

Mining opponents harassed, killed – advocacy groups

Community activists who oppose mining projects in SA are often harassed, threatened and sometimes killed, according to a report by advocacy groups.

The report, *We Know Our Lives Are in Danger*, was prepared with HRW, groundWork, Earthjustice and the Centre for Environmental Rights.

Municipalities frequently block attempts by communities to protest against projects using reasons that have no basis in law, HRW said.

Peaceful demonstrations are often violently broken up by police, it said.

There are “threats to personal security of community-rights defenders and environmental groups, restrictive interpretation of protest laws, police

violence and harassment” through legal filings or social-media campaigns, the report said.

The report documents threats and attacks in four provinces between 2013 and 2018 and shows their origins are often unknown, though activists believe they were initiated by the police, government officials or other groups acting on behalf of mining companies.

Communities also complain they get few benefits from the mines, while their lives are disrupted through relocations and pollution.

The report recommends local authorities, government and police follow SA’s laws when dealing with community protests.

– *Bloomberg*