

Implats: ‘Illegal underground protest is not only endangering lives but also livelihoods’

By  [Lindsey Schutters](#)

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Impala Platinum has reported with “deep concern” that the illegal underground protest at its Impala Bafokeng operation remains unresolved. The protest, which began on the morning of Monday, 18 December 2023, was initiated without the sanction of the operation’s representative union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).



Underground at Impala Bafokeng. Source: Impala Platinum

Implats maintains that its primary concern is the health, safety, and security of its employees.

In response to the protest, Impala Bafokeng implemented targeted emergency measures to protect the well-being of those involved, whether voluntarily or under duress. Support measures have also been introduced for concerned family members and friends.

As of 7pm on Tuesday, 167 employees had safely returned to the surface, while approximately 2,038 employees remained underground.



Implats responds to underground protest

18 Dec 2023



The protest appears to stem from what the company calls “several misunderstandings among employees, exacerbated by the recent change in ownership at Impala Bafokeng”.

These include, according to a company statement, "the belief that employees' accumulated pension fund balances can be paid out, that statutory taxation provisions should not apply to award or bonus payments, and concerns about the conversion of the historical employee profit share arrangement into an employee share ownership trust".

Implats stressed that it is committed to ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of its employees who remain underground at both North and South shafts.

De-escalate the situation

Mine management is working to de-escalate the situation and pave the way for constructive engagement. They have facilitated underground access for the regional leadership of the NUM to engage with its members and are working with the union leadership towards resolving the protest action.

“ *The illegal underground protest is not only endangering lives but also livelihoods.* ”

"Given the current low platinum group metal (PGM) prices, the financial sustainability of the broader PGM industry is at risk. This illegal protest action serves to exacerbate this situation at Impala Bafokeng, adding unnecessary additional pressure on the operation and, as such, its ability to sustain employment," concluded the statement.

ABOUT LINDSEY SCHUTTERS

Lindsey is the editor for ICT, Construction&Engineering and Energy&Mining at Bizcommunity

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