

## PRESS RELEASE


### **Communities threatened by North Sumatra high-risk mine appeal for Chinese withdrawal of financial support with 2,000-signature petition**

*Residents of Indonesia's Dairi Regency are calling on the Chinese government to withdraw its financial support for the Dairi Prima Mineral mine. A petition signed by more than two thousand community people was delivered to the Chinese Embassy in Jakarta today.*

#### **Key Points:**

- *The Dairi Prima Mineral mine and associated tailings dam—or mining waste storage facility—in North Sumatra pose extreme risk to surrounding villages and the environment, according to [local civil society](#) and independent [international experts](#).*
- *Over 17,000 people live in settlements near to or downstream from the mine.*
- *In August 2024, Indonesia's Supreme Court [declared](#) that an environmental permit granted for the project must be revoked.*
- *However, the parent company of Dairi Prima Mineral, the state-owned China Nonferrous Metal Industries Foreign Engineering and Construction Co., Ltd. (NFC) has [stated](#) that the project will go forward, and a Chinese state-owned investment company [has provided funding](#) to NFC to support this.*
- *Local communities threatened by the mine are appealing directly to the Chinese state to stop the project, with a petition signed by over two thousand community people and delivered to the embassy in Jakarta today.*

Residents of Dairi Regency in North Sumatra, Indonesia, are alarmed by the Chinese government's support for the construction of a high-risk mine in their backyard. The risks associated with the Dairi Prima Mineral mine that it would be illegal if constructed within China itself<sup>1</sup>. Despite an Indonesian Supreme Court ruling in 2024 [declaring](#) that an environmental permit for the mine must be revoked, the majority owner—the state-owned China Nonferrous Metal Industries Foreign Engineering and Construction Co., Ltd. (NFC)—has [insisted](#) that the project will move forward. And the Chinese state-owned investment company CNIC Corporation has [provided funding](#) to NFC to support this. Now, 2,046 people from 15 villages that stand to be affected by the mine have signed a petition calling on the Chinese government to withdraw its funding for the project. Representatives of community members delivered the petition, with [a cover letter](#), to the Chinese embassy in Jakarta today.

NFC's parent company China Nonferrous Metals Mining Group, a state-owned enterprise, has been in the headlines recently due to a [disastrous acid leak from a tailings dam at one of its mines in Zambia](#). World-leading mine hydrologists and civil engineers have said that due to the  problematic location of the Dairi Prima Mineral tailings dam it would also almost inevitably leak or collapse, sending a wave of toxic mud downstream and to the sea.

Such failures elsewhere in the world, involving other companies, have killed hundreds of people and destroyed entire river ecosystems while resulting in [significant financial losses](#) and even [murder charges](#) for senior staff at the companies responsible.

Ms. Juniaty Aritonang, Director of BAKUMSU, an NGO providing legal support to communities threatened by the Dairi Prima Mineral mine, said, “A tailings dam breach in Brazil in [2019](#) killed 270 people and resulted in the mining company paying \$7 billion in compensation. This was after a [2015 breach](#) that killed nineteen, led to massive environmental damage, and will likely cost the company tens of billions of dollars. This year, we also see the parent company of NFC, is responsible for a tailings dam breach in Zambia, where the water supply for millions of people has been polluted<sup>2</sup>. The Dairi Prima Mineral mine, if built, would be likely to produce a disaster of similar significance.”

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<sup>1</sup> The project as it is designed would not be approved if built in China, since it fails to meet China's safety standards, with the tailings dam less than 1,000 meters upstream from numerous homes.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/16/a-river-died-overnight-in-zambia-after-an-acidic-waste-spill-at-a-chinese-owned-mine-00232234>. Sino-Metals Leach Zambia is majority owned by China Nonferrous Metals Industry Group (the same group that holds majority share of China Nonferrous Metal Industry's Foreign Engineering and Construction Co., Ltd. – the company involved in Dairi).

Local signatories to the petition are adamant in their opposition to the project.

Ms. Tioman Simangunsong from Parongil township added “We are the potentially impacted people and we are asking the Chinese Government to stop funding this project. If the proposed tailings dam leaks or collapses - which experts say is likely - we could be killed or our lands and water poisoned.” She added, “We have over two thousand signatures from fifteen villages near or downstream from the mine saying they want the mine stopped.”

Local community members have also alleged disinformation and intimidation associated with the project. Ms. Nursariana Hutaaruk from Bonian village said “DPM have been feeding lies to people immediately around the mine. They say there is no chance of a dam leakage, overflow or collapse. But we know it would be inevitable. They plan to put millions of tons of toxic waste in a dam on unstable foundations.” She added: “Dairi has high rainfall, high earthquake risk, and unstable geology. There should just be no mine here.”

Ms. Tioman Simangunsong from Parongil township said “Even with the company’s disinformation campaign, and with local government representatives threatening to withdraw social benefits from people who oppose the mine, we have over two thousand signatures.”

Dr. Steven Emerman, a world expert on geophysics and mine hydrology called the project “highly irresponsible,” saying “I have never seen a mine with such callous disregard for human life. Tailings dam collapses can kill hundreds of people. The mine’s owners say they want to continue with ‘no-tailings technology,’ but this is almost certainly an impossibility in Dairi<sup>3</sup>. He added “It is inevitable that a Dairi Prima Mineral mine would result in millions of tons of tailings stored above ground. Any dam in that area will represent an extreme risk with extreme consequences. When a collapse occurs, a wave of toxic mud will flow rapidly down the stream system for 20 to 30 kilometers. After that, it will continue to move downstream and pollute down to the sea, over 100km away.”

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**Further information** about the community opposition to the mine may be found at

<https://bakumsu.or.id/en/advokasi-tambang/>

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.e-mj.com/features/tailings-management-whats-changed/>