

Amnesty Intl. UK rejoinder to UK Export Finance (UKEF) response

30 Jul 2013

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited UK Export Finance to respond to this item: "A History of Neglect. UK Export Finance and Human Rights", Amnesty International UK, June 2013 http://www.amnesty.org.uk/uploads/documents/doc_23288.pdf

UKEF sent us this response: http://www.business-humanrights.org/Links/Repository/1020952/link_page_view

Amnesty Intl. sent us the following rejoinder:

Mr Dodgson expresses disappointment that UK Export Finance (UKEF) was not given the opportunity to comment on our briefing on the human rights failings of UKEF pre-publication. We have been engaging with UKEF and Lord Green, the Minister for Trade and Investment, for some time on the issues raised in our report and their stock response is invariably the same - that UKEF does not need to address the human rights impacts of its activities except when required by the OECD agreement to which it adheres, the Common Approaches.

UKEF's abdication of responsibility was repeated in Parliament in early July in response to questions from Lord Stevenson of Balmacara, including one asking what human rights due diligence was undertaken for the £4.6m in financial support that was provided to a UK mining company operating in Sierra Leone. The response from Lord Green :

*"It is The Export Credit Guarantees' Department (ECGD's) policy to comply with all International Agreements which apply to the operations of Export Credit Agencies (ECAs). This includes the OECD Recommendation on Common Approaches for Officially Supported Export Credits and Environmental and Social Due Diligence (the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Common Approaches), which informs the way in which member ECAs should address the environmental social and human rights (ESHR) impacts of projects they are asked to support. The support provided was under ECGD's Contract Bond Support Scheme. **And the OECD Common Approaches does not require an ESHR impact assessment to be carried out in respect of this category of export transaction**".*

Isn't it time UKEF changed its tune and treated each transaction and project it is asked to support on its merits? This would require an assessment of potential negative human rights impacts and development of mitigating action, regardless of whether it conforms with the very weak OECD Common Approaches standard for export credit agencies.