



# HWANGE WOMEN ARRESTED FOR DEMANDING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



SIX Hwange women were on the 31st of May 2022 arrested at Raylton residential area in Hwange for demanding environmental justice against air pollution caused by coal shunting trucks.

The women in Hwange accused the trucks from coking companies of violating Section 73 of the Constitution by causing dust pollution at Raylton residential area. Section 73 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe states that every person has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and prevent pollution and ecological degradation. The women went on to block Zimbabwe Zhongxin Coking Company (ZZCC) trucks that are ferrying coal from Zhong Jian Colliery. The trucks use Old Victoria Falls – Bulawayo Road, which is a narrow dirty road passing through the residential area stirring thick clouds of dust. The trucks also pose danger to children since they travel at high speeds.

Using logs, poles and stones, the women blocked the road demanding that the companies suppress the dust every day before the trucks can move. One of the drivers called the police which came in and arrested the 6 women. Despite the availability of a special designated road for trucks, the truck drivers prefer the one that passes through Raylton residential area because it is shorter. The dust is blowing into the community



with some settling in people's homes, thereby exposing them to respiratory diseases.

The 6 women who were arrested were charged with obstructing the free passage along any road in violation of Section 46, subsection 2(f) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act [Chapter 9:23]. They were made to pay ZW\$2000.00 fine and released.

Women in Raylton residential area highlighted that they have endured the effects of the dust for years and recently decided to engage the authorities to resolve the matter.

"We approached the Zimbabwe Republic Police and requested them to bar the trucks from using this road. The police told us to engage the companies.

"We went to Zhong Jian, Zimbabwe Power Company and Hwange Coal Unification Company. The companies disassociated themselves from the trucks and suggested that we stop them and ask who owns them. We did as advised but we were arrested in the process," said one of the women who was arrested.

Raylton is a low-density residential area formerly owned by National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ). The suburb is located within the Hwange Colliery Company Limited concession.

The women told CNRG that they are not able to dry their laundry outside due to the dust in that area. One of the ladies who was arrested has a child who suffers from asthma. She has resorted to sending the child to her relatives in other areas to avoid the dust.

Raylton residential suburb does not have electricity. Power was reportedly disconnected between June and October 2021 over a debt owed to the power generating company by the NRZ and since then the matter has not been resolved.

"We do not have electricity here, so we use fire for cooking, and we do so outside. The dust raised by these trucks contaminates our food," another woman said. The women said they cannot open their windows due to the dust. The team from CNRG also had an opportunity to see these trucks passing by that road and the dust was unbearable. Similar circumstances are also observable in many communities where mining is taking place in Zimbabwe. Mining companies externalise the environmental cost of their business activities whilst families pay for the cost of pollution caused by mining activities while the companies get profits. Families pay for mining costs by their loss of health and rights to live in a clean environment.



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