

# Another class action against Anglo American

Another 18 miners who claimed they contracted deadly silicosis working at an Anglo American gold mine in South Africa have slapped the firm with a class action lawsuit, lawyers said.



The miners claimed they got the disease with no known cure from inhaling dangerous levels of silica dust while drilling rocks at Anglo's President Steyn Gold Mine, in central Free State.

The lawsuit -- prepared by South African and British law firms -- is the latest in a series of legal actions against gold mining firms in South Africa.

Five of the 18 claimants have died since the case started in 2004, one of the lawyers, Richard Meeran a partner with British firm Leigh Day, told *AFP* adding that he hoped the case would set a precedent.

The case will go for an arbitration hearing in February next year in Johannesburg before three prominent judges.

The judges include the former chief justice Sandile Ngcobo and a retired Appeals Court judge Ian Farlam. Farlam is currently chairman of the inquest into the killing last year of 34 platinum mine workers by police at Marikana.

Anglo American South Africa confirmed to *AFP* that it has been served with a silicosis class action application and that it will need time to study it.

The company which no longer operates gold mines in South Africa said it has denied "liability in answer to similar claims filed in South Africa".

"Anglo American does not believe that it is any way liable for the silicosis claims brought by former gold workers and is defending the actions," it said.

The lawyers alleged that Anglo American, which was the parent company of 11 gold mines until 1998, "negligently controlled and advised its mines with regard to prevention of dust exposure and silicosis."

When exposed to excessive amounts, silica dust gets locked into the lungs and permanently scars the organ. The result is silicosis, a disease which does not have a cure.

Symptoms include persistent coughing and shortness of breath.

In a separate case from 2011 over silicosis some 2,300 South African miners lodged a class action against Anglo American in London. But the gold miner has challenged the jurisdiction of a British court to hear the matter.

In December, another attorney Richard Spoor launched what is so far the biggest class action involving more than 17,000 mostly black workers who allegedly contracted the disease while working the mines across Africa's top gold producing country.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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