

Chile Sues Barrick Gold Over 10 New Environmental Violations



Santiago de Chile, April 25 (teleSUR-RHC)-- Chilean environmental authorities announced on Thursday that they will file 10 new charges against Canadian mining company Barrick Gold for failing to follow environmental requirements at its Pascua Lama gold and silver mine.

"Barrick's Pascua Lama project has been non-compliant with environmental regulations for years, and Barrick used to instruct their employees not to speak to regulators and the media, or bring cameras to work. I'm happy to see that this negligence has caught up with them," Sakura Saunders, editor of ProtestBarrick.net, told teleSUR English.

In October 2013, the Superintendence for the Environment had already condemned Barrick, issuing the company a \$16 million fine over 23 violations committed at the Pascua-Lama project, while also ordering the suspension of any mining operation.

In March 2014, a Chilean court revoked the fine, but maintained the suspension, contesting that the environmental regulator had wrongly grouped the infringements into five categories instead of each separately, and ordered it to re-work the case. Barrick had then pleaded guilty for 22 of the 23 charges it was held responsible for, only denying that it needed to improve the protection of the valley below its mine site.

“Pascua Lama exists in a fragile environment and part of it is even within an UNESCO biosphere reserve, and Barrick had to commit to 400 environmental conditions so the project can proceed,” added Saunders, whose website serves as a portal for groups researching and organizing around Barrick Gold's mining operations.

“Many doubt that it is possible to operate a gold mine without irreparably damaging the environment there, as it is an arid region that relies on the glaciers next to Pascua Lama for water.” The 10 new violations announced, committed between 2013 and 2015, included failing to properly protect flora and fauna, monitor glaciers, and manage local water use.

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