

ENVIRONMENT

ILLEGAL MINING REPORTEDLY CONTINUES IN DOROB NATIONAL PARK

Area 'stripped' as authorities look away

Despite previous fines and an ongoing application for environmental clearance, the mining of mica in the Goanikontes area is reportedly continuing.

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The illegal mining of mica is believed to continue within the Dorob National Park in the Namib, despite a reported government investigation and fines issued earlier this year.

Tourism operators, environmentalists and residents allege increasing environmental damage, lax enforcement and deliberate evasion in the licensing process allegedly linked to the exclusive prospecting licence (EPL) 10877.

According to a reliable source, an investigation was carried out by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) in February 2025.

"A report was sent to the head office in March to senior officers and the environmental officer. Patrols were carried out in conjunction with the Ministries of Mines and Immigration. They received fines of N\$14 000," the source told Network Media Hub (NMH).

The source also indicated that a follow-up inspection of the area is planned.

Despite this, several sources on the ground claim that illegal mining activities continue in the Goanikontes area, which forms part of the Dorob National Park – a declared protected area.

A settlement of hundreds of people has been reported operating near the Swakop River, allegedly without permits or infrastructure.

Heavy machinery, water tanks, tents and open-pit operations were observed, according to eyewitnesses. Allegations include environmental destruction, poaching, illegal firewood harvesting and pollution.

"These people are looting everything," said one source familiar with the area.

"They're polluting – it's dirty, very dirty. They bathe there, they defecate there and they just live out there and illegally destroy the place."

Concerns increased following the appearance of a Background Information Document (BID) in July 2025 for EPL 10877, where Omegore appointed Mineral and Trading CC for Excel Dynamic Solutions to conduct an environmental scoping study. The application reportedly proposes prospecting for base and rare metals and industrial minerals – including mica – over 7 005 hectares southwest of Arandis. This area overlaps the Goanikontes farm and the Dorob National Park.

'COVER'

While the environmental consultant claims the process is still in a scoping phase, several tour operators and residents argue that exploitation is already underway.

"They're trying to legalize what's already happening illegally," said one resident.

"They've already started mining. This EPL process is just a cover."

The BID reportedly describes planned non-invasive and invasive exploration phases, including digging trenches and drilling. It also reportedly proposes the use of existing roads (B2 and D1991), tent accommodation for seven workers, mobile toilets, 2 400 litres of water per month and 1 200 litres of diesel per month.

The document reportedly lists potential environmental impacts such as habitat disturbance, dust, and land-use conflicts. Critics say that any substantial assessment of the tourism economy or the impact on heritage and biodiversity is conspicuously absent from the report.

"It is with great disappointment to note that the impact on tourism is not listed in the BID not," said a tourism operator.

"It just goes to show that the applicant and Excel Dynamic Solutions have not done any homework on the area – or choose to ignore the greatest economic impact this project will have."

COMPLAINT

More than 250 individuals have signed a complaint against the proposed mining operations, expressing concern about endangered species (such as the Namaqua chameleon, Namib Desert beetle, brown hyena and web-footed gecko), the destruction of unique geological features and the undermining of the coastal tourism industry.

"Our tourism is a sustainable long-term income . . . Opening a mine might create some jobs, but how many jobs in the hospitality sector is it going to close?" said the organiser of the complaint.

The ownership of Omegore Mineral and Trading CC has also come under scrutiny.

The consultants told Network Media Hub (NMH) that the owner was not a Namibian citizen. An email was shared with NMH of a "Luna" at a Chinese email address associated with a Chinese electrical company, Pamica. An email with questions was sent, but no response was received.

CHINESE WOMAN BELIEVED TO BE IN CONTROL

Those concerned claim that a "Chinese woman living in Arandis" appears to be in charge of the illegal activities.

Whether "Luna" from EPL 10877 and this Chinese resident of Arandis are the same person is yet to be confirmed.

Tour operators and residents further claim that the EPL process was poorly advertised, with some only becoming aware of the application after the public comment period had already begun. The registration as interested and affected parties allegedly experienced delays or was reportedly ignored.

The site is located along well-known tourist routes, including the Welwitschia area, close to the Moon Landscape, and heritage sites dating back to 1906.

The situation mirrors earlier concerns from 2024, when residents of the Palmenhorst farm in the Namib-Naukluft Park reported illegal mica mining that caused damage and pollution. The environment ministry confirmed at the time that an investigation had been launched.

Meanwhile, a policy change in 2025, reported on by NMH, indicated that flagship parks, including Dorob National Park, should be protected from new mining operations. The current EPL process appears to be in direct conflict with that goal.

Attempts to obtain clarity from the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Industrial Development, Mines and Energy, have yielded limited results.