



PRESS RELEASE

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre launches world's first online portal profiling human rights lawsuits against companies:

www.business-humanrights.org/LegalPortal

London, 29 Oct - Today the non-profit Business & Human Rights Resource Centre launched a free online portal – the first to bring together and demystify lawsuits from across the world alleging human rights abuses by companies. The portal summarises in non-legal language over 35 cases and the positions of each side, with more cases to be added soon. It also presents special commentaries by experts.

Mary Robinson, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and President of Ireland, said: "The Resource Centre's portal is a unique tool for advocates, victims of abuses, NGOs, business people and others."

CASES PROFILED include:

- **AngloGold Ashanti**: sued in **South Africa** over miners suffering from silicosis
- **BHP Billiton**: sued in **Australia** and **Papua New Guinea** over pollution by its mine in Papua New Guinea
- **Chevron/Texaco**: sued in **Ecuador**, alleging extensive pollution damaging environment and health
- **Dow/Union Carbide**: sued in **India** and **US** following the industrial disaster in Bhopal
- **ExxonMobil**: sued in **US** over alleged complicity in abuses by **Indonesian** security forces in Aceh
- **Severstal**: sued in **Russia** for severe pollution by its steel plant; government failed to provide the court-ordered relief; local residents took Russian Government to **European Court of Human Rights** and won
- **Shell**: sued in **US** over alleged complicity in killings of Ken Saro-Wiwa and 8 other Ogoni activists in **Nigeria**
- **Trafigura**: legal action in **UK, France, Netherlands & Côte d'Ivoire** regarding dumping of toxic waste in Côte d'Ivoire, allegedly leading to 17 deaths and the illness of hundreds
- **Yahoo!**: sued in **US** for handing information to **Chinese** officials; led to detention & alleged torture of dissidents

Most of these cases are pending; some are finished or settled – the profiles indicate the current status of each.

Companies in other profiled lawsuits include: Barclays, Bewater, Blackwater, BP, Cambior, Cape PLC, Chiquita, Coca-Cola, Daimler, Deutsche Bank, Drummond, DynCorp, Firestone, Ford, Freeport-McMoRan, IBM, Mitsubishi, Nike, Occidental, Rio Tinto, Standard Chartered, Talisman, Total, UBS, Wal-Mart.

COMMENTARIES: The portal includes brief, personal commentaries about corporate legal accountability for human rights – citing progress made in various countries, and challenges that remain. The commentaries were specially written for the portal by leading practitioners and experts – including some who have brought lawsuits against companies, and others whose clients are companies.

- **Michael Smyth**, Head of Public Policy at Clifford Chance (UK), remarks in his commentary: "There was a time when business lawyers did not need to know a great deal about human rights law. That is no longer the case...This is now a key boardroom issue...Businesses can sustain major reputational damage where they are associated with infringements of human rights."
- **Terry Collingsworth**, a lawyer who has sued multinationals in US courts alleging their involvement in human rights abuses overseas, comments: "With a few positive examples of using the Alien Tort Claims Act to hold companies accountable for human rights violations in the global economy...other companies will be deterred from violating human rights out of a fear of substantial legal liability."

Other commentaries are written by:

- **Mary Robinson**, President, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative
- **Argentina**: Rodolfo Yanzon, Argentinean Human Rights League Foundation
- **Denmark**: Sune Thorsen, lawyer, Global CSR
- **Hong Kong**: Geoffrey Crothall, *China Labour Bulletin*

- **Mexico:** Astrid Puentes, Interamerican Association for Environmental Defense
- **Netherlands:** Law professor Menno Kamminga, Maastricht University
- **Norway:** Mark Taylor, Deputy Managing Director, Fafo Institute
- **South Africa:** South African Human Rights Commission. Lawyer Charles Abrahams.
- **Switzerland:** Carlos Lopez, International Commission of Jurists
- **UK:** Lawyer Martyn Day, Leigh Day
- **USA:** Lawyers involved in lawsuits against companies, including Jennifer Green, Michael Hausfeld, Paul Hoffman. Law professors Anita Ramasastry and Beth Stephens.

When asked why this portal was developed, Christopher Avery, Director of the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, explained: "These precedent-setting cases are so important that they need to be understood by more than legal insiders. We developed this portal because victims, human rights advocates, business people, journalists, shareholders, lawyers, law professors and others told us that they wanted accessible information about these lawsuits. As for the commentaries, they provide remarkable insight into the thinking of leading experts, many of whom have worked on the profiled cases."

To find the portal, go to: www.business-humanrights.org/LegalPortal. The portal is also accessible from the Resource Centre's homepage.

Our Corporate Legal Accountability Project is made possible by a grant from JEHT Foundation.

The [Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](http://www.business-humanrights.org) tracks the human rights impacts (positive & negative) of 4000 companies in over 180 countries. Issues include discrimination, labour rights, security & conflict zones, killings, torture, displacement, environmental abuses affecting human health, access to medicines, poverty and development. The site is updated hourly and receives 1.5 million hits per month.

Our researchers, 7 of whom are lawyers or legally-trained, are based in Hong Kong, India, South Africa, UK, Ukraine and USA – soon also Senegal. Mary Robinson chairs our 80-member International Advisory Network. Our 20 Academic Partners include leading institutes associated with law schools in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America.

For further information about the Resource Centre, see the "[About us](#)" section of our site.

SUPPORT THE RESOURCE CENTRE: Please consider [making an online donation](#) to help us continue to provide these resources for free.

For additional information, please see www.business-humanrights.org or contact the Resource Centre staff members with primary responsibility for the portal:

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The Resource Centre thanks its present and past legal interns who assisted our staff with preparation of the case profiles: Sandra Cossart (France), Amila Jayamaha (Sri Lanka), Kellie Johnston (Canada), Danielle McMullan (UK), Silvia Nicolaou Garcia (Spain), Christopher Pogue (USA), Xue Yang (China).

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