

## TO THE ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT:

### Stop the Beifa Coal Project and the Violation of the Rights of the Dinde Community in Hwange, Zimbabwe

17 May 2021

The undersigned organizations are deeply concerned with events unfolding in the Dinde Community in Hwange District of Zimbabwe where a Chinese company, Beifa Investments, have started exploration work for coal despite clear objection by the local community. The Chinese investor has vowed to continue with the exploration project despite the community protests and went further to disclose its intention to set up a thermal power station in that community. The special grant issued to Beifa Investments covers 4070 Hectares in 4 wards, namely ward 13, 14, 19 and 20. We are further concerned with remarks attributed to the Minister of State for Matabeleland North Affairs Mr. Richard Moyo who threatened that his government will not tolerate any resistance to the project by the community, arguing that protesters will be arrested. His threats came barely two weeks after the Vice Chairperson of Dinde Residents Association was arrested for resisting the mine. Never Tshuma is currently out on bail and his case will be heard in court on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

**We stand in support of Never Tshuma and the community and are alarmed by and oppose the repression of community activists who are defending their land, environment, cultural rights, and livelihoods. This statement further calls for the charges to be dropped and the case to be dismissed.**

Villagers argue that the Beifa investments are in breach of environmental and customary laws of the country as they have not engaged the community for a social license. They fear that, should the coal project continue, some will be subjected to forced relocations while others will be exposed to air and water pollution, especially from Nyantuwe River which provides drinking water for humans and livestock. Villagers also fear loss of livelihoods and grazing land for their livestock; destruction of cultural heritage sites like graveyards for the Nekatambe Chieftainship and also cultural site for ordaining traditional leaders. The proposed site for the project also has economically significant features like a dip tank which was donated to the community by the USAID and the village cattle sale pen.

#### THE RIGHT TO SAY NO

According to Dinde Residents Association, from February 2019 to December 2019, a team of Chinese nationals would tour the village without consulting or engaging locals. In December 2019, the same team brought some lightweight machinery and set up a camp in the village. Locals mobilised each other and approached the Chinese to establish the nature of business they were undertaking in the area. In a show of resistance, locals ordered them to leave and return with documents granting them permission to work in Dinde. Thereafter, the Chinese investors have visited Dinde community with several officers from the Environmental Management Agency; Hwange Rural District Council; Traditional Leadership; members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Zimbabwe National Army and a local miner.

#### DINDE COMMUNITY HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Dinde Community is in Ward 13 in Hwange Rural District Council. It is home to thousands of Nambyas and Tongas with a preponderance of the Tonga who first settled in Hwange district up to Victoria Falls right upstream of the Zambezi River between 300 AD and 400 AD. The Nambyas

tracked in from Masvingo in the early 19th century. According to local traditional leader, most people who settled in Dinde area were relocated by the Rhodesian government in 1920 to pave way for the Hwange National Park. The area has had five Chiefs since its establishment in 1920 and four of the chiefs who have passed on were buried near the site where the Chinese want to mine. The community depends on subsistence farming but also specialise on livestock production as soils are predominantly barren. The people of Dinde depend on Nyantuwe River for drinking water - both for humans and livestock.

We call upon the Government of Zimbabwe to:

- Immediately halt the Beifa Investments Project and address the concerns raised by the Dinde community
- Stop intimidation campaigns and threats to the Dinde community resisting the proposed project
- Drop all charges and the case against Never Tshuma
- Listen to the community's energy and development needs and find alternatives to dirty coal

## **This statement is endorsed by the following organisations:**

350Africa.org

Africa Coal Network

Africa Climate Justice Group

Alternative Information & Development Centre, Cape Town

Amigas de la Tierra/Friends of the Earth Spain

Amnesty International Zimbabwe

Centre for Citizens Conserving

Centre for Natural Resource Governance

deCOALonize Campaign

Denver Justice & Peace Committee

Dinde Residents Association

Ecologistas en Acción-Spain

Friends of Lake Turkana

Friends of the Earth Spain

Global Justice Ecology Project

Global Rights

Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) Africa

GroundWork, Friends of the Earth South Africa

Igapo Project - France

International Accountability Project

Justica Ambiental/Friends of the Earth Mozambique

Leave it in the Ground Initiative

London Mining Network

Lupane Youth for Development Trust

Matabeleland Institute for Human Rights

Red Latinoamericana de Mujeres Defensoras de los Derechos Sociales y Ambientales

Rivers without Boundaries Coalition

Rural Development Policy Institute

Oyu Tolgoi Watch

People's Dialogue Southern Africa

Power Shift Africa

Rettet den Regenwald, Germany

Salva la Selva, Spain

Southern Africa Campaign to Dismantle Corporate Power

Southern Africa Resource Watch

Southern African Rural Women's Assembly

Sustainable Holistic Development Foundation

The Corner House, UK

The Gaia Foundation (UK)

Trust for Community Outreach and Education, South Africa

Witness Radio – Uganda

WoMin African Alliance

Zimbabwe Diamond and Allied Mineral Workers Union

Zimbabwe Natural Resource Forum