

Double Trouble: Mirrar face yet another U-mine battle

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The ever-widening differences between Australian and international approaches to the plight of the Mirrar people were today highlighted by events in Europe and Canberra.

In Salzburg, Senior Traditional Owner of the Mirrar people, Yvonne Margarula, was officially awarded a US\$ 10 000 prize for her efforts to protect the living tradition of her people from the Jabiluka uranium mine.

Meanwhile in Canberra, Australian and Torres Strait Islander Affairs minister John Herron is seeking to impose compulsory arbitration in order to force through an indefinite extension of the Ranger Uranium Mine lease. Both the Jabiluka and Ranger mineral leases are wholly within Mirrar country.

Executive Officer of the Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation, Jacqui Katona, said today:

"The Mirrar and other Aboriginal people of the Kakadu region have had no opportunity to effectively participate in the Ranger re-negotiation 'agreement' which Senator Herron seeks to finalise over the next few months. This is a shameful repetition of events in 1978 when the Ranger Mine was imposed on Aboriginal people despite their strident opposition."

"The Mirrar are now facing the prospect of two unwanted, mega-industrial developments systematically destroying their culture for at least the next 25 year. It seems apparent to the Mirrar that the Federal Government is wilfully participating in a form of genocide."

"However, the Mirrar have been buoyed by the recent UNESCO investigation of the Jabiluka mine and growing international assistance at the highest levels. The Australian government has vastly underestimated the level of support for the Mirrar in the international community and is set to suffer the financial and diplomatic consequences of its belligerent approach."

"In addition the Mirrar are currently considering legal action against the Federal Government to prevent the Ranger arbitration process commencing before the Mirrar have the opportunity to properly consider any proposed agreement in their own language", Ms Katona concluded.

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