



Mangistaumunaigaz

Summary

Activists and community members have expressed concern about the following human rights allegations related to Mangistaumunaigaz:

➔ Labour Rights and Employee Protests:

Workers have consistently protested to demand better working conditions, improved payment and compensation along with an end to persecution of labour rights activists. In 2017, 400 workers for Mangistaumunaigaz and its contractors went on a hunger strike for support of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions. The court declared the protests illegal, and several union members and protesters faced criminal charges. Workers were allegedly not paid during the Covid-19 quarantine period, despite company promises.

➔ Persecution of Labour Rights Activists:

Union activists connected with the company have faced persistent persecution and legal battles. Workers who protested Mangistaumunaigaz have been found guilty of criminal charges and ordered to pay 'damages' to the company. Others have been fired, as hunger strikes are a 'violation of labour regulations'.

➔ Pollution and Environmental Degradation:

An oil fire erupted at the Kalamkas field in 2019, following a water and gas leak several weeks prior. Notably, the company had not informed the authorities about the leak; critics say the company was trying to hide the incident. Atmospheric pollution exceeded maximum permissible concentrations of formaldehyde, methane, ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, phenol and soot. Notably, all of these substances are highly toxic and can poison the human body.



Country: **Kazakhstan**



Website



BHRRC company page

Human Rights Commitments

- + [Safety and labour protection document archive](#) (Russian)
- + [Policy on environmental management and health and safety at work](#) (Russian)
- + [Safety and labour protection](#) (Russian)
- + [Health, safety and environment management system](#) (Russian)
- + [Emergency response plan](#) (Russian)
- + [Procedure for reporting and investigating incidents](#) (Russian)
- + [Committee of labour protection, industrial safety and environmental protection](#) (Russian)
- + [Rules for reporting on key indicators of occupational safety and health](#) (Russian)
- + [Corporate standard for the provision of special clothing, footwear and PPE](#) (Russian)
- ⊖ The company **did not respond** to our questionnaire of its human rights policies and commitments



Health Impacts and Access to Information in Local Communities:

Villagers in Zhetibay say oil-filled sludge has been dumped near their community, causing negative health impacts for the area. About 245 residents have disabilities; residents say this is because of the poor environment related to oil activity. One activist collected signatures from local residents as part of a letter to inform the president of Kazakhstan about the conditions. Allegedly, police and the local mayor visited the residents who had signed the letter and forced them to retract their signatures.

The company has a number of publicly available statements and documents about the environment, labour protection, occupational safety and emergency response. Mangistaumunaigaz did not respond to our questionnaire of its human rights policies and commitments.

Company Information

Mangistaumunaigaz is a joint venture of Kazakhstan’s state-owned oil company, KazMunaiGas and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) through the intermediary company Mangistau Investments. The company is alternately headed by Kazakhstani and Chinese representatives for a period of one year each.

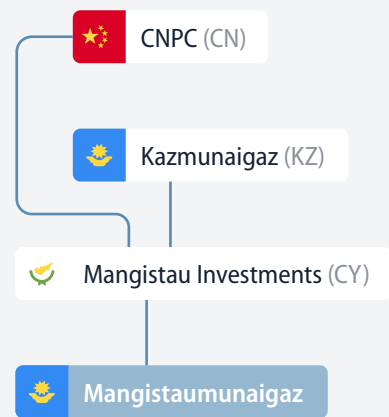
Mangistaumunaigaz has developed fifteen oil and gas fields, including the Zhetybai oil field and Kalamkas oil field. It is one of the largest oil and gas companies in the country.

In August 2020, Dauren Beisembin, the Director of the Legal Support Department, and Aliya Daulenbaeva, his deputy, were arrested for embezzling 455 million tenge (\$1.08 million USD). The company officials allegedly stole the money by issuing fake contracts for the restoration and registration of title documents, work that the contractor did not actually carry out.

Human Rights Impacts

-  Health and safety
-  Environmental and water rights
-  Right to livelihood and adequate standard of living
-  Labour rights and wages
-  Access to information
-  Community, cultural and property rights
-  Attacks on human rights defenders and labour activists

COMPANY OWNERSHIP



Human Rights Allegations

Labour Rights and Employee Protests

Employees at Mangistaumunaigaz have raised a number of alarms around union rights, employment and compensation. In 2017, 400 workers for Mangistaumunaigaz and its contractors went on a hunger strike to demand that the government recognise and register for the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions. The workers said that the Confederation was the only organization that advocated for their social rights; they also said that they did not want to be part of the ‘official’ trade union because it did not actually protect their rights or interests.

The court declared the protests illegal, and several union members and protesters faced criminal charges, including eleven employees of Mangistaumunaigaz contractor, Oil Construction Company. The leaders of the union were detained and issued with a steep fine (see below).²

A year after the strike, workers of a different Mangistaumunaigaz contractor, Techno Trading LTD, complained that they had been continually harassed by their employer. The Techno Trading LTD employees initially started a hunger strike to demand better working conditions, improved payment and compensation as well as an end to persecution of labour rights activists. In the following months, the company allegedly fired most of the participants with the strike. One worker complained he was fired for saying ‘officials such as foremen and shop supervisors do not follow safety rules’. The company said he was fired for ‘working without headphones’ even though witnesses saw the employee following all of the safety procedures. The company allegedly pressured the witnesses to retract their statements. Another employee was fired for ‘improper performance of duties’ despite never being reprimanded during the nearly twelve years of work for the contractor. The employee complained about harmful and dangerous working conditions. The independent trade union went from 490 members to just ninety; members say they were afraid of being dismissed, and that they chose to join the union supported by the company’s management instead. One union leader said that the requirements in the collective agreement were not met, but the workers are afraid to talk about their rights. The union filed complaints about harassment, but the authorities did not find violations of the labour code.²

Additionally, Techno Trading LTD was supposed to make 800 million tenge (\$1.9 million USD) in social payments, which it allegedly did not do. The local labour department said it did not have the authority to resolve the dispute. The contractor has denied all of the above allegations.²

Another conflict erupted in 2018 when Mangistaumunaigaz suddenly transferred contracts of hundreds of employees to a private contractor. Workers accused the Mangistaumunaigaz trade union of not protecting their labour rights. Employees also said that they were dismissed and re-hired by the new contractor, Caspian Food, against their will. The company claimed it had entered into an agreement with the trade union about the arrangement; however, workers said they had not seen any contract before the time they were dismissed. Some said they never received any documents stating they had been fired and transferred to another company.² Other workers said they were forced to submit letters of resignation against their will. Employees were also concerned about their wages and losing their positions under the new company.²

Employees of Mangistaumunaigaz and its oil field contractors raised further grievances during the following years. In one case, workers of Kazpromlogistic complained about working conditions and the environment in the area. One employee said he did not have an employment contract, and that there was no water to wash his work clothes. The company also did not issue work uniforms. Other workers said they were not paid enough to feed their families.^{2 2}

Mangistaumunaigaz workers also raised alarms about problems with the company’s collective agreement, including issues related to wages and healthcare. The agreement allegedly should have been signed in December, but ‘foreign leadership’ in the company delayed proceedings. Locals also complained about ‘deterioration of the social situation of workers’.²

Workers were allegedly not paid during the Covid-19 quarantine period, despite company promises. Employees of Mangistaumunaigaz and its contractors filed a claim about non-payment. According to one worker, in the labour contract, the company must pay workers 50% of wages during the event of downtime, but that workers had not received this pay. The contractor, M-Techservice, confirmed that the terms of the labour contract were violated, but this contractor declined to comment further.^{2 2}

Persecution of Labour Rights Activists

In 2015, two union activists connected with the company, Amin Yeleusinov and Abai Kaliev, faced persecution. Yeleusinov was accused of embezzling union funds, but he testified that the charges were false. He claimed that he was actually being punished for his 'vigorous activity in protecting workers' rights' and his opposition to Kazakhstan's new labour code, which placed limitations on unions and freedom of assembly.²

Abai Kaliev, who worked for a Mangistaumunaigaz subcontractor, participated at a rally to demand higher wages and to oppose job cuts. Shortly afterwards, the director of the contracting company demanded that Kaliev apologise and pay 500,000 tenge (\$1,200 USD) for 'moral damage'. Kaliev denied doing anything that would cause moral harm. He claimed he was being punished for representing the union at a meeting with political representatives and signing a collective letter demanding payment of wages.²

In 2017, workers protested with support of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (see above). The court declared the protests illegal, and several union members and protesters faced criminal charges, including eleven employees of Mangistaumunaigaz contractor, Oil Construction Company. The leaders of the union were detained and issued with a steep fine. Some were initially investigated for 'embezzlement of trade union funds', but then they were found guilty of holding an 'illegal rally'. One of the workers found guilty was Amin Yeleusinov—who, as mentioned, faced harassment due to his union activity two years prior. Some reporters were not allowed into the courtroom during the proceedings.² Cases were then brought against another thirty-six workers, who were ordered to pay for 'damages to the company'. The oil workers said they were not provided with a lawyer, and since they were unfamiliar with the laws, they were unable to defend their rights. Three workers were dismissed because refusing to eat during the hunger strike was a 'violation of labour regulations'.²

Pollution and Environmental Degradation

Mangistaumunaigaz has experienced a number of environmental accidents during recent years. In 2014, the company denied allegations that it had violated environmental standards related to oil sludge disposal sites.² A few years later, an accident involving a gas-water column occurred at the Kalamkas oil field, caused by 'poor organization of work' and lack of control over well parameters after repair.²

An oil fire erupted at the Kalamkas field in 2019, following a water and gas leak several weeks prior. On 13 March, the company admitted there was a seepage;² nine days later, local media reported seeing oil slicks at the area. A fire ignited shortly thereafter. More than fifty firefighters were involved with putting out the flames, but they faced difficulty accessing the site. The energy minister downplayed the incident, saying, 'In principle, there is no need to make a huge tragedy out of this. There are no residential areas nearby. The fire is not that big. It happens, but we will work out who is to blame and they will pay for the damage caused'.² Notably, the company had not informed the authorities about the leak;² critics say the company was trying to hide the incident. Workers say they were forbidden from taking photos or videos of the disaster.²

The Department of Ecology at Mangistau estimated that the damage to the environment amounted to 98.7 million tenge (\$235,000 USD). Atmospheric pollution exceeded maximum permissible concentrations of formaldehyde, methane, ammonia, hydrogen sulphide, phenol and soot. Notably, all of these substances are highly toxic and can poison the human body. The soil had above-permitted concentrations of copper and iron. Authorities also fined the company for failing to notify the government about emissions and pollution, failing to comply with the requirements in the environmental impact assessment and deteriorating land resources.² Critics have pointed out that the incident will likely have health impacts for workers in the area due to the toxic substances in the environment.²

Further oil leaks occurred at the same oil field in February 2020.² Three Kazmunaigas subsidiaries—Karazhanbasmunai, Ozenmunaigas and Mangistaumunaigaz—agreed to clean up 2.5 million cubic meters of oil-contaminated lands at the Mangistau region.²

Health Impacts and Access to Information in Local Communities

Villagers in Zhetibay say oil-filled sludge has been dumped near their community, causing negative health impacts in the area. Journalists who investigated the claims found black sludge and waste at abandoned quarries. Oil companies and government authorities said the dump site was not dangerous to people or nature; despite these assurances, locals worry that the waste has contaminated water supplies. By law, waste disposal sites and quarries must go through a reclamation process to preserve the environment, but no such process has occurred at twenty-five sites near the village.

This dumping has allegedly had health impacts on Zhetibay. About 245 residents have disabilities; residents say this is because of poor environment, related to oil activity. Locals have also died in their sleep.

‘Over the entire period that they have been extracting oil here, they have never held any meetings with the community’, said one resident. Additionally, information on the waste dumps and emissions is not available anywhere.

Community members say local authorities have suppressed discontent. One activist collected signatures from local residents as part of a letter to inform the president of Kazakhstan about the conditions. Allegedly, police and the local mayor visited the residents who had signed the letter and forced them to retract their signatures. [↗](#)

Human Rights Commitments

Mangistaumunaigaz has a number of policies and documents related to human rights topics, including:

- ➔ [Safety and labour protection document archive](#) (Russian)
- ➔ [Policy on environmental management and health and safety at work](#) (Russian)
- ➔ [Safety and labour protection](#) (Russian)
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According to its policies, Mangistaumunaigaz conducts preliminary and periodic medical examinations of its employees in order to ‘allow early detection of abnormalities in the body’. Based upon the results of these examinations, all employees who have been diagnosed with signs of diseases are put on dispensary records.

In the structure of the Department of Occupational Safety, Health and Environment of Mangistaumunaigaz JSC, there is a Laboratory for Industrial Sanitation and Occupational Health (LPS and GT). According to the company, the main activities of the laboratory are:

- ➔ regular laboratory monitoring of the working conditions of the Company's employees, which includes measurements of noise levels, vibration, gas pollution, dustiness, microclimate and illumination indicators at workplaces;
- ➔ regular aerodynamic tests of ventilation systems at the facilities of the JSC. Effective operation of ventilation systems allows ensuring working conditions at workplaces that exclude harmful effects for the human body;
- ➔ control over the observance of sanitary norms and rules at the facilities and health protection of the Company's employees. A huge section of work, which includes monitoring the state of the water supply of the facility, the provision of sanitary facilities and devices, compliance with the sanitary and anti-epidemic regime, etc.

Mangistaumunaigaz did not respond to our questionnaire of its human rights policies and commitments.