

HALKIDIKI - MINES

INFORMATION

FACTS



SOS
ΧΑΛΚΙΔΙΚΗ

IMPACTS

ENVIRONMENT - ECONOMY - SOCIETY

Universities, institutes and scientists explain ...

DEMONSTRATIONS

REPRESSION

A long history of activism and demonstrations against mining activities in Halkidiki



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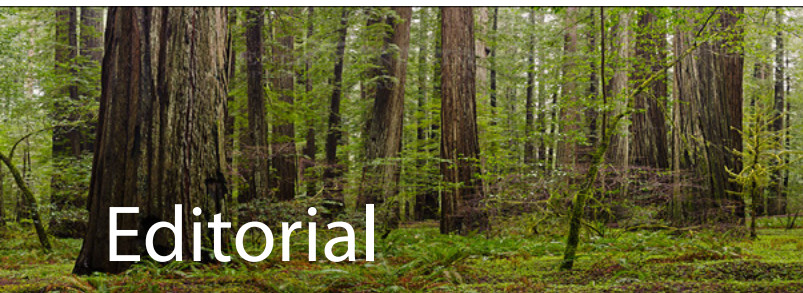
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Editorial

Halkidiki is a peninsula in northern Greece. Halkidiki has a very diverse, biologically important, natural landscape, combining mountains and beautiful forests with amazing sea and beaches. It is a very popular tourist destination. Besides tourism, local economy is based on agriculture, livestock, fishery, beekeeping, and forestry.

For many years in Halkidiki the issue of mining activities has been central. Political choices and economic interests have been trying to create an economic “monoculture” for many decades, where the local economy is entirely dependent on the mines. Moreover, it is widely recognized that the mining activity is competitive to other economic activities such as tourism, agriculture, livestock, fisheries, beekeeping, etc.

Mining and metallurgy, are forms of heavy industry fraught with dangers. Serious and irreversible damage to the natural environment, air pollution, water resources, the soil, as well as effects on human health and life quality.

The first issue of “soshalkidiki” tries to give an overview of the impacts that scientific institutions and scientists have documented. Opposition of the residents against the expansion of mining activities in Halkidiki, is based on scientific findings warning about the inevitable negative consequences.

The people of Halkidiki have been struggling for a long time against the destruction of their land. They struggle to protect the environment and ensure a decent life. They struggle to ensure their childrens’ right to live and create in this place. Get informed and support their struggle.



Email

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Web Site

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For Articles and Information in English visit:

<http://soshalkidiki.wordpress.com/category/in-english/>

Translations of the main articles, scientific papers and videos will soon become available on the website.

NATURAL RESOURCES

PUBLIC WEALTH

EXPLOITATION

CORRUPTION



HISTORY OF CASSANDRA MINES

Cassandra Mines operated since antiquity. So far 33 million tons of ore have been extracted. Over the next 25 years, 380 million tons will be extracted.

The mining activities in Halkidiki started at the early classical antiquity, around the 6th century. After the Second World War, Cassandra mines become a property of the greek businessman Bodossakis Athanasiadis.

In 1992, the company went through special liquidation process by the National Bank of Greece. In December 1995, mining royalties and infrastructure are transferred to TVX Hellas S.A. a subsidiary of the Canadian mining company TVX Gold. In 2002, the State Council, after an appeal by the people, decides that the potential risks of the investment are greater than the economic and social benefits that would arise for the local community.

In 2003 TXV Hellas stopped its operations in Halkidiki.



At the price of 11 million euros, Cassandra mines are transferred to Hellas Gold S.A.”

TRANSFER

In December 2003, the assets of Cassandra Mines (N.E. Halkidiki, Greece) of TVX HELLAS S.A., were transferred by law, ratified by the Greek Parliament, to the Greek State for 11 million euros. They were sold the same day to HELLAS GOLD S.A. for the same price without prior economic assessment of the assets and without an open competition ^[19]. The assets include mining and exploration concessions covering 317 square kilometers, 310 homes, 11,000 square meters of urban land, 2.5 square kilometers of land, 30,000 square meters of offices and industrial buildings, 2

underground mines with shafts and underground tunnels, pumping systems, two ore-treatment plants, vehicles and mine machinery.

The concession exempts the company from any transfer tax or other taxes and relieves it in advance from any financial obligations concerning environmental damage resulting from previous operation of mines. The European Commission has decided that the terms of the contract amount to an illegal State aid in favor of the company equivalent to 15.3 million euros ^[20]. The Greek government immediately appealed ^[21] for an annulment of the decision while the hearing of the appeal is pending to date.

In March 2012, 4.1 square kilometers of public forest was conceded for the company to begin the implementation of the

mining projects. This is essentially a transfer of social surplus from the State to the company ^[14].

The Environmental Impact Assessment was submitted to the Ministry of Environment in August 2010, and after a shockingly ostensible public consultation, which in fact never took place, remained for 11 months in the drawers of the then Minister Mrs. Birbili who refused to approve it. This “bureaucratic” barrier was bypassed by replacing Mrs Birbili with former Finance Minister Papaconstantinou, who immediately signed the approval of environmental terms.

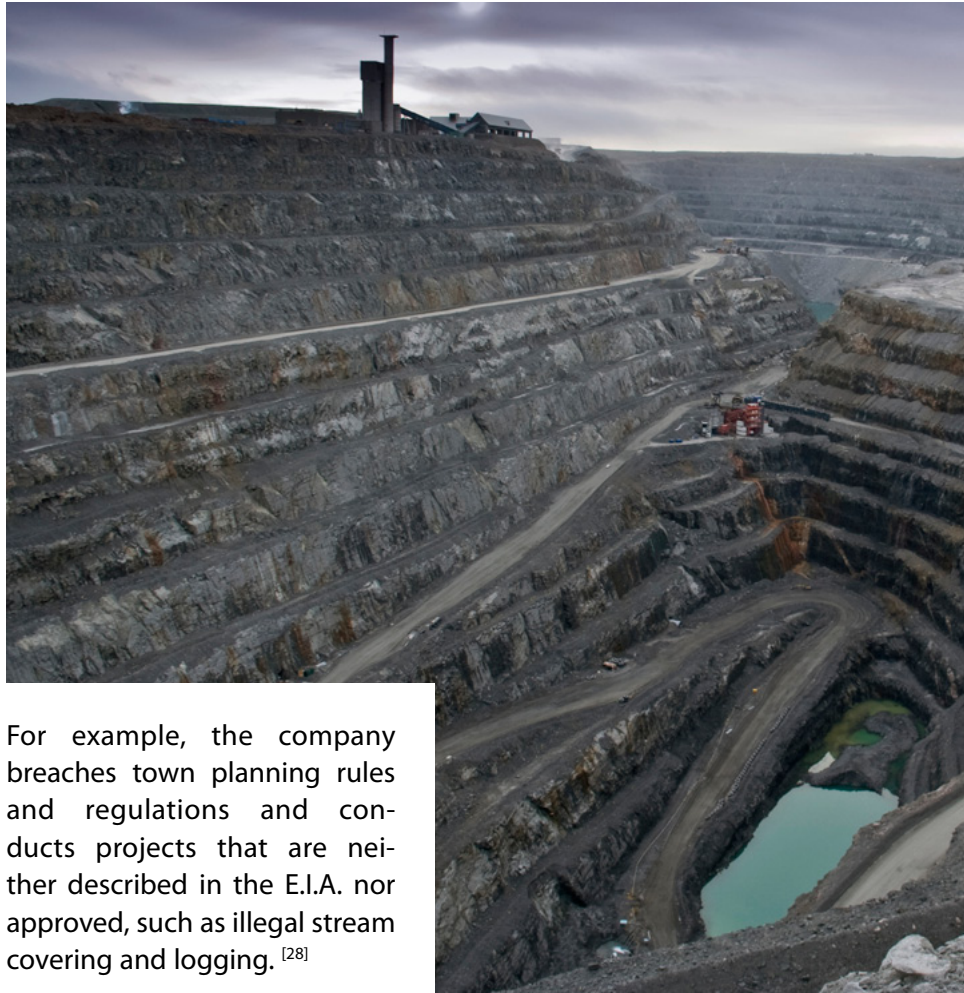
In 2007, European Goldfields Ltd acquired 95% of Hellas Gold S.A. In December 2011 European Goldfields Ltd sold its share to the Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold. Corp. at the price of 1.8 billion euros. Hellas Gold S.A., today 95% owned by the international gold producer Eldorado Gold Corporation based in Vancouver, has a market capitalization of 2.3 billion euros and the value of the minerals in Halkidiki is estimated to 15.5 billion euros. According to the Greek Mining Regulation the mining company has full possession of the minerals contained in the concessions granted and there are no royalties for the State ^[10, 16].

LEGITIMACY

The Eldorado Gold Corp. and Hellas Gold S.A. openly and systematically violate the Greek and European legislation under the tolerance - if not protection - of the Greek auditing and prosecuting authorities. The violation of Article 6 (clause 3-4) of the 92/43/EEC Directive, concerning the activities near areas belonging to the NATURA 2000 network, makes authorization by the Ministry of Environment of the company's operations, void and illegal. The appropriate evaluation process was not followed, alternatives were not examined and no compensatory measures of any kind, were imposed as required by law.

Since then, the company has committed a series of illegalities.

For example, the company breaches town planning rules and regulations and conducts projects that are neither described in the E.I.A. nor approved, such as illegal stream covering and logging.^[28]





BRIEF PROJECT DESCRIPTION

EXTRACTION OF 380 MIL. TONS

OPEN PIT

METALLURGY

CHEMICAL PROCESSING

The phases of the projects in brief ^[18]:

Deforestation of a forest area greater than 2.5 square kilometers

Surface crater mining (open pit), with initial estimated diameter of 705 meters and 220 meters depth

Tailing dams, buildings and ancillary facilities

Nine boreholes for drainage around the crater to a depth of 750 meters (140 meters of which are below sea level)

Open pit mining of 24,000 tons per day, with excavation and blasting (daily use of 6 tons of explosives)

Transfer, pre-crushing and deposit of ore in covered storage area with 80,000 tons capacity

Trituration - chemical processing (enrichment) of ore

Transferring of (a) the final product, which represents only 1.97% of the ore, to the metallurgical factory and (b) waste enrichment, constituting 98.03% of the ore to the tailing disposal and storage sites.

The “investment” plan of HELLAS GOLD SA includes the existing mine in “Mavres Petres”, a new open pit and underground mine in “Skouries”, an underground mine in “Olympiada”, a 8.5 kilometer underground tunnel for the transport of ore (Olympiada – Madem Lakkos), a copper-gold metallurgy plant, a sulfuric acid plant (1000 t / d), four tailing disposal and storage sites, an industrial port, storage tanks and exploration of 14 other potential mining areas ^[18].

According to the plan, the next 25 years 380 mil. tons will be extracted, when till today 33 mil. tons were extracted!



IMPACTS

Findings of Universities
Scientific Research

ENVIRONMENT

ECONOMY

SOCIETY

HEALTH

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

According to independent scientific institutes, the company's EIA has many problems. There are deficiencies in the documentation ^[1, 5, 7], incomplete scientific data and problematic methodologies ^[1, 5, 7, 14, 16, 17], deviations from the procedures of the European Commission ^[1] and misinterpretation of statutory limits of pollutants ^[5].

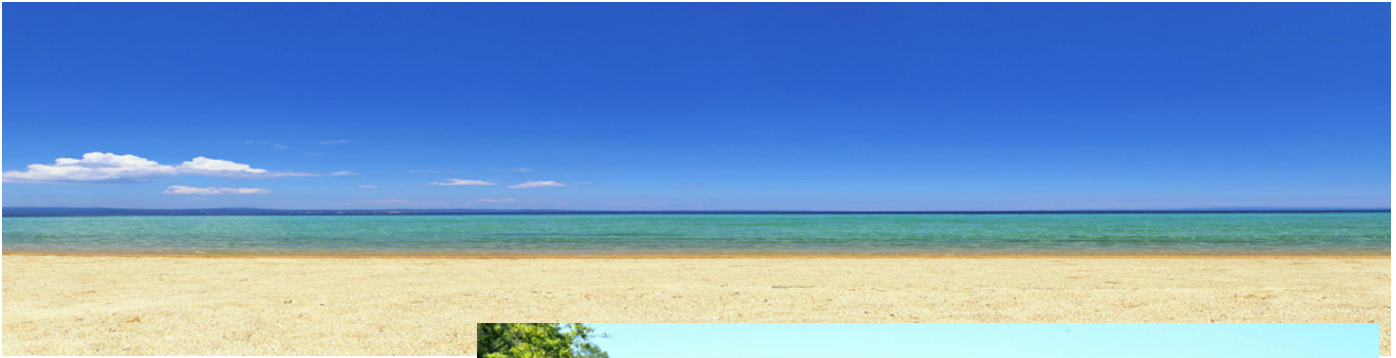
For example the method of "flash smelting" that is proposed (a) has never been applied on an industrial scale for the production

of gold ^[16, 17] and (b) does not give pure gold but mixtures with copper, lead and iron and there is no reported separation method ^[3, 10]. The company, most probably, will eventually implement the method of cyanation ^[18].

Additionally, the geometric characteristics of the surface exploitation (depth and diameter of the open pit) depend exclusively on the price of gold. With the revision of prices, the expected surface area is multiplied, thus overturning the whole design of the EIA regarding the geometry

of the intervention as well as the chemistry of all deposits ^[17].

In July 2011 the Greek State approved the Environmental Impact Assessment ^[22], after a shockingly ostensible public consultation ^[1].



ECONOMY

A United Nations report concerning economic and social development in the world observes that countries which export raw materials such as ores, grow at a slower pace and diverge from developed economies ^[25].

In theory, mining activity can be sustainable only if it does not alter the character of a region, and developmental if it is carried out in the overall interest of society ^[3,12]. This amounts the assurance of public interest, the existence of reliable inspection mechanisms, and long-term preponderance of overall benefits over negative impacts.

None of those criteria are met by the "investment" plan of the Hellas Gold S.A. ^[3, 8]. Instead it is estimated that this is a definitive and irreversible major destruction of physical capital at local, national and European level ^[11] and a violent alteration of the region's development model ^[1]. The positive economic externalities are absent, while the negative externalities will continue having an impact on other economic activities for several years after the mining operation has ended ^[14].



Unlike the majority of countries with mining activities, Greece has not provided for any mineral rights (royalties). According to the Greek Mining Code, that was drafted during the military dictatorship, the Greek State has no right (royalties) on profits, production or sale of minerals. According to the Minister of Environment who sign the permit (Mr. Papaconstantinou) the benefit for the Greek State will come from taxation of workers, VAT and social contributions!



Ore Deposit: : geological formation that contains minerals with economic interest. The boundaries of a deposit are based on the cut-off grade, i.e. the minimum concentration of a mineral or element per volume unit, that makes the exploitation of the deposit economically worthy."

IMPACTS ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Tourism, agriculture, live-
stock, beekeeping, fishery,
forestry, biocultivates,
aquaculture

AGRICULTURE

Halkidiki shows significant activity in the agricultural sector. There are 108.9 square kilometers of farmland and 276 square kilometers of pasture land ^[2], 814 beekeepers and 152,385 beehives (9.7% of the national total) ^[2], organic farming, fishing and aquaculture. A significant contribution to the local economy is also managed wood logging, forest fruits, game preys and aromatic herbs ^[11]. All these activities are at fatal risk due to the deforestation of Kakkavos mountain, the drying up of the aquifer, dust that impedes the vital functions of plants, acid runoffs, and bioaccumulation of heavy metals in the food chain ^[2, 13].



TOURISM

The contribution of tourism to GDP of Northeast Halkidiki is estimated at 15-20% ^[4]. The mining activity will bring a fatal blow to the touristic character of the area, will degrade the life quality of residents and visitors and will not replace the stable benefits of existing and future sustainable development of the area ^[4].

SOCIAL WELFARE

The aspect of social welfare in the case of gold mining is practically zero ^[14]. According to the Greek Mining Regulation, any activity that disturbs mining is prohibited in designated mining areas, private land can be expropriated, and any protection status for areas designated as protected by national and international conventions does not hold. Finally the mining company has full possession of the ore contents and there are no royalties, meaning zero profits for the State ^[10, 16].





IMPACTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT



*Water shortage
would be the cause of
third world war"*

WATER RESOURCES

The Kakkavos mountain supplies water to the entire N.E. Halkidiki ^[10, 17]. The proposed mining activity will directly and irreversibly affect the region's water resources. The EIA does not meet any of the goals of the Framework Directive 60/2000/EK - "Establishing a framework for Community action in water policy" which has been incorporated into Greek law ^[15].

The current mining runoff amounts to 350 m³ / h, which corresponds to the supply needs of 40,000 inhabitants, while the future pumping of fresh water only in "Skouries" is expected to reach 480 m³ / h and is probably underestimated ^[3]. The fresh water pumping in "Olympiada" will reach 663 m below sea level,

which will cause saltwater intrusion to the coastal aquifer ^[3, 15]. The company's plan of reintroducing the pumped water back into the aquifer and repositioning part of the mined material as backfill in conditions where drainage has occurred ^[10] will result in permanent pollution of groundwater by infiltration of pollutants once the aquifer has returned to surface level ^[2, 3, 7, 10, 12, 15].

ATMOSPHERE

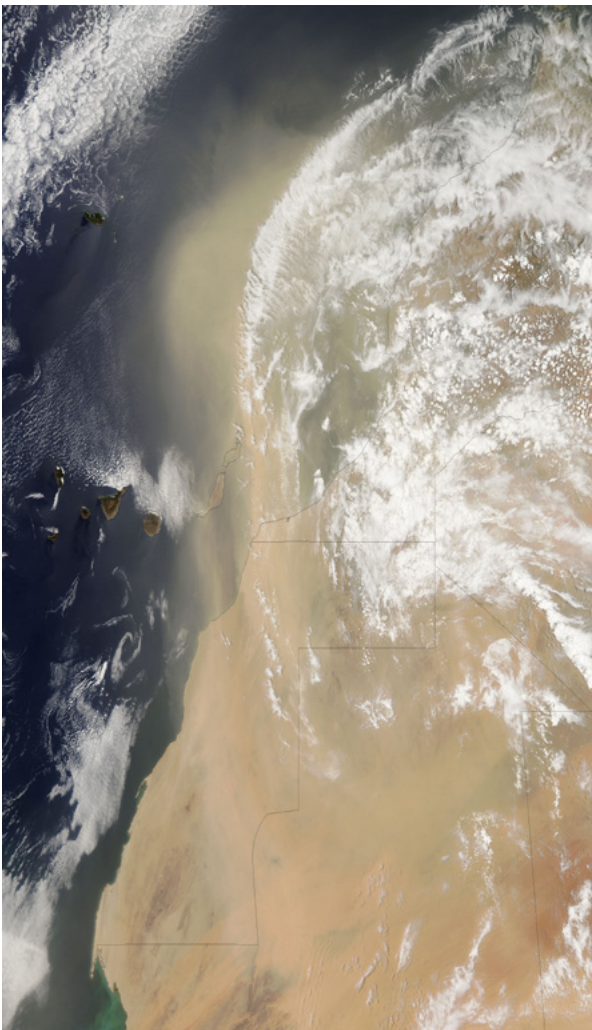


Concerning the atmospheric pollution, Halkidiki will turn into another Thessaloniki, and will be comparable only with heavily industrial areas ^[5].



MINE DUST PRODUCTION:

4.324 TONS PER HOUR



The air pollution estimates found in EIA violate the statutory limits for gaseous and particulate pollutants ^[3]. Only in “Skouries” the particulate emissions are estimated to 430 t / y PM10, with high concentrations of heavy metals, particularly arsenic ^[3]. The ore dust production sums up to 4.324 t / h ^[18] with high concentrations of sulfur compounds such as heavy metals antimony, arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, copper, iron, manganese, nickel, lead, mercury, zinc, etc. ^[2]. The emission of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter PM10 and PM2, 5, is in total 715 t / y in the first two years of operation and over 950 t / y over the next years ^[2, 16]. These atmospheric pollutants will be transported over long distances ^[5].

ECOSYSTEMS



The planned intervention is characterized as violent and will irretrievably change both the landscape and ecosystem functions [3, 9, 17]. The area of exploitation covers 264 square kilometers [18] with 90% forest cover. Much of it belongs to the NATURA 2000 network and other protected areas, with primeval forests and rich flora and fauna with rare, endangered and strictly protected, by international conventions, species [2, 3, 11]. Bioaccumulation of heavy metals at various levels of the food chain is extremely dangerous to the functioning of ecosystems, agro-pastoral products and ultimately to human health [2, 3, 12, 13].

Deforestation and forest drainage of the aquifer is a threat to ecosystems within a radius of several kilometers from the site [16]. The pollution of the marine environment by mining pollutants and the construction and operation of a large-scale industrial port would damage the quality of sea water both as a natural habitat of marine organisms as well as bathing waters [3].

SOIL

Soil is considered a non-renewable natural resource. In almost all countries that operate or have operated gold mines, the land adjacent to mines, and even land at a great distance, remain contaminated with heavy metals for several decades - or even centuries - after the closure of the mines [13]. The decrease in soil pH due to acidic runoff and the high heavy metal concentration makes the soil unsuitable for organisms and plant growth [2, 13]. The mining activity will cause drying topsoil within kilometers of the open pit [2, 13] and severe soil erosion with subsequent catastrophic flood events [13, 15].

Μέχρι που θα φτάνει η αέρια ρύπανση και η όξινη βροχή από τα μεταλλεία χρυσού της Χαλκιδικής;

Θεσσαλονίκη - Σαχάρα 1100 χλμ.

Θεσσαλονίκη - Ορυχείο Σκουριών Χαλκιδικής 62 χλμ.

Η κόκκινη σκόνη έρχεται από την Σαχάρα στην Θεσσαλονίκη διασχίζοντας απόσταση 1100 χλμ. Μέχρι που θα μεταφέρεται από τους ανέμους η τεράστια ποσότητα τοξικής σκόνης (3.116 τόνοι ανά ώρα!) που θα δημιουργείται από την επιφανειακή εξόρυξη και επεξεργασία τόνων χύματος των μεταλλείων χρυσού της Χαλκιδικής;

Τι θα γίνεται όταν αυτό θα συνδυάζεται με βροχόπτωση;

Την απάντηση την δίνει η σύγκριση των αποστάσεων!

Αποστάσεις από θέση ορυχείου Σκουριών:

Αρναία 8,5 χλμ
Αγ. Νικόλαος 23,2 χλμ
Ιερισσός 16 χλμ
Μ.Παναγία 3,5 χλμ
Μουδιανά 40,8 χλμ
Νεοχώρι 3 χλμ
Νικιτή 26,4 χλμ
Ορμυλία 24 χλμ
Παλιοχώρι 4 χλμ
Πολύγυρος 24 χλμ

Αποστάσεις από θέσεις άλλων κοιτασμάτων χρυσού:

Στανός - Πιάσπα 4,5 χλμ.
Στρατώνι - Φισώκα 2,5 χλμ.



Παραθέτουμε συμπεράσματα από την Μελέτη του Τεχνικού Επιμελητηρίου Ελλάδας για τα αιωρούμενα σωματίδια και τα τοξικά μέταλλα από τη λειτουργία των συγκεκριμένων ορυχείων χρυσού:

"... δεν είναι δυνατόν να ελεγχθούν οι υπερβάσεις των οριακών τιμών που ορίζει ο νόμος, αλλά ούτε και η γεωγραφική κατανομή της ρύπανσης."

"...απέχει πολύ από την πραγματικότητα ο ισχυρισμός ότι βρίσκονται σε απόσταση ασφαλείας οι γειτονικές κατοικημένες περιοχές."

"The lands close to mines, remain contaminated with heavy metals for several decades-even centuries"

MINING WASTES

ARSENIC

182 MIL. M³. WASTES

The solid extraction waste exceeds 182 million cubic meters^[18]. The slurry of arsenic-bearing / iron-oxides (scorodite) and gypsum is 70% of the waste and is dangerous because of high arsenic content. The stability of the crystalline scorodite in conditions of co-deposition with other solid waste^[3, 8] is challenged.

The proposed method for arsenic removal from metallurgy's water and stabilization of the crystalline scorodite in order to achieve environmentally safe disposal, was developed by the Laboratory of Metallurgy of the National Technical University of Athens for the purposes of the investment of Hellas Gold. S.A. Nevertheless, this is a completely new method that has not been applied – not even in pilot tests – and it will be implemented in the "Madem Lakkos" unit, where 120 t/d of arsenic will be burned^[1].



*Recent mining
waste spills:
Finland (2012),
Turkey (2012),
Hungary (2010),
U.S.A. (2008),
China (2006),
Romania (2000)*





2007-2012

Gold Production

gold mining: 2400 metric tones (MT)

recycling: 1500 MT

Usages

53% jewelry

12% industry

35% banks

HEALTH

HEAVY METALS

HEAVY INDUSTRY



The mining activity poses serious risks for workers, residents and visitors to the region.

Workers in gold mines have a lower life expectancy. They often suffer from many kinds of cancer (trachea and bronchi, lung, stomach and liver), pulmonary tuberculosis, silicosis, pleural diseases, malaria, dengue fever, hearing loss, increased prevalence of bacterial and viral infections, diseases of the blood, skin and musculoskeletal system ^[6]. The presence of heavy metals, even at very low concentrations, causes anemia, hypertension, disorders in the child's nervous system, disruption of respiratory function, renal failure, acute and chronic poisoning, gastroenteritis, kidney disease, liver damage, cancer, hepatitis, liver cirrhosis, jaundice ^[2, 6]



DEMONSTRATIONS REPRESSION

Most of the peaceful protests and demonstrations of the areas' residents, were met with violent police repression

13.03.2011

Ierissos, Halkidiki.

The first massive mobilization against the expansion of mining activities in the NE Halkidiki [↗](#).

DEMONSTRATIONS

RUBBER BULLETS

CHEMICALS

ARRESTS

TERROR

REPRESSION

20.03.2012

Skouries, Halkidiki.

Thirty residents of Megali Panagia and Ierissos (half of them women), were at "Skouries" (the location in mountain Kakavos where the open pit is planned to be) in protest against the expansion of mining activities and gold mining that is planned to be carried out by "Hellas Gold SA" and the Canadian Eldorado Gold Corp. The Greek Police blocked access on both sides to "Chondro Dentro" and assured that it will preserve order. Shortly after, the Greek Police allowed the passage of 500 workers from the block.

The workers moved untroubled towards to the thirty residents. After negotiation, the two sides agreed the withdrawal of everybody from the mountain. Instead, the 500 workers moved on in frontal attack, against the thirty residents. Wild brawl and beatings followed, while the Police was watching without interfering.

25.03.2012

Chondro Dentro, Halkidiki.

On March 25, after a protest rally in Ierissos and Megali Panagia, Halkidiki, protesters of all ages, among them many elderly, children and even pregnant women, moved to the position "Chondro Dentro". There they came across a strong police presence that prevented them from moving forward. At the request of the delegation of protesters to be allowed to march in a public forest road, even with the accompaniment of the Police, the answer was unequivocally negative and riot vans and riot police prevented the passage of the demonstrators.

Upon completion of negotiations and without the slightest provocation from the demonstrators, police forces, which were lined up on a hill, attacked the unsuspected and totally unprepared citizens with tear gas and stun grenades.

Panic was created and the crowd retreated to Megali Panagia, but was "trapped" in a narrow street between tall cliffs. There people received the second attack by men of riot police who stood on the hills and hurled tear gases downwards (video [🔗](#))

14.04.2012

Skouries, Halkidiki.

On 14 April 2012, six women, residents of the area, were in their cars at public forest road, having as destination public area of Mount Kakavos. The position Skouries, where the construction site of the «Hellas Gold SA» is situated, there was a roadblock with moving bar, barbed wire, men of private security with full-face coverage and workers. The masked men of the private security requested identification, and the women refused. Having recorded the characteristics and plate numbers of their vehicles, they were allowed to pass through.

Soon after, the women realized that two vehicles of the company were following them. Later on, the company's cars closed the road. The private security men jeered, used verbal and physical violence, threaten the women's physical integrity and stated that they will incriminate them for possible damage or loss of the company.

The hostage of the women lasted about twenty minutes despite the fact that the police was informed and the women's request for prosecutor's intervention. Finally they were released following a telephone order of the President of the local council of Stratoní (amature video [🔗](#)).

05.08.2012

Skouries, Halkidiki.

On August 5, a peaceful march towards Skouries took place. At Chondro Dentro strong police forces, without written prosecutor's order, blocked the way to citizens, committees and Parliament members present to continue their march to the mountain.

During the negotiations and without any provocation, the police forces began shooting tear gases, chemical substances, flash grenades, even rubber bullets. Continuous shooting tear caused many fires in the forest, that were extinguished by the Fire Service with the help of the protesters.



Several protesters were injured by the use of rubber bullets. An individual from the police block openly created a fire in front of the demonstrators. The demonstration ended in the afternoon when protesters, in front of the unprecedented, powerful and relentless power of the Greek Police withdrew from the mountain (video [🔗](#))

Residents and tourists of all ages were victims of brutal police violence and many were injured by the straight shot of tear gases and flash grenades. The riot police left at midnight.

05.08.2012

Ierissos, Halkidiki.

On the afternoon of August 5, after the brutal repression of protests of the same day, people gathered in the central square of Ierissos and symbolically closed the road. The protesters were warning the passing driver, redirected them through other streets and handed out leaflets with information.

After a while, strong force of riot police arrived to the village, and they attacked the people (children, elderly, pregnant women, tourists), with extensive use of tear gases in the village. The excuse of the police was that they were informed that the City Hall was set on fire by the protestors - an information that the police chief did not consider necessary to confirm before ordering attack, although the police station is located just 100 meters from the City Hall. Later was confirmed that this information came from the Mayor of Aristotelis Mr. Pachtas, that was absolutely false.

09.09.2012

Skouries, Halkidiki.

September 9, 2012, another peaceful demonstration against the expansion of mining activities in Halkidiki took place.

One part of the protesters moved towards the position "Hontro Dentro" at Megali Panagia and once again the way was blocked by police forces. The majority of the protesters approached the mine area from a rural road. There, extremely large police force, assisted by a police helicopter, was blocking the way.

At the sight of the first protesters and without the slightest provocation, the police launched a fierce attack with straight shots of tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets (See Amnesty's International Report [🔗](#)). The protester retracted but the police started a manhunt.

Many protesters were injured. Among them was the PM of SYRIZA-EKM Vangelis Diamantopoulos [🔗](#) and a German girl. [🔗](#). The most serious injury was the one of a protester who suffered ruptured spleen removal, caused by a straight shot of tear gas.



The riot police blocked all the main exit roads, trapping, checking and arresting the protestors (video [\[link\]](#)). Four detentions were turned to arrests.

Note: In October 2012 the Association of Police Officers of Thessaloniki, filed a report claiming extrajudicial assignments to the greek police, related to guarding the private gold mining site of "Hellas Gold S.A.", without an appropriate reason and without following the procedure under Article 22 of par1 N 3938/2011. [\[link\]](#)



After 7km hiking, the protestors were blocked by strong police force. The protestors were not allowed to continue through "Hellas Gold S.A." construction site towards the village of Megali Panagia.



In protest, a group of women sat in front of the riot police [\[link\]](#). During the sit-in protest, a man from the police block started a fire in the forest, which was extinguished by the protestors [\[link\]](#).

While everyone was in a waiting position, and shortly after the official confirmation of the Greek Police (recorded at 6:52 on the video [\[link\]](#)) that the police will not use chemicals and tear gases, the first attack took place with tear gas shots in front of the first protestors.

The crowd retreated, but the police started a man-hunt of women and men of all ages, with extensive use of chemicals in straight shots, re-

sulting in panic. Incapable of seeing and with breathing problems caused by the tear gases, people fell, were trampled and injured. People not able to run were chased in the forest and beaten by fully armed policemen.

21.10.2012

Skouries, Halkidiki.

On October 21st, more than 2500

people gather at "Hontro Dentro", Megali Panagia, Halkidiki, [\[link\]](#) in order to demonstrate against gold mining in the area. Around 300 people remained on the spot, while the rest walked, on the forest road, towards Skouries.

Locals with vehicles came in order to transfer protestors and injured people at a safe place. The manhunt continued for 7 km on the forest road. [↗](#) .

At “Hontro Dentro” and while pedestrians and vehicles were retreating, the second violent police attack took place, [↗](#) with extensive tear gas usage [↗](#) . Policemen chased people between gridlocked cars, broke cars’ windows, threw chemicals inside the vehicles, dragged violently passenger outside the cars, beaten and arrested them.

Occasionally, policemen were triumphing about their achievements and urged their colleagues in similar actions. There are testimonies describing some officer’s try to restrain their men. The manhunt continued for several kilometers (testimony [↗](#)).

The injured were taken to Polygyros Hospital, with respiratory and heart problems, fractures caused by policemen’s violence and rubber bullets. Secret police officers visited the hospital asking for personal details of the injured which the doctors - citing the medical confidentiality - did not provide.

Sixteen person were detained. Two of them, were released and transferred to the hospital, as during their arrest were violently hit by the policemen and seriously injured (testimony [↗](#)).

The rest 14 persons were eventually arrested and charged with “stasis” (violence against the Sate, Article 170 of the Crime Code). One of the arrested - whose car was attacked by the police with straight shot of tear gas into the vehicle resulting in losing control of the vehicle - was also charged with “attempt of causing serious injuries” to the policemen that had surrounded his vehicle.

At the police station, the lawyers were denied contact with the arrested and the police officers demanded the arrested to sign the police reports without the presence of their lawyers.

The trial of the fourteen arrested was postponed to November 2013.

According to the police nothing of the above happened (Police Press Release [↗](#) , Response of Police [↗](#) to question of Parliament Members [↗](#))



25.10.2012

Polygyros, Halkidiki

More than 2000 persons gathered in front of the Court

House at Polygyros, in order to protest against the 14 unjustified arrests of the 21st of October demonstration and marched through the city's streets in solidarity with the arrested (resolution)

12.01.2013

Athens

Another demonstration against gold mining in Halkidiki this time in

Athens. More than 500 people traveled with buses from Halkidiki in order to make their voices heard in Athens and to declare their protest to the Greek Parliament, the Ministry of Environment, and the Canadian Embassy.

18.11.2012

Megali Panagia, Halkidiki.

Another demonstrations against mining activities in Halkidiki

. The protesters marched through the village's streets and then walked in the mountain.

24.02.2013

Megali Panagia, Halkidiki

Thousand of people from Halkidiki, Thessaloniki, Kilkis, Thrace,

Athens, gathered at Megali Panagia in order to declare once more their opposition to destructive mining activities. On their side stood political parties, organizations and peoples' groups from all around Greece.

24.11.2012

Thessaloniki

More than 8000 people gathered at Thessaloniki and demonstrated

against the destructive mining in Halkidiki, Kilkis and Thrace. Resolutions were delivered to the Municipality of Thessaloniki and the Canadian Consulate. The demonstration remained invisible for most media nationwide.



17.02.2013

Skouries, Halkidiki

During the night, from 16 to 17 February 2013, an arson attack took place on the worksite of the mining company "Hellas Gold S.A." in the Skouries forest. According to the Police around 40 masked persons set on fire machinery, containers and vehicles of the mining company.

Since then, Halkidiki has been under a regime of state terrorism and repression. Constant police patrols, masked police men in the streets and squares, massive and blind detentions, random arrests (even of under-age students), physical and psychological violence during police questioning, illegal taking of DNA samples, disappearing of detained persons and kidnappings of citizens by the police. All these were denounced by lawyers. The state and the police, openly violate the constitutional and human rights, in order to protect the interests of a private company.



07.03.2013

Ierissos, Halkidiki

The climax of state terrorism, police violence and abuse of power came on the 7th of March [↗](#). More than 300 fully armed men of the Greek police, Riot Forces and Anti-terrorism squads invaded the village of Ierissos in the middle of the day [↗](#). They threw large quantities of tear gas in the village and inside the school yard, with more than 400 students present. The attack caused serious breathing problems, panic attacks, faintings and injuries. A 17 year old student was injured by a part of a flash grenade and a 11 month old baby was hospitalized for many days with breathing problems and symptoms of blood poisoning.

The police operation lasted more than 9 hours. Many houses were searched with the presence of a magistrate and the escort of more than 200 armed policemen. The police forces' departure was another show of police brutality and abuse of power with extensive use of tear gas [↗](#).

At first the police denied everything. Under pressure from eyewitness reports, videos and testimonies they were quickly forced to admit to "limited" use of tear gas.



09.03.2013

Thessaloniki

A massive demonstration [with](#), with more than 15.000 people protesting against gold mining, police violence and state repression [in](#). This was a loud answer to all of those who violate human rights in order to promote private companies' interests. To those who use extensive violence in order to silence and terrorize peoples' movements and protests. To those who sacrifice people and environment, in order for a few rich people to become richer [in](#).

12.03.2013

Athens

Demonstration in solidarity with Halkidiki's people and their struggle against state repression and destructive mining activities. Many political parties, organization and citizens' groups participated in the march in central streets of Athens and outside the Greek Parliament.



Photography by Seitanidou Katerina



MAME





GOLD AND THE MEDIA

GREEK MASS MEDIA

THE RULE

The majority of mainstream media have dealt with the issue of the proposed expansion of mining activities in Halkidiki – either as a political and economic scandal or as a cause for intense objections of local communities – in an unethical if not suspect manner.

Initially, the issue was met by complete silence by the national mass media. Not being able to silence it completely, local Halkidiki media devalued the issue, making note of a small, guided minority, almost picturesque in its actions and reactions, and presented the issue only from the viewpoint of the mining company and its employees.

The first publication by press of wide circulation in Greece came from Eleftherotypia (Epsilon) on 19.06.2011, with an article by Maria Louka with the title “Have you perhaps seen Gold in Halkidiki” [↗](#). The article was met by intense opposition by the employees of the mining company (“Hellas Gold”, at the time owned by European Goldfields). Quick to note that it was on their own initiative and not instigated by their employers in any way, they demanded the “exemplary punishment” of the reporter and threatened with law suits.

On the contrary, the episode titled “Searching

for Greek gold”, [↗](#) aired on SKAI channel’s show “New Folders” met with no objections on the part of the mining company or its employees. The show followed all techniques of modern propaganda in order to painlessly elicit the conclusion that the investment is beneficial for the local economy, the dangers to the environment and people’s health comparatively negligible, and those who object either picturesque characters spouting eco-babble or uneducated and uninformed peasants.

As the reactions and objections to the proposed expansion of mining not only continued but also escalated, the Greek government’s reaction to the growing community movement was to mobilize repression mechanisms (riot police), and the media passed into a phase of misinformation and slander.

A characteristic example is the newspaper Kathimerini’s coverage of the 9th September 2012 protest and its repression. In an unsigned article with the title “Determination in the face of extremities”, [↗](#) the newspaper went so far as to equate the local communities’ struggle against the expansion of mining activities in Halkidiki with the actions of fascist far-right schemes – characterizing the protestors as “leftist assault battalions”.

On the 21st October 2012 one more protest was met with unusually vicious force and violence by police forces as people marched to the forest site of Skouries. Coverage of the events by TV channel ET3 (of the public broadcasting company ERT) was unacceptable, bringing about serious objections of the employees of the TV channel [🔗](#) .

In November of 2012 a large protest took place in Thessaloniki (Greece's 2nd largest city) against the mining projects in Halkidiki, Kilkis and Thrace. Thousands of people (reports range from 6.000-7.000) marching peacefully for hours along the central streets of the city remained invisible to the large media corporations [🔗](#) .

EXCEPTIONS

Fortunately, there are notable exceptions. Indicative cases: the EXANDAS documentary "Gold in times of crisis – part B – The Treasure of Cassandra" [🔗](#) (in english [🔗](#)) the TV show of channel "4E" [🔗](#) , various articles in printed media such as "EFIMERIDA TON SYNTAKTON" [🔗](#) , PONTIKI [🔗](#) , PRASINO PONTIKI [🔗](#) , AVGI [🔗](#) [🔗](#) , the short film of the "UNFOLLOW" team [🔗](#) .

Throughout, the internet and social media played an important role in providing information, keeping updates of events as they occurred, and in balancing the invisibility and biased reporting imposed on the issue of the proposed mining projects in Northern Greece by the mainstream media. Indicative cases: alterthess [🔗](#) [🔗](#) [🔗](#) , tvxs [🔗](#) [🔗](#) .

For an extensive overview on the issue, see the adapted article in english, from a report by Mariniki Alevizopoulou published in UNFOLLOW magazine (issue 14, February 2013) [🔗](#) .

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

The attitude and stand of the Greek mainstream mass media points to interwoven relations of corruption, as analyzed in the article by "REUTERS" with the title "Greece's triangle of power" [🔗](#) . Although the issue has received exposure in international press (New York Times [🔗](#) , Le Monde [🔗](#) , Associated Press [🔗](#) , France2 [🔗](#) , Weiner Zeitung [🔗](#) , El Pais [🔗](#) , ARD [🔗](#) κ.α) it continued to be silenced and/or manipulated in Greece until very recently.



*First they ignore you,
then they ridicule you,
then they fight you,
and then you win. -
Mahatma Gandhi*

To this end, an open letter was written and sent to journalists and their associations in Greece on March 4th 2013.

Open Letter

From: The Coordinating Committee of Associations of Stageira-Akanthos

To: The Panhellenic federation of the Editors Unions, The Editors Union of the Athens news papers, The News Editor of the MEGA TV channel, and every Greek journalist

Ierissos, 4/3/2013

During the last few days, after the events in the forest location of Skouries (site of the proposed new open-pit mining project), the residents of our towns and villages have been targeted by a certain part of the MEDIA, which systematically present us as "terrorists". The representations of the events in Skouries and the ensuing events, is far from impartial and objective.

Not only is televised time split unequally, but we also often see a television "reality" that is manufactured for the needs of the 8pm news. On the pulpit of tele-democracy and the government affiliated news papers, there is no mention of the repetitive violations of our human and constitutional rights, the continuous police surveillance of our personal lives, the violation of our lawyers' rights, the abductions/citizens' disappearance for hours at a time, the unbearable pressure to give DNA samples. The rule of law is abolished everyday in our towns and the journalists pretend they see nothing.

At the same time the media - apart from few exceptions - create a climate of civil war, by using loud headlines in the newspapers and by representing only the opinion of the supporters of the mining company's expansion.

Therefore an "investment", which is supported only by a small minority of local residents and the employees of the company "Hellas Gold / Eldorado Gold", is represented as "the apple of discord" that has divided our society. Journalists never refer to the abundance of scientific testimonials that warn of the catastrophic ecological, financial and social implications. On the contrary, the majority of the press solely adopts the mining company's point of view, by referring to "sustainable development" and "job offers", without making any reference to the scandalous transfer of the company from the Greek state to Mr. Bobolas - and the ensuing loss of revenue to the Greek state.

Is obvious that, in Halkidiki, the truth - as well as the rule of law - are being violated. The MEDIA act as a mechanism of propaganda that stifles our voice, if not transforming or deleting it altogether. A great example is the news coverage of the gold mining company's supporter's demonstration, on Mega TV channel, on Saturday, March 2nd 2013. We invite you to compare this coverage with the live coverage of the same event by the website: www.seleo.gr.

We invite all Journalists' Unions and each one of you individually to adhere to your own Code of Professional Ethics and Social Responsibility, of which we feel the strong need to remind you:

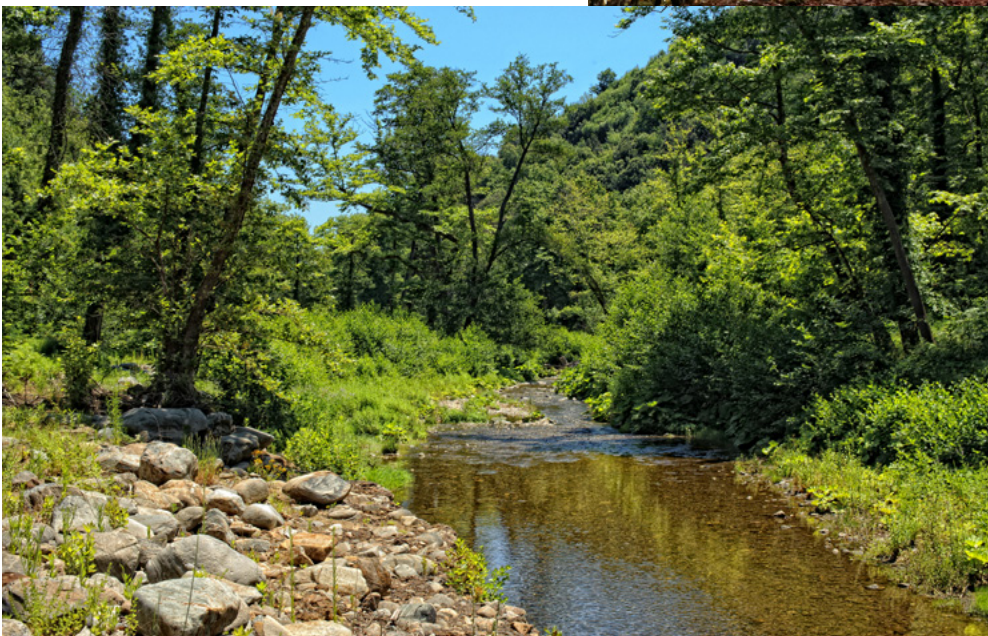
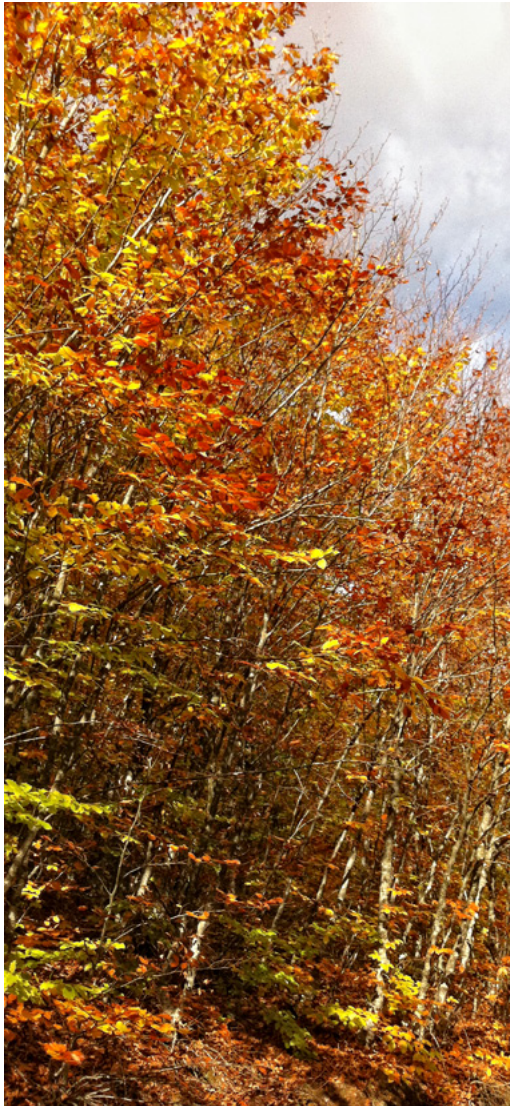
Article 1

The right of people and citizens to inform and to be informed freely is inalienable. Information is a public good and not a commodity or a means of propaganda. The journalist is entitled and obliged:

- (a) To consider as his foremost duty to society and himself the disclosure of the whole truth.
- (b) To consider falsification, concealment, alteration or falsification of facts as an offense against society and a degrading act for himself.
- (c) To respect and maintain as distinct a piece of news, a comment and an advertising message, the necessary correlation between title and text, and accurate use of photographs, images, illustrations or other graphic representations.
- (d) To convey information and news, unaffected by his personal political, social, religious, racial or cultural views and beliefs.
- (e) To investigate in advance, with a sense of responsibility and awareness of the consequences, the accuracy of the information and news to be broadcast.
- (f) To redress without delay, with a similar presentation and appropriate notation, incorrect information and false claims affecting the honor and reputation of persons and citizens, and to publish or present the opposite view, without necessitating a rebuttal which would place anyone in a privileged position opposite the injured party.

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SUPPORT OUR STRUGGLE

AGAINST HALKIDIKI'S DESTRUCTION

Sign the petition against mining activities in Halkidiki:

<http://www.gopetition.com/petition/41232.html>

Visit our site

www.soshalkidiki.wordpress.com