



New Shootings and Assaults at Petra Diamonds' Williamson Mine in Tanzania

Statement by RAID

On 9 February 2021, Petra Diamonds [published](#) an “update” regarding allegations of human rights abuses by security personnel at its Williamson Mine in Tanzania. The update follows a [letter](#) by RAID to the company detailing credible new reports it had received of assaults, including shootings, by security personnel at the mine between November 2020 and January 2021.

Petra Diamonds' reporting about the recent assaults is both necessary and welcome. The company's briefing does however confirm that force continues to be used against artisanal miners with alarming frequency and that the steps the company has taken to date have not yet been effective in addressing the serious human rights concerns.

According to Petra Diamond's update, there have been 19 incidents where its security personnel used force in recent months. In particular, it details the mine's investigation into four reports of assaults, including three shootings and the assault of an artisanal miner with a heavy rock. The company says that it did not find evidence of unjustified use of force by security personnel or of injuries of the nature described.

Reports RAID has received provide a different version of events. RAID calls on Petra to conduct transparent and independent investigations, fully at arm's length from the company, into each of these incidents to determine if force was proportionate and justified.

To date, RAID has found evidence of 10 deaths and 50 assaults by security forces at the Williamson Mine since Petra took ownership in 2009.¹ With such stark statistics, it is extremely difficult to have confidence in Petra's claim that it is producing 'ethical' diamonds.

Reports of new shootings and assaults at the Williamson Mine

In reports received by RAID, four individuals described recent shootings and assaults in which they suffered serious injuries. In one incident in December 2020, Joseph (not his real name) told RAID, “Once I saw the guards, I took off running. I was carrying a sieve, nothing else.” Joseph said he was chased and encountered another guard from the mine's private security contractor, Zenith Security, who shot him in the face at close range and without warning. The shot broke Joseph's jaw, knocking out a number of his teeth, and left him unconscious. When he gained consciousness, he said a guard was standing over him.

Another individual said he was shot in the arm, and a third described being struck from behind with a heavy rock by a Zenith guard, dislocating his shoulder. The fourth said he was hit with a teargas

¹ This total is comprised of the seven killings and 41 assaults detailed in RAID's *The Deadly Cost of 'Ethical' Diamonds* report, and three further killings and nine further assaults, all since 2013, based on RAID's ongoing research.

cannister. All four reported they were running away and appeared to pose no threat to security personnel at the time of the incidents.

Guards from [Zenith Security](#) were said to be involved in all four incidents, and identified as perpetrating two of them. In the other two incidents, it was not confirmed whether it was Zenith Security guards or Tanzanian police, both of whom were present, who fired the relevant weapon.

These accounts are consistent with dozens of others received by RAID, some of which are detailed in [The Deadly Cost of 'Ethical' Diamonds](#), published in November 2020. RAID's report described local people shot with little or no warning, stabbed, detained, stripped, beaten, incarcerated for days in a filthy and cramped holding cell by the mine's entrance, deprived of food and medical treatment, and/or handcuffed to hospital beds at the mine's medical facility. RAID found that guards from Zenith Security, operating under the supervision of Williamson Mine employees, were directly implicated in many of the abuses.

One notable difference in the latest accounts received by RAID is that the individuals did not describe being taken to the detention cell or hospital on the mine's concession. They said that after being injured they were left to make their own way out of the concession to seek medical assistance. This may reflect a change in tactics by security personnel following RAID's earlier report. It should be noted that international standards such as those of the [United Nations](#) state that medical aid should always be provided to those injured in security operations. This difference might explain why, according to Petra Diamonds, there were no admissions to Mwadui hospital of anyone with injuries of the nature described. Those injured said they sought treatment elsewhere.

Petra Diamonds' description of the violence

In its latest update, Petra Diamonds' account of the incidents differs markedly from the accounts received by RAID. The company says that the investigation of the incidents "do[es] not indicate a breach of the [Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights]." In respect of three incidents, it found no evidence of injuries of the nature described occurring to "illegal diggers". In the fourth, while a security guard reported seeing a digger hit with a cannister and then run away, the company says that no injuries were recorded. Petra Diamonds also states that its security contractor is "only authorised to use baton rounds (rubber bullet cartridges)", although it does not specify whether unauthorised use of ammunition has occurred in the past or may still be occurring. International medical experts have [found](#) that baton rounds caused significant morbidity and mortality during the past 27 years, and call for greater control of such weapons.

Petra Diamonds' update raises several issues of concern.

1. It states that the mine "has an obligation and right to protect its property." However, the issue is whether the mine's security personnel are using force unlawfully and excessively to that end. Petra Diamonds' update confirms the stark inequality of arms. It describes "illegal diggers" as using slingshots and rocks. While these may cause injury, and may justify the use of force if proportionate, they are not of comparable scale to shotguns with baton rounds and other weapons used by the mine's security personnel. [International standards](#) provide that use of force by security personnel should not exceed what is strictly necessary and must be proportionate to the threat.
2. Petra Diamonds says that "reasonable force" by security personnel "was required to remove or disperse the illegal diggers" or in defence on 19 occasions since November 2020. That is an alarmingly high number. A confidential internal security report from the Williamson Mine dated

15 January 2021, a copy of which was obtained by RAID, suggests that firearms are used against artisanal miners for purposes other than self-defence. The document, entitled *Security Levels, Updates, Awareness and Reminders*, informs mine personnel that if “sounds of small explosions” are heard, they “will be coming from WDL security team **detering** illegal miners” [emphasis added]. It is unclear on what basis such practices, which indicate the use of firearms for purposes other than in self-defence, could be justified.

Petra Diamonds’ assurance that only “reasonable force” was used and that it was “required,” or otherwise justified, appears to rely heavily on self-reporting by the security personnel. Without independent verification, at arm’s length from the company, it is hard to confirm these versions of events. Petra Diamonds says that nine members of the security patrol team were injured during the 19 incidents, though it provides no further details, such as the nature, cause, or seriousness of injury. Such details are important to determine whether the use of force could be justified.

3. The root causes of the ongoing incursions onto the Williamson concession have yet to be addressed. The mine’s confrontational approach to small-scale miners is unsustainable and seems likely to continue to result in violence and security incidents. The concession is vast, covering 30.6 km², and is surrounded by communities with challenging socio-economic circumstances, whose livelihoods are precarious. The Williamson Mine [contributed](#) over US\$90 million in revenue to Petra Diamonds in 2019 alone, but neighbouring communities say they have experienced little to no benefit, and in some respects considerable hardship, from its presence. Many of those interviewed by RAID [explained](#) that they enter the mine site in search of diamonds as a way to feed their families and cope with poverty, as previous generations had done over the course of the mine’s 80-year history. Tackling these root causes, rather than resorting to a security solution that results in injuries and deaths, will demonstrate a meaningful commitment to resolving the serious human rights concerns raised by security operations at the mine.

RAID reiterates its call for the measures recommended in its November report. Petra Diamonds’ update makes clear the urgent need for:

- **Transparency** – if local communities and the wider public are to have confidence in the security situation at the Williamson Mine, it is imperative that its security arrangements be made public, including the memorandum of understanding with the police. Similar transparency and oversight should be provided for any new security contractors.
- **Fully arms’ length investigation** – credible investigation into these new reports should be fully arms’ length from the company and independently verifiable.
- **Justice and remedy** – to RAID’s knowledge, there has been no justice or remedy for those harmed, over five months since Petra Diamonds’ first public [announcement](#) regarding the human rights allegations, and in many cases years after the harms were suffered. The two mine employees overseeing security are still suspended, with no further action being described to ensure accountability of any individuals implicated in the abuses. Petra Diamonds should make clear the measures it will be taking to ensure justice.

For more information, please see:

The full report, *“The Deadly Cost of ‘Ethical’ Diamonds”* – click [here](#) and video, click [here](#).

Why Petra Diamonds is Soon to Face the British High Court video – click [here](#).

Correspondence between RAID and Petra Diamonds – click [here](#)

Petra Diamonds’ “Allegations of human rights abuses at the Williamson mine” – click [here](#).
