

July 7, 2020

Joint Statement on Policing and Respect for Human Rights

We, the Corporate and NGO members of the Voluntary Principles Initiative, release the statement below:

The last few weeks have seen demonstrations around the world condemning police brutality and systemic racism present in public security institutions. Protesters have called for reforms to policing policies and practices as well as the restructuring of public security institutions to prevent further human rights violations against racialized groups.

Improving the human rights performance of public security organizations is a global undertaking requiring significant commitment, resources and effort. Past and ongoing efforts to professionalize and improve the human rights performance of public and private security can play a role in informing future reforms.

Globally, over 50 government, NGO and corporate members of the **Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI)** promote and adhere to the **Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights**. Members of the VPI collectively have decades of experience in improving the human rights performance of private and public security providers. While the Voluntary Principles were originally designed to guide natural resource companies on interactions with private and public security providers, they have been implemented directly by private and public sector security institutions around the world.

The Voluntary Principles require public security providers, such as police, to act in a manner consistent with the protection and promotion of human rights in accordance with the rule of law. According to the Principles, force is to be used only when strictly necessary and to an extent proportional to the threat. Where force is used, this should be reported and investigated, and medical aid should be provided to any injured persons. Furthermore, public security forces should not violate the rights of individuals while exercising their right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

The VPI has found that improving the human rights performance of private and public security providers leads to better outcomes, not just on human rights, but also on improving relations and building trust with communities and citizens. Relevant Principles and best practices include:

- Conducting periodic risk assessments regarding the potential for violence and risks of human rights abuses allows police and other security providers to better understand the situations and populations for which risks are highest;
- Security practices must consider the unique human rights risks facing ethnic and racial minorities, women and girls, Indigenous Peoples, human rights defenders, and other vulnerable groups, and respond accordingly;
- Effective community engagement, including with women and vulnerable groups, is critical both to understanding risks and working collaboratively to mitigate them;
- Vetting individual security providers on their human rights record is essential to ensuring a professional force which can gain the trust of the community. Individuals credibly implicated in human rights violations should not be employed;
- Professional and regular training and education for public security providers is essential and should involve civil society organizations. Training should include de-escalation techniques, human rights compliance, use of force only when necessary and to the extent proportional to the threat and as a last resort only; and

- After human rights violations have occurred, any perpetrators of human rights violations must be held accountable. Anyone with reliable evidence should report a violation.

As a security and human rights initiative, the VPI has always been acutely aware of the potential for human rights violations in the provision of security services. We hope our experience might benefit governments and public security institutions currently reflecting on the risk of human rights abuses, accountability, and how policing policies and practices can better promote and protect human rights.

For the full text of the Voluntary Principles, please see <http://www.voluntaryprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/TheVoluntaryPrinciples.pdf>

We are also very pleased to share a recording of a webinar broadcast on June 26, 2020 by the Voluntary Principles Initiative on **Security and Human Rights and the Treatment of National Minorities**, available at <https://www.voluntaryprinciples.org/news/recording-webinar-security-and-human-rights-and-the-treatment-of-national-minorities/>

Lastly, we thank the following VPI members who have contributed to or expressly endorsed this statement. Some of them have released their own statements, which are hyperlinked to the name of the organization in the list below:

[AngloAmerican](#), AngloGold Ashanti, [BP](#), COMPPART Foundation for Justice and Peacebuilding, Conoco Phillips, Freeport-McMoRan Inc., Fund for Peace, Gemfields, Green Advocates International, Lite-Africa, Newcrest, New Nigeria Foundation, Pax, [Search for Common Ground](#), Shell, TOTAL, UNICEF Canada, Vale.

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Background: About the Voluntary Principles

The Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights are an internationally recognized set of principles that guide companies on how to conduct their security operations while ensuring respect for human rights.

The Voluntary Principles were created in 2000 when companies, governments, and NGOs committed to work together to address security-related human rights abuses and violations in the extractive sector. Today, the Voluntary Principles help companies in various industries conduct a conflict analysis, identify and understand the security and human rights risks in the environment in which they operate, and take meaningful steps to address these risks.

To promote implementation of the Principles, the Voluntary Principles Initiative (VPI) was created. The Initiative is comprised of over 50 members including companies, governments, and non-governmental organizations that share best practices and mutually support the implementation of the Principles.

More information: www.voluntaryprinciples.org