blood, one from the DRC and the other from South Africa.

On 20 March Father Vincent Machozi, an Assumptionist Catholic priest who fought against what is now termed the “Coltan Wars”, was killed in a storm of bullets by a group of men wearing Congolese military uniforms. At the time of his shooting he was in a peace-making retreat. Father Machozi’s so-called sin was to write about collusion between the Congolese and Rwandese presidents in the massacre of civilians and to throw light on what he saw as a conspiracy among political elites, armed factions, and commercial interests in the eastern part of the DRC. In the end, Madame Chair, the main winners of these “coltan wars” are the transnational corporations.¹

On 22 March another activist, Sikhosiphi Bazooka Rhadebe, was shot dead in South Africa by people who claimed to be police officers. He was an activist who campaigned against mining on the east coast of South Africa and thereby challenged the interests of a large Australian mining company.

Madame Chairperson, we commend the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders for her forceful and passionate defence and protection of human rights defenders in situations of great peril. In our view these incidents highlight a very grave threat to a different kind of human rights

¹ See <https://sojo.net/articles/congolese-priest-fighting-coltan-mining-assassinated>



defender. A human rights defender that deals with issues of money in this world of abundant greed needs special protection, Madame Chair.

We consequently call upon the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders to develop a special focus on this type of human rights defender within her mandate. We also ask that the Special Rapporteur engage with the governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa to conduct independent investigations into the assassination of Father Machozi and Mr Rhadebe respectively and that they ensure that the perpetrators are prosecuted.

I would like to conclude with the words of Che Guevara who said: “the life of a single human being is worth more than the wealth of the richest man on earth.”

Thank you.