

28 July 2026

Subject: Concerns about potential EIB involvement in Reko Diq mine

Dear President, Dear Directors,

We write to you with deep concern regarding the news around the European Investment Bank's possible investment in the Reko Diq mining project in Pakistan's Balochistan province (see e.g. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2605610/eib-eyes-shares-in-reko-diq-project>). We note that there are excessive risks and concerns around human rights, militarization, Indigenous Peoples, and climate associated with this project. Located in an intensely militarised region, where civic space is very closed and where reprisals against civil society actors have increased in recent months, this project risks exacerbating the insecurity of human rights defenders and contributing to environmental and social destruction.

On April 2 of this year, Barrick Mining Corporation - the parent company of the project developer, Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC) - [disclosed](#) that they are slowing down activity and reviewing security risks around the Reko Diq project in Balochistan, until mid-2027. While this development is crucial given the ongoing war in West Asia, the Reko Diq project had already been fueling conflict and insecurity, and leading to environmental and social destruction in Balochistan.

It is clear, given the current situation in Balochistan, that it would be impossible for development banks, including the EIB, to uphold the safeguards they have adopted to mitigate environmental and social risks, and their policies against reprisals and investing in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, if they proceed with their financing of RDMC. These investments would also undermine the commitments made by EIB's shareholders to support sustainable development, responsible business practice, and climate action and not to support investments listed on the [EIB Group excluded activities](#), specifically "extraction or mining of conflict minerals and metals".

While we understand that copper is considered to be a critical mineral for the energy transition, extraction projects must also respect human and environmental rights. In 2024, an expert panel convened by the UN Secretary General [recommended that](#) "human rights must be at the core of all mineral value chains" and that multilateral co-operation in this sector must promote peace and security. Unfortunately, the project proposed by RDMC does not meet these standards.

We therefore call on the EIB not to provide any support to RDMC, either directly or indirectly (e.g. through financing of associated infrastructure), given the following concerns around human rights, conflict, Indigenous Peoples' rights and environmental harm.

1. Civil society and the UN's unheeded warnings

For several months, civil society organizations (CSOs) have raised concerns that the Reko Diq mine may further exacerbate the already fragile and complex situation in Balochistan. In August 2025, a [joint statement](#) signed by more than 35 CSOs called on international actors to reconsider

their involvement in the project in light of the escalating risks to local Baloch people and workers associated with operating in the region.

In November 2025, civil society organizations made a submission to several UN Special Procedure Mandate Holders. Following this submission, the mandate holders issued communications to [Barrick Mining Corporation](#) (which owns 50 % of the Reko Diq Mining Company), the [Asian Development Bank](#) (ADB), the Governments of [Canada](#) and [Pakistan](#), and the [International Financial Corporation](#), among others. These communications highlighted serious concerns regarding the human rights situation in Balochistan, including the arrest and detention of human rights defenders, excessive use of force, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings.

Over the past year, civil society organizations have also engaged financial institutions through multiple rounds of correspondence and outreach, both before and after investment decisions. These communications sought to provide investors with information on the situation on the ground in Balochistan and to highlight the potential human rights, legal, and reputational risks associated with involvement in the project. However, despite mounting evidence and civil society's sustained engagement, the project has continued to move forward without any change in their operations.

2. Deterioration of security in Balochistan

The security situation in Balochistan has deteriorated significantly in recent years, with an increase in large-scale violent incidents affecting transportation networks, public infrastructure, and urban centres across the province. These incidents have resulted in the loss of life, injuries to civilians, and significant disruption to daily life for communities in the region. At the same time, intensified security operations have also raised serious human rights concerns, with documented patterns and escalating instances of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, and other abuses affecting local residents and human rights defenders. Together, these dynamics have contributed to a highly volatile environment that poses risks not only to infrastructure and economic activity but also to the safety, rights, and livelihoods of individuals and communities living in Balochistan.

Recent incidents illustrate the severity of the security challenges. In November 2024, a [suicide bombing](#) at a railway station in Quetta killed at least two dozen people and injured many more, marking one of the deadliest attacks in the city in recent years. In March 2025, armed attackers [halted](#) a passenger train after damaging railway tracks and opened fire on the train, leading to a hostage situation and a major military operation. The incident resulted in at least 31 deaths, including soldiers, railway staff and civilians. Soon after, a suicide car bombing [struck](#) a convoy transporting security personnel, killing at least seven people and injuring others.

In May 2025, an explosive attack targeting a school bus [killed](#) at least 10 people, including several children, and injured more than 50 others. On 31 January 2026, a [series](#) of large-scale coordinated attacks across multiple districts, including Quetta and Gwadar, resulted in the deaths of more than 30 people, including civilians and security personnel, and triggered extensive security operations across the province.

3. Growing militarization

Due to ongoing conflict brought about by resource extraction and wide-scale human rights violations in Balochistan, the Reko Diq project has also been heavily militarized, with [both public and private security forces](#) guarding the site. According to the Security Services Framework Agreement, the government has deployed the Frontier Corps Balochistan and Levies (which has been recently [merged](#) with the Balochistan Police), while the Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC) has employed the private services of Askari Guards Limited, which has [ties](#) to the Pakistan military. The RDMC has taken on the responsibility of training and ensuring that security forces adhere to international human rights and security standards, including conducting due diligence when deploying members of the armed forces.

With the recent attacks and widescale unrest, in February 2025, Barrick Mining [reviewed the project's security arrangements](#). This entailed allocating a significant amount of money — a total of [Rs 1.79 billion](#) (approximately USD 6.4 million) – for the deployment of security around the project site. The government says this would support the [establishment](#) of a dedicated Frontier Corps to guard borders with Iran and Afghanistan, as well as strengthening its intelligence network in the name of security.

The proposed security arrangement reportedly “aims to safeguard” mineral extraction and investments, thereby further militarizing the region, particularly Chagai, the host district of the Reko Diq project. With the amount of influence and control of the security forces over the project, the local Baloch have raised concerns regarding the militarization of their land. This has already contributed to intensified conflict and unrest, as Baloch movements continue to challenge the control over their territories and resources.

The presence of military and security forces has also contributed to a climate of fear, given the [role that the Levies, Police and Frontier Corps have played](#) in arresting, disappearing, and killing Baloch people in order to suppress dissent. Information around attacks, arrests and disappearances against the Baloch people, as well as the location of detention facilities, is rarely disclosed.

The growing militarization of this region is particularly concerning because of the Baloch's close ties to their land and their rights as Indigenous Peoples. Despite the Pakistani government, Barrick Mining, and the financiers failing to recognize them as such, [UN Special Rapporteurs](#) have asserted that the Baloch people are Indigenous according to the criteria of self-identification, traditional lifestyle, distinct language and culture, unique social organization and historical connection to the land. This assessment is based on the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the context of the Reko Diq mine, the failure to recognize the Baloch as Indigenous Peoples also draws into question the adequacy and legitimacy of the project's impact assessments and consultation processes, particularly with respect to international safeguard standards for Indigenous Peoples that require Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

4. Specific security incidents related to the Reko Diq mine

In this section, we report three recent security incidents that are directly related to the Reko Diq project. It is important to note that, due to the ongoing conflict, it is extremely difficult to independently verify information about security incidents. Bank staff, as well as journalists, human rights defenders and civil society organizations, cannot easily and safely access the mine site. As investors over-rely on information from RDMC, they lack oversight of project implementation. Therefore, they cannot independently assess project risks and ensure compliance with their safeguards and commitments.

4.1 Suicide bombing in Nokkundi

Baloch activists, such as [Sabiha Baloch](#), have warned that it was only a matter of time before armed Baloch insurgents would organise an attack against the project, considering the uptick in violence in the region and the fact that the project was moving forward amidst the opposition of the Baloch community.

On 30 November 2025, as reported by [The Diplomat](#) among others, a suicide bombing coupled with an armed attack targeted a compound housing foreign staff and engineers working for the Saindak and Reko Diq projects in the city of Nokkundi. The Balochistan Liberation Front claimed responsibility for the attack.

4.2 Abduction of two Reko Diq employees

As [reported](#) by local media, on two separate occasions over the weekend of 23 November 2025, Pakistani security forces abducted and forcibly disappeared two Reko Diq employees. Both were taken from the company's vehicles.

The project developer, the Reko Diq Mining Company, informed the ADB that one of the employees was eventually released while the other was put on trial, but that the disappearances were “unrelated to the project and were carried out by a wing of law enforcement outside the project's Security Framework Agreement.” However, there is no information on where the detained employee is being held, what charges he is facing, and under what conditions the other employee was held. This is extremely concerning, given the well-documented and [systematic](#) abuses by Pakistani security forces targeting ethnic Baloch, including [arbitrary detention](#), torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions. Local and international CSOs are concerned about the detained employee's conditions and whether his right to a fair trial is being respected.

For Reko Diq Mining Company in particular, questions arise about what it is doing to ensure the safety of Indigenous Baloch employees, and whether they can work without fearing being arbitrarily targeted by the authorities. As one local [news report](#) pointed out, the Security Services Framework Agreement between Reko Diq and the Pakistan government entrusted the Balochistan Frontier Corps with “apprehending illegal immigrants and countering terrorist activities, including securing the Reko Diq project.” [Local](#) and international human rights organizations reported the Frontier Corps was responsible for most of the abductions in Balochistan, including 56 cases out of 107 enforced disappearances [reported](#) by the Human

Rights Council of Balochistan in January this year. This clearly indicates a risk for collusion of Reko Diq security with other Pakistani security services targeting the Baloch people.

4.3 Detention of mining company personnel

On 13 March 2026, Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) fighters [temporarily detained](#) personnel of a “mineral exploration company” at the Wadh area of Chagai, damaged their vehicle and seized their weapon. While the personnel were released safely, BLF has warned that such instances will continue unless mineral exploration and extraction of natural resources in Balochistan is ceased immediately. As mentioned in BLF’s official press release about the incident, if companies do not stop such activities, “they will be responsible for the consequences.”

4.4 Road blockades against mineral transport

Since late May, armed Baloch groups have been [attacking vehicles transporting minerals](#) in order to impose a road blockade against vehicles transporting minerals from mines, including Reko Diq. On May 19, they [reportedly](#) abducted 17 workers associated with Reko Diq. The same article indicated that the attacks have led transport associations in Balochistan to announce a suspension of the transport of minerals.

5. Impacts on Indigenous Peoples

RDMC has ignored the presence of the Indigenous Baloch population in its [Environmental and Social Impact Assessment \(ESIA\)](#), classifying the Baloch people as an “ethnic minority”. Under EIB safeguards, the Baloch people meet the definition of Indigenous Peoples. They possess a distinct language and cultural identity, self-identify as Indigenous, have strong ancestral and territorial ties to the region, and maintain their separate and distinct customary institutions. This has been recognised by the Baloch communities themselves, is recognised in case law, and is widely affirmed in international scholarship. [UN Special Rapporteurs](#) have also asserted that the Baloch people are Indigenous, based on the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The case of Sher Zaman v. Government of Balochistan acknowledged the Baloch as “indigenous tribes and sub-tribes” with established customary boundaries and tribal governance. Academic studies describe the sardari system and jirga councils as integral political and legal institutions distinct from Pakistani state structures. The Baloch’s unique governance systems, cultural identity and economic and political institutions satisfy international legal criteria for Indigenous Peoples’ institutional distinctness. The ESIA should therefore be corrected to recognise the Baloch as Indigenous Peoples.

Furthermore, RDMC’s suggestion (in the ESIA) that it will “collaborate with the Government of Balochistan to ensure that the Baloch and other marginalised groups are sufficiently represented in the Project’s decision making process”, while acknowledging that the Baloch people have suffered “conflicts with state security agencies” and detentions by state forces, is wholly inappropriate. This suggestion of relying on the same state security agencies who are most often perpetrators of violence against the Indigenous Baloch people is highly problematic. Furthermore,

by denying the impacts that this project will have on Indigenous Peoples, RDMC is denying the Baloch people their rights with regard to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), stakeholder engagement, land rights and cultural heritage.

6. Barrick's human rights track record

Finally, local and international CSOs are concerned about Barrick Mining's track record in other projects and fear the same patterns might be replicated in the Reko Diq mines.

In particular, in other cases where Barrick relies on security arrangements that include armed national police forces, there are ongoing and well-documented allegations of serious human rights abuses. For example, at the North Mara Gold Mine in Tanzania, allegations of excess use of force against local Indigenous peoples have led to four [transnational lawsuits](#). Two have been settled on behalf of the Indigenous Kuria plaintiffs while the other two are ongoing. It is deeply concerning that Barrick appears willing to settle lawsuits rather than address the allegations about its security arrangements.

7. Impacts on water, air, health and livelihoods

Serious concerns have been raised, including by Pakistan's Supreme Court, about Reko Diq's potential [exacerbation of water scarcity](#) in Balochistan, and about outstanding harms from previous attempts to develop the site, including [cyanide poisoning and health impacts](#). This is in addition to the documented impacts on human and animal health, and water and air quality, that can be expected with large-scale, industrial [copper extraction](#) projects. This includes increased risk of respiratory illnesses, neurological disorders and other chronic diseases in humans, and poisoning, reduced fertility, stunted growth and increased mortality in animals. Indeed, the [IFC Disclosure page](#) acknowledges that the project will emit significant particulate matter which will impact air quality and project workers.

Meanwhile, local workers at the site have faced labour violations. In one [documented incident on 20 August 2023](#), it was reported that four Baloch Indigenous workers were fired by [military-owned security guards hired by Barrick](#) without explanation and forced to leave the Reko Diq camp. These young men were left to walk on foot for hours in 39°C heat, posing serious risks to their health and safety.

The mine also has the potential to reshape the livelihoods of local communities, particularly those dependent on pastoralism and small-scale agriculture. The project will require significant land acquisition, which will restrict access to grazing lands and seasonal migration routes critical for livestock herders. In an already arid region, the mine's substantial water use risks depleting or contaminating scarce groundwater sources, undermining crop irrigation and drinking water for animals and people. Dust emissions can also damage pasture vegetation, reduce crop yields, and contaminate fodder with heavy metals, which in turn can harm animal health and reduce market value for livestock products. These changes will force herders and farmers to alter their way of life, fundamentally impacting their livelihoods, forcing many to find alternatives or migrate.

8. The construction of a heavy fuel oil (HFO) power plant to power the project.

The project [ESIA details that the project will result in 4,250,000 tons CO2-eq / year, mainly from \(a\) the buildout and use of a Heavy Fuel Oil \(HFO\) power plant](#) that will power 80% of the project and generate "approximately 850,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO2e) and (b) scope 3 emissions. Despite being located in a hot desert climate zone that receives more sunshine than any other climate classification, due to Barrick's desire for cost advantages, the project only calls for 20% of the project to be powered by renewables, despite the 100% renewables being economically and technically feasible. Both the HFO plant and solar solutions would have back up diesel generators on hand for power reliability.

Just as troubling, the project will aggravate and not contribute to Pakistan meeting its NDC. This is because the ESIA forecasts use of the HFO power plant for the first 15 years (2034-2041), then for the project to be connected to Pakistan's grid that the ESIA predicts will be powered by renewables if Pakistan is meeting its NDC. Further, while the ESIA may properly estimate Scope 3 project emissions at around 3,000,000 tons CO2-eq/yr., (1) there is no GHG alternatives analysis to evaluate ways to avoid or mitigate these substantial emissions, (2) alternatives and mitigation measures are not adopted to avoid these substantial Scope 3 emissions as far as economically and technically feasible. In sum, the project will increase Pakistan's national greenhouse gas emissions, free ride on Pakistan's efforts to meet its NDC, fails to assess and implement feasible alternatives and mitigation to substantially avoid GHG emissions, and contributes to further exacerbating the country's vulnerability to climate change. The project as planned is inconsistent with the 1.5°C objective and does not meet the claims made by EIB, and their shareholders, to only finance projects that are aligned with the Paris Agreement ([see Bank Climate Advocates analysis from the ESIA for supporting details](#)).

Recommendation

The heavy militarization of the project area, the documented pattern of human rights violations in the region, the limited possibility for independent monitoring, and unresolved concerns regarding Indigenous Peoples' rights raise serious questions about whether the project can be implemented in a manner consistent with international human rights standards and the environmental and social safeguard commitments of its financiers.

In light of these concerns, we urge the EIB not to even consider any form of support for the Reko Diq mine until, at the very least, the dire human rights and security situations have resolved.

Sincerely,

Accountability Counsel
Bank Climate Advocates
CEE Bankwatch Network
Counterbalance
Defenders in Development campaign
Human Rights Council of Balochistan
Recourse