

South America Deep Dive

Background

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre's [Transition Minerals Tracker](#) monitors the human rights policies and practices of companies mining six key commodities vital to the clean energy transition: cobalt, copper, lithium, manganese, nickel and zinc. This South American deep dive explores the region's top producers for each of these six minerals. Allegations can feature multiple impacts across categories. A full regional methodology can be read [here](#).

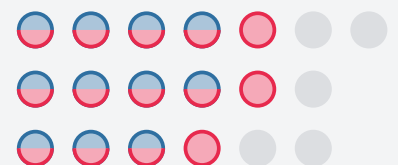
Key findings

We examined the records of the top **19 companies producing minerals** in South America. Of those, we identified a total of **90 allegations related to 14 companies. Eleven of the companies have a human rights policy.** Allegations were predominantly found in **copper operations** (68%), likely reflecting its larger market, longer history of extraction and more media coverage. Overall, the largest number of abuses relate to environmental impacts, with one in three of all allegations related to the **environment**. One in five of all allegations in this region relate to **indigenous rights**. Lastly, there are several instances of **conflict and violence** as a result of mining for transition minerals.

An environment of abuse

Over one third of human rights allegations (35%) recorded in South America relate to environmental impacts. Of all the impacts resulting from these human rights allegations, 42% relate to water rights, pollution (34%) or access (27%) – which is significantly higher than impacts from our global Transition Mineral Tracker findings (38%). This may in part reflect the [water-intensive nature of mining for lithium](#), found largely in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile. One in three of all allegations indicate a lack of adequate environmental legislation, with allegations recorded either under inadequate environmental impact assessments or environmental safety standards.

KEY STATS

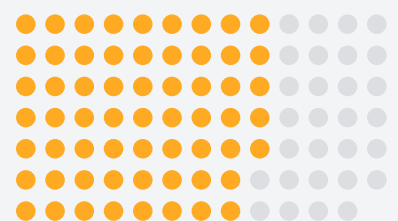


19 companies examined in South America

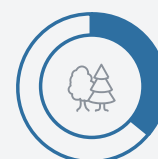
11 have a human rights policy

14 have human rights abuse allegations

90 allegations of human rights abuses identified



61/90 allegations were found in **copper operations**



One in three relate to the environment



One in five are related to indigenous rights

The rights of communities and indigenous groups

More than one in four allegations (29%) relate to negative human rights impacts on local communities or attacks on civil society organization. Almost a fifth (18%) of all allegations relate to Indigenous Peoples’ rights, closely correlated with insufficient or inadequate consultation (16%) and violations of free, prior, and informed consent (9%). These issues are often found within the same case, when Indigenous People protest the absence of prior informed consultation or absence of consent to the exploitation of their lands.

Contributing to conflict and insecurity

The data demonstrates that human rights allegations in South America often begin with environmental or community concerns that escalate into larger-scale protests if concerns are not addressed. These abuses drive increased conflict and insecurity; 7% of all human rights impacts relate to security issues and conflict zones. When communities protest mining operations, the response from government or corporations can become violent,. In 2018, the Peruvian National Police and officials of [Glencore Antapaccay allegedly assaulted and threatened 10 local citizens](#). [Glencore](#) has denied the allegation. As well as violence, the state can use the judicial apparatus to quell resistance, such as [by bringing criminal charges against environmental defenders](#) to impede their campaign.

Conclusion

South America has some of the [Transition Mineral Tracker’s](#) most notorious cases of human rights abuses in relation to environmental damage and defence. [Water rights are under threat](#), particularly due to the hike in water-usage from lithium mining in the region. Increasingly, because of the energy transition, there is a growing global awareness of these issues, but huge improvements are needed to deliver effective environmental protection, and to ensure the rights of local communities and Indigenous People are adequately respected and protected as companies work to deliver a net-zero economy, a net-zero economy.

COMPANIES UNDER SCOPE OF STUDY¹

● Companies with HR policy ● Allegations

COPPER

● Codelco	● Chile
● BHP Group	● Chile ● Peru
● Glencore	● Chile ● Peru
● Anglo-American	● Chile ● Peru
● Antofagasta	● Chile

NICKEL

● Vale	● Brazil
● Anglo-American	● Brazil
● BHP	● Colombia
● Lara Exploration	● Brazil

ZINC

● Glencore	● Peru ● Bolivia ● Argentina
● BHP	● Peru
● Nexa Resources	● Peru ● Brazil
● Sumitomo	● Bolivia
● Trevali Mining	● Peru

LITHIUM

● Jiangxi Ganfeng	● Argentina
● SQM	● Chile
● Livent	● Chile
● Albemarle	● Chile
● JEMSE	● Argentina

MANGANESE

● Vale	● Brazil
● Mineração Buritirama	● Brazil
● COMIBOL	● Bolivia
● Cancana Resources	● Brazil

¹ All companies listed here are parent companies; joint ventures and subsidiaries are included in the study and listed under their parent companies.