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Brazil: UN experts call for probe into deadly dam collapse

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GENEVA (30 January 2019) - UN human rights experts* have called for a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the collapse of a tailing dam in Minas Gerais, Brazil, on 25 January 2019, the second such incident involving the same company in the past three years.

Dozens were killed and hundreds left missing by the disaster involving the Córrego do Feijão mine owned by the mining company Vale. Experts expressed their deepest condolences to the families of the victims and solidarity to those affected by the catastrophic collapse of the tailing dam.

The tragedy demands accountability and calls into question preventive measures taken subsequent to the Samarco mining disaster in Minas Gerais just over three years ago, when a catastrophic flood of mining waste near Mariana killed 19 people and affected the lives of millions, including indigenous communities.” the experts said.**

“We urge the Government to act decisively on its commitment to do everything in its power to prevent more such tragedies and to bring to justice those responsible for this disaster,” the experts said, noting with concern deregulatory efforts on environmental and social protection in Brazil over the recent years.

“We call upon the Brazilian Government to prioritize the safety evaluations of existing dams and rectify current licensing and safety inspection processes to prevent reoccurrence of this tragic incident. We further call upon the Government not to authorize any new tailing dams nor allow any activities that would affect the integrity of existing ones until safety is ensured.”

UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics Baskut Tuncak made a specific call for a transparent, impartial, rapid and competent investigation into the toxicity of the waste, with full accessibility of information for the general public, and urged for necessary precautionary measures to be taken immediately.

The experts also called on the mining company Vale to act in accordance with its responsibility to identify, prevent and mitigate adverse human rights impacts; to cooperate fully with authorities investigating into the disaster; and to provide for or cooperate in the remediation of harm caused through legitimate processes.

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See also report by the Working Group on Business and Human Right on its visit to Brazil ([A/HRC/32/45/Add.1](#))

(*) The UN experts: **Mr. Baskut Tuncak**, Special Rapporteur on the implications for [human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes](#); **Mr. Léo Heller**, Special Rapporteur on human rights to water and sanitation; *The Working Group on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises*: **Mr. Surya Deva**, **Ms. Elżbieta Karska**, **Mr. Githu Muigai**, **Mr. Dante Pesce** and **Ms. Anita Ramasastry**; **Mr. David R. Boyd**, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment and **Ms. Victoria Tauli Corpuz**, Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples (see the report on visit to Brazil [A/HRC/33/42/Add.1](#)).

()** *The experts communicated their concerns about the detrimental human rights impact caused by the collapse of tailing dam in Mariana in the state of Minas Gerais to the Government of Brazil and related companies in November 2015 (Ref. BRA 10/2015).*

The Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

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