



## **Economic and Social Justice Trust PRESS RELEASE**

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29 May 2024

### **ESJT supports Kavango conservancy leaders standing up to Canadian oil driller**

ReconAfrica is a Canadian oil and gas company exploring in the Kavango regions of Namibia. The company's operations have been marred by controversy since they arrived. Since December of 2020, the company has been accused by communities and watchdog groups of failing to fully assess environmental risks and line oil waste pits with plastic to protect groundwater, to drilling before getting land and water permits. Again and again, the company has cut corners and flouted laws and regulations, according to official documents and eyewitness accounts.

ReconAfrica drilled two test wells before applying for all the required rights and permits and relocated the second—without permission—inside the Kapinga Kamwalye community conservancy. Protests in Namibia and loud criticism abroad seem to have done nothing to slow the company's work. In 2022, the company was supposed to do a full Environmental Impact Assessment in order to continue operations. An EIA requires consultation but the company merely did an 'amendment' to their original EIA instead of doing a new one. This amendment outlined an extensive, new, 12 well drilling program. Namibia's Environmental Management Act makes clear that a full EIA is required for any project of that scale.

In June 2022, The Economic and Social Justice Trust (ESJT) and Conservancies and Community Forest Associations from the Kavango regions appealed the decision of the Environmental Commissioner to award a new Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) to ReconAfrica. We stated at the time that ReconAfrica used the amendment process to circumvent public participation. ReconAfrica's environmental consultant restricted Namibian organisations and affected communities from raising their concerns. This represented a clear violation of Namibians' right to engage in the democratic process.

ReconAfrica's rights violations have attracted international attention. More than 400,000 people globally have [signed a petition](#) started by Thomas Muronga (chair of the Kapinga Kamwalye Community Conservancy), with Avaaz urging the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, Hon. Pohamba Shifeta, to make his official ruling and revoke ReconAfrica's drilling licence. More than a year after the hearing was held, the ruling is still outstanding.

In November 2023, Namibian civil society organisations and Kavango community leaders teamed up with investigators from the University of Toronto's International Human Right Project to detail the ReconAfrica's violations of Namibian communities. They took affidavits from affected community members. The 187-page complaint which contains detailed allegations

([https://drive.google.com/file/d/102qVldbz0UX7T\\_7fE6rxG2lk4agwFixQ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/102qVldbz0UX7T_7fE6rxG2lk4agwFixQ/view))

points out that, *"Despite the various safeguards in place in Namibian law to protect the environment and local communities in the context of extractive activities, ReconAfrica not only violated such requirements imposed by domestic laws and regulations but also violated international human rights law in the course of its operations in the Kapinga Kamwalye Conservancy (including Mbambi and Shakambu villages), Ncaute Community Forest (including Kawe and Ncaute villages), Ncumcara Community Forest, Likwaterera Community Forest (including Shiwandamo village), Khaudum North Complex (composed of George Mukoya Conservancy and Muduva Nyangana Conservancy), and surrounding areas."*

Earlier this month, we wrote to the Honourable Minister to finally make his ruling on the appeal. The affected communities have the right to access a remedy for the harms done to them. They have waited too long for justice.