

Gemfields denies human rights abuse

Pallinghurst Resources's wholly owned subsidiary Gemfields, a leading source of emeralds and rubies, stands accused of human rights abuses in Mozambique - charges CEO Sean Gilbertson strongly denies.



Sean Gilbertson, CEO: Pallinghurst

Human rights law firm Leigh Day has lodged a claim against Gemfields and its Mozambican operating subsidiary, Montepuez Ruby Mining, in the High Court of England and Wales on behalf of 29 people from in and around the mining concession in northern Mozambique, which is the world's new ruby hotspot.

The allegations range from death and mistreatment of artisanal or unlicensed miners on the property to taking land without due process, often in collusion with security forces in the form of police or military.

"You never want a situation where someone throws serious human rights allegations at your company," said Gilbertson.

"We denounce violence and we go to great lengths to ensure that it doesn't happen.

"We take the allegations very seriously," he said.

"We want to be transparent and open, and will not shy away from them."

Leigh Day has successfully fought a court battle in SA to secure payments from Anglo American and AngloGold Ashanti for former employees made ill with the irreversible silicosis lung disease caused by breathing silica dust in underground gold mines.

The case was separate to the class action case brought against gold companies, which is nearing a settlement for which six companies have made a R5bn provision.

Gilbertson said the claim against Gemfields had not been served on Gemfields or its Mozambican subsidiary "meaning that the court process has not commenced".

"Instead, Leigh Day has indicated its interest in exploring alternative resolution of the claim on behalf of its clients. Should the claim be served, Gemfields and Montepuez Ruby Mining would vigorously defend themselves against the claim, whether in the English courts or otherwise," Gilbertson said.

The Pallinghurst share price closed unchanged at R3.15 on Monday.

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