



Human rights abuses linked to transition mineral mining surge by 111% in just one year

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Cobalt mine Energy transition minerals Attacks on whistleblowers

The *Canary* has [reported previously](#) on the [Business and Human Rights Centre's Transition Minerals Tracker](#). And now [the latest report](#) reveals a dramatic and accelerating human rights crisis at the mines supplying the global transition to [clean energy](#).

The figures for 2025 show a staggering 111% year-on-year increase. There were 329 allegations of abuse linked to transition mineral mining operations worldwide, up from 156 the previous year.

It's the only research of its kind. And it reveals direct implications for renewable energy companies relying on these minerals and their investors:

- Nearly 70% of mines associated with at least one allegation of abuse are owned by or linked to listed companies. This represents significant material risk for investors.
- In 2025 alone, community resistance resulted in 27 mine suspensions, slowdowns or closures.
- One in seven allegations (44 out of 329) led to lawsuits or regulatory action.
- Since 2010, the report has recorded a total of 1,226 allegations of abuse, closely linked to rising social conflict around mining operations.

Despite these risks, corporate accountability remains dangerously weak. Just 10 companies and 33 mines (out of 299 tracked) accounted for 50% of all 2025 allegations.

Glencore, Rio Tinto and First Quantum Minerals led the list of most frequently implicated companies, in part due to their market dominance.#

Yet concentration among a small number of actors does not diminish the systemic nature of the risk. Close to half the mines linked to allegations of abuse lacked even a basic public [human rights](#) policy.

And the absence of meaningful human rights due diligence is a concern for the entire renewable energy sector.

Systemic risk across geographies and minerals

The 2026 *Tracker* numbers make clear that human rights risks are not confined to a handful of operations or geographies:

- Copper, which accounts for around a quarter of renewable energy mineral demand, is associated with 60% of allegations recorded since 2010.
- The risks for iron ore, bauxite, nickel and rare earth elements are also growing.
- All regions recorded a surge in allegations in 2025.
- Africa saw the sharpest rise, with 100 allegations recorded – an increase of 122% from 2024.
- South America continued to record a high number of allegations, with 97 in 2025 – nearly double from 2024.
- [Workers’ rights](#) and safety are under significant threat, with 92 allegations recorded, including 22 deaths – nearly a 2024 figure.

Blanca Racionero Gomez of the Business and Human Rights Centre said:

This year’s data is the biggest increase we have ever seen year-to-year and makes clear that this is no longer an emerging issue. The world cannot build a clean energy future on the foundation of human rights abuses – and one built in this way will not ultimately succeed.

The minerals powering our clean energy future are being extracted at a growing human cost, with allegations of abuse up 111% in a single year – and Indigenous communities, workers, environmental defenders and women paying the heaviest price.

A small number of powerful mining companies are responsible for the lion’s share of this harm – and too many are operating without even the most basic human rights policies in place.

This is a moral failure, and a strategic one: we can see communities are fighting back, mines are being shut down, and supply chains are being disrupted.

Every year of inaction risks more harm to those on the frontlines, as well as another year of risk accumulating for investors and companies who have the power, and the responsibility, to do better.

Direct consequences for investors and their renewable energy companies

There is a human rights crisis unfolding in the supply chains of renewable energy companies and this is turning into a direct risk for investors. Their portfolios are directly exposed to the reputational, financial

and legal consequences, representing material financial risk.

For renewable energy companies, the picture is equally stark. Social conflict around mining operations is on the rise, with 173 cases recorded, including protests (61), strikes (10) and lawsuits or regulatory action (44). Failing to address these harms is already leading to mineral supply chain disruptions, affecting operational timelines and costs.

Gomez added:

Mining companies and their investors cannot treat human rights as a compliance exercise. Respect for human rights, fair negotiations, the [Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples](#) and protection for people raising concerns about mining impacts are essential conditions for a successful energy transition.

Where these safeguards are absent, conflict follows. Communities resist, projects stall, supply chains become less reliable, and risks for investors and companies grow. A just transition is not only the most approach it is the only durable one.

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