

*Burkina Faso court finds
Canadian mine execs guilty over
flood disaster*

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Burkina Faso Prime Minister Albert Ouédraogo visits the Perkoa mine. Credit: Primature du Burkina Faso.

Ouagadougou, September 15 (RHC)-- A court in Burkina Faso has found two executives of Canadian mining firm Trevali guilty of involuntary manslaughter following a mine flood disaster in April that killed eight miners. Diti Moussa Palenfo, country director of Nantou Mining, the Trevali entity that owns Perkoa zinc mine, said Wednesday that one manager was given a 24-month sentence, while a manager from Trevali's contractor Byrnegut was given a 12-month sentence. Both sentences were suspended.

The Perkoa zinc mine, which is located about 120 km (75 miles) west of the capital Ouagadougou, was abruptly submerged on April 16 after torrential rain fell unexpectedly during the country's dry season.

There had been some hope during a month-long search and rescue operation that the missing men might have reached the rescue chamber, which is stocked with food and water and located approximately 570m (1,870 feet) below ground. But no survivors were found in the chamber on May 17 after days of search by a rescue party.

Relatives of some of the victims filed a complaint for involuntary homicide, causing danger to life and failure to help people in danger. Burkina Faso's government launched a judicial probe into the incident afterwards and said mine managers would be banned from leaving the country while investigations were under way.

In a statement in June, Trevali said that together with Burkinabe authorities, it was investigating the events around the flooding. "Mining and milling operations at Perkoa will remain suspended for the foreseeable future and the Company has suspended its production and cost guidance for 2022 as it relates to Perkoa," it added.

The mine consists of an open pit with underground shafts and galleries below. Most of the workers who were there at the time of the flash flood were able to escape, but the missing eight were more than 520 meters (1,706 feet) beneath the surface. Six of the men were Burkina Faso nationals, one was from Tanzania and another from Zambia.

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