

# The Weekly

A Weekly Newsletter by CNRG

Issue 14

8 May 2026



*An abandoned water-filled mining pit in Shurugwi left unreclaimed by mining companies, highlighting the growing environmental and safety risks associated with poor mine rehabilitation practices.*

## Bindura Mining Crisis p5

### Africa's Critical Minerals Are Fueling a New Global Arms Race

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## The Ocean's Giants Still Need Saving

Forty years after the world drew a line against commercial whaling, the fight to protect the ocean’s largest mammals is unfinished. The moratorium adopted by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1986 was one of the most significant conservation victories of the modern era. Yet despite overwhelming scientific evidence and global public support for whale protection, commercial whaling persists in Japan, Norway and Iceland.

# Riverbeds, Raids and the Real Crisis Behind Zimbabwe's Gold Rush



*By Staff Reporter*

The latest joint operation along the Mutare River, which led to the arrest of 11 suspects and the recovery of excavators, generators, wash plants and other heavy mining machinery, once again exposes the scale and sophistication of illegal alluvial gold mining in Zimbabwe. The involvement of a provincial task force made up of the Zimbabwe National Army, Zimbabwe Republic Police and Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services reflects how deeply the crisis has penetrated the country's environmental and security landscape.

What stands out is not merely the presence of illegal miners with shovels and wheelbarrows, but the industrial nature of these operations. Thirteen excavators hidden in bushes are not the tools of desperate artisanal miners scratching for survival. They point to organised syndicates with financial backing, logistical coordination and access to fuel, machinery and protection networks. Illegal gold mining in Zimbabwe has evolved into a shadow economy operating in plain sight, often at devastating environmental and social cost.

Yet this is hardly the first raid of its kind. Similar crackdowns have been conducted before in Penhalonga, Odzi, Chimanimani, Mazowe, Shurugwi and along the Umzingwane and Angwa rivers since 2019. This led to the initial ban imposed in October 2020 and another ban pronounced in 2024.

Security forces have periodically descended on illegal mining hotspots, confiscating equipment and arresting suspects. In some cases, operations have temporarily reduced mining activity.

But the pattern is depressingly familiar: raids occur, headlines are made, equipment is seized, and within weeks operations quietly resume elsewhere.

This raises an uncomfortable but necessary question: why does illegal alluvial mining continue to flourish despite repeated crackdowns?

Part of the answer lies in the powerful economics of gold. Zimbabwe's ongoing economic difficulties, unemployment and currency instability have made gold one of the few reliable stores of value. Thousands of young people are drawn into artisanal and illegal mining because formal employment opportunities remain scarce. At the same time, politically connected actors and well-financed syndicates exploit weak enforcement systems to profit from illicit gold trade networks.

The environmental consequences are severe. Riverbank destruction, siltation, deforestation and water pollution continue to threaten ecosystems and downstream communities. Mutare River itself has increasingly become a casualty of uncontrolled extraction. Communities lose clean water sources, agricultural land is damaged and infrastructure is weakened as river systems are destabilised.

There is also a governance contradiction at play. Zimbabwe depends heavily on gold exports for foreign currency earnings, yet regulatory systems remain fragmented and under-resourced. Small-scale miners often struggle to obtain licences, access financing or formal markets, creating fertile ground for illegality. As long as formalisation remains difficult and corruption persists within mineral governance structures, enforcement operations alone will not solve the problem.

The state must therefore move beyond reactive militarised crackdowns and pursue long-term reforms. This includes strengthening transparency in the gold sector, formalising artisanal miners, tightening oversight over heavy machinery movements, prosecuting financiers behind syndicates, and ensuring communities benefit from mineral resources rather than merely bearing the environmental burden.

Without structural reform, the Mutare River raid risks becoming another episode in Zimbabwe's endless cycle of arrest, confiscation and return. The excavators may disappear from the riverbanks for now, but unless the political economy driving illegal gold extraction is confronted, the machines, and the destruction, will inevitably return.

## Africa's Critical Minerals Are Fueling a New Global Arms Race

*By Donald Nyarota*

By all appearances, the 21st century was supposed to belong to climate diplomacy. Electric vehicles, renewable energy and “green transitions” dominated international discourse just a few years ago.

Today, however, another language has taken centre stage: strategic competition, military security and critical minerals. It's a conversation often delinked from the global race for Africa's mineral wealth.

However, beneath the rhetoric of sustainability lies a harsher geopolitical reality, the world's most powerful nations are scrambling for control over the minerals that sustain both modern industry and modern warfare.

David Van Wyk with the Benchmarks Foundation warns that Africa is once again being drawn into a familiar pattern: a global race for resources in which the continent supplies raw materials while others control technology, manufacturing and profit.

Van Wyk made this assertion during a virtual presentation for the People's Dialogue, a south to south solidarity movement of civil society organisations pushing against extractivism and the global capitalism.

The numbers are staggering. The Democratic Republic of Congo produces between 60 and 70 percent of the world's cobalt. Zambia and the DRC account for a significant share of global copper production.

South Africa dominates chrome, manganese, rhodium and platinum group metals. Zimbabwe and other Southern African states are increasingly central to global lithium supply chains. Yet despite this abundance, most of these minerals leave the continent in raw form.

Ownership tells the deeper story. From Malawi to Namibia, Tanzania to Angola, critical mineral projects are largely controlled by foreign corporations headquartered in Australia, Britain, Canada and elsewhere. African governments, meanwhile, remain largely price takers in a system designed around extraction rather than industrialisation.

What emerges is not merely an economic imbalance but a political contradiction.



African minerals are increasingly described as “strategic” because they are essential to battery technologies, aerospace systems, surveillance infrastructure and military production. Yet the communities living atop these mineral deposits often face unemployment, displacement, environmental degradation and weak public services.

CNRG argues that this raises urgent moral and developmental questions. Who benefits from Africa's mineral wealth? What happens when these finite resources are exhausted? And should minerals extracted from African soil continue feeding a global military-industrial system while African countries struggle with poverty, debt and deindustrialisation?

The wars in Ukraine and Gaza have accelerated global anxieties over supply chains and resource security. In response, wealthy nations are intensifying competition for access to strategic minerals. But for many African observers, the danger is that the continent becomes trapped in a new era of extractive dependency disguised as green development or geopolitical partnership.

The challenge before African governments is therefore larger than attracting foreign investment. It is about asserting sovereignty over minerals that are rapidly becoming the foundation of the global economy.

Without local beneficiation, industrial policy and stronger democratic oversight, Africa risks repeating the oldest story of colonial economics: exporting wealth while importing dependency.

Critical minerals should serve humanity's future, powering hospitals, schools, renewable energy and sustainable economies, not perpetuating endless cycles of conflict and extraction.

# The Ocean's Giants Still Need Saving, CNRG joins Petition to Save Whales

*By Staff Reporter*

In Forty years after the world drew a line against commercial whaling, the fight to protect the ocean's largest mammals is unfinished. The moratorium adopted by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) in 1986 was one of the most significant conservation victories of the modern era. Yet despite overwhelming scientific evidence and global public support for whale protection, commercial whaling persists in Japan, Norway and Iceland.

The scale of destruction that preceded the ban remains staggering. During the 20th century, nearly three million whales were slaughtered in industrial whaling operations. Blue whales, fin whales and sperm whales were pushed to the brink of extinction, their populations decimated in pursuit of oil, meat and profit.

Some species have shown signs of recovery, but many remain fragile, a reminder that ecosystems do not heal at the speed of markets.

At stake is more than the survival of charismatic marine mammals. Whales are now recognised as essential ecological engineers. They help regulate marine food chains, transport nutrients across oceans and contribute to carbon sequestration. In an era defined by climate breakdown and biodiversity collapse, protecting whales is no longer merely a moral question; it is an environmental imperative.

The Centre for Natural Resource Governance (CNRG) stands in solidarity with global efforts calling for a permanent end to commercial whaling, fronted by the End Commercial Whaling Coalition, a grouping of dedicated conservation and animal welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have been campaigning for the protection of whales and other cetaceans for decades.

Its founding members bring long-standing experience in cetacean conservation and have been actively involved in the IWC and other national, regional and international fora that address the protection of cetaceans and wildlife worldwide.

CNRG as an affiliate organisation recognises that the exploitation of natural resources, whether on land or at sea, too often follows the same destructive logic: short-term extraction at the expense of ecological balance and future generations.



As the IWC marks its 80th anniversary and the moratorium reaches its 40th year, governments gathering at the 70th meeting of the commission in September 2026 face a defining choice. They can continue tolerating loopholes that weaken international conservation efforts, or they can decisively end commercial whaling once and for all.

The continued defence of commercial whaling reflects wider debates across Africa over wildlife exploitation and trophy hunting. In Zimbabwe and elsewhere, elephants, lions and other species are increasingly treated as commercial assets through hunting markets, tourism and illicit wildlife trade. Critics argue that this mirrors the same extractive mindset that once pushed whales to near extinction, valuing wildlife primarily for profit rather than ecological survival and community wellbeing.

CNRG also believes the fight to end commercial whaling is connected to broader struggles for conservation justice in Africa. From whales in the oceans to elephants on land, wildlife protection must move beyond profit-driven exploitation toward models that prioritise biodiversity, community stewardship and long-term environmental sustainability.

The world acted once to save the great whales. It must now finish the task.

## Bindura Mining Crisis: The Cracks Beneath Zimbabwe's Mining Boom



*By Staff Reporter*

The growing outcry from residents of Aerodrome in Bindura is more than a local dispute over blasting vibrations. It is a warning sign about the widening gap between Zimbabwe's mineral wealth and the security of ordinary citizens living in mining communities.

In a bold petition recently addressed to Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa by youth leader and political analyst Simbarashe Tatenda Christopher Mukau, paints a disturbing picture of life near Ran Mine. Residents say intensified blasting operations have left homes with cracked walls, shattered windows and damaged sanitation systems, while fear has become part of daily life.

Ran Mine is linked to investment from Malaysian company Rainbow Century SDN BHD since its resuscitation around 2021.

For families in Aerodrome, the concern is no longer hypothetical, it is a lived reality. Every detonation reportedly sends tremors through homes built long before mining operations expanded so close to residential areas. Parents worry about the safety of their children. Elderly residents fear sleeping under roofs they believe could collapse. Yet despite these anxieties, many residents claim they have received neither compensation nor meaningful engagement from the mining company.

This is not an isolated case. Similar concerns have emerged in Shurugwi, where communities living near mining operations of Cheng Xi Mine, have also petitioned Parliament of Zimbabwe complaining about blasting-induced cracks in homes, environmental degradation and the long-term impact of extractive activities on residential infrastructure. Across Zimbabwe's mining towns, the same pattern continues to surface communities bear the environmental and social costs while corporations and political elites reap the profits.

The issue speaks directly to the broader question of human security. Modern governance is no longer measured solely by border protection or economic growth statistics. It is measured by whether citizens can live safely and with dignity in their own homes. When mining activities threaten homes, livelihoods and community stability, the matter becomes a national governance concern.

Zimbabwe's Constitution, particularly Section 73, guarantees citizens environmental rights, including protection from activities that threaten their health and wellbeing. The responsibility therefore falls on institutions such as the Environmental Management Agency and the Ministry of Mines to ensure mining operations comply with safety and environmental standards.

The calls from Bindura residents are reasonable and urgent. Independent structural assessments, transparent environmental audits and fair compensation mechanisms must be prioritised. Mining companies operating in residential zones should also be compelled to invest meaningfully in community development, including infrastructure rehabilitation and local employment opportunities.

Zimbabwe cannot pursue Vision 2030 while mining communities live in fear beneath cracking ceilings. Development that destroys the dignity and security of citizens is not development at all.