



Protestors at the town hall in March 2026

## RIO TINTO/QMM MINE MADAGASCAR: BRIEFING APRIL 2026:

Currently falling under a “[strategic review](#)”, the future of Rio Tinto’s QMM ilmenite mine in Madagascar [is in question](#). Reports from the ground suggest QMM staff and sub-contractors are worried, the latter now only able to secure two-month contracts. Local people fear the operation will be sold off to a Chinese operator with the loss of all hope for reconciling QMM’s outstanding environmental and social issues. Local people have a right to know all facts about the environmental condition of the waterways on which their livelihoods depend before any sale transaction is completed. Investors too should be aware of the risks.

Water quality has been an ongoing concern [since 2009](#), after QMM constructed a weir that changed the water chemistry in local lakes and vital [fish stocks plummeted](#). QMM’s [unregulated breach](#) of an environmental buffer zone in 2014 broke at least two national laws and raised questions about [radioactivity](#) and heavy metal contamination in the local lakes. Conflict occurred after two tailings [dam failures in 2022](#) when QMM was forced to release a million cubic metres of toxic mine basin water into the local environment, followed by hundreds of [fish deaths](#) in an adjoining lake. Rio Tinto denied responsibility and promised an independent study into the fish deaths.

*“Why has no official feedback been communicated to the communities concerned?” Toteny Tanosy, 2025*

**Rio Tinto’s promises to share independent studies into the fish deaths have never been honoured.** A report by WRG was withheld in 2023 because it was deemed “inconclusive”. There is no sight of the subsequent WSP report, promised for 2025. QMM’s own 2025 water report acknowledges unreported releases of at least a million cubic metres of mine process waters and increased conductivity. QMM uses data from a contaminated operational period for its baseline, never employing pre-mining baseline data in their water analysis. It fails to explain the full range of metals present in its treatment plant waste sludge or offer long-term solutions for management of this toxic waste.

[Independent studies](#) have demonstrated elevated levels of uranium and lead in waters downstream of QMM, and [a legal case](#) has been launched against Rio Tinto by more than 6000 villagers who claim pollution from the mine has led to potentially dangerous health impacts.

Local community members have [been protesting](#) over unpaid land compensation, and also demanding transparency about the 4 million dollars per year fund promised in 2023 for social programmes that has not reached mine-affected populations with any meaningful impact. Poverty has deepened according to [Anosy civil society](#). There have been reports of human rights abuses, failed grievance processes, and no inquiry into the 2023 events which led to the [killing of three protestors](#). Malagasy civil society, international NGO and investor [requests](#) to Rio Tinto for independent human rights/environmental impact assessment/s of QMM have been repeatedly denied.

*“... the expected positive impacts (of QMM) have yet to materialize. The reasons? A lack of transparency, the absence of effective local governance, and the exclusion of citizens from decision-making processes. The result is a widespread loss of trust, coupled with a sense of injustice. What should have been a driver of progress has become a symbol of broken promises.” Toteny Tanosy/PFROSC/Plateforme Districte des OSC, 2025*

Unresolved issues around water quality, [livelihoods](#), [land](#) and [compensation](#) remain priorities for Antanosy populations concerned that Rio Tinto will cut and run from Madagascar leaving a toxic legacy and its social and environmental [commitments abandoned](#).

### **Demands on Rio Tinto/QMM**

- No sale of QMM unless all Rio Tinto promises and commitments are delivered and local grievances resolved.
- Ensure owed /adequate compensation is paid to affected populations for land and livelihood losses
- Ensure mining benefits shared with communities transparently, according to their priorities
- Provide WRG and WSP reports into fish deaths as publicly promised to investors and civil society since 2022
- Agree to Malagasy demands for an independent human rights & environmental impact assessment
- Honour all QMM social and environmental commitments and obligations to international standards

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