



Press Release by [South African BDS Coalition](#), [Masifundise Development Trust](#), [Natural Justice](#) and the [Climate Justice Coalition](#)

South Africa urged to reject genocidal Israeli's fossil fuel grab in the Orange Basin

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Civil society warns the South African energy and minerals authorities of the severe human rights and environmental risks of permitting Israeli company, Navitas Petroleum, to operate in a strategic and potentially profitable offshore oil block in the Orange Basin.

In a letter to Minister Gwede Mantashe, Mineral and Petroleum Resources (DMPR), and Dr Bongani Sayidini, CEO of Petroleum Agency South Africa (PASA), human rights and environmental organisations warn that it would undermine South Africa's human rights and environmental commitments if petroleum rights were granted to Navitas Petroleum, a company that materially benefits the Apartheid Israeli State. They describe the legal obligations of the South African government to reject any involvement with activities and companies that aid Israel's genocidal activities and illegal occupation in Palestine, or causes irreversible harm to the oceans and climate.

The letter was submitted jointly by the South African BDS Coalition, Masifundise Development Trust, Natural Justice, and the Climate Justice Coalition.

The concerns centre on an application to transfer significant ownership of Block 1 CBK to Navitas Petroleum. [1] If South Africa approves the transfer to Navitas, it will extend a state-approved strategic resource opportunity to a company anchored in Apartheid Israel's domestic capital market and corporate framework, making South Africa complicit in generating income for the Israeli State, investors and financial institutions. It would also be contributing significantly to climate change and the resulting severe long term impacts on human rights and environment.

The South African Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources has the authority and obligation to reject this application.

South Africa must not support genocide, apartheid and illegal occupation of Palestine

"Right now, as Israel is continuing the genocide in Gaza, escalating ethnic cleansing, and expanding its illegal occupation, it is beyond urgent that we end our complicity and sanction Apartheid Israel. It is unconscionable that the South African government can even consider allowing a company that profits the genocidal state to export 'ecocide' to our shores.

Roshan Dadoo, South African BDS Coalition

Navitas is closely linked to the Israeli capital market. It is a limited partnership based in Herzliya, Israel, is listed on the flagship index of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (TASE), and pays taxes to Apartheid Israel. According to the company, a significant number of Israeli institutional and private investors hold equity or debt.

South Africa has consistently supported the Palestinian people's struggles for equality, justice, and the rights to self-determination and return, and has acted to end Israel's impunity for its crimes against humanity of genocide, apartheid, war crimes, illegal occupation, and illegal wars. The country is under obligation – including by international processes it has itself driven – to not recognise or assist Israel's occupation of Palestine, prevent support to Israel's military operations, and prevent complicity in genocide. [2]

Energy is critical for military operations. The organisations specifically ask that the Minister and PASA establish where the petroleum extracted from Block 1 would ultimately be sold, refined, financed and taxed, as well as who the profits will benefit.

People and nature above profit

“Extractivism unravels identity and cultural fabric, severing fisher people from the traditions and ways of life passed down through generations and inseparable from the sea. Above all, South Africa cannot and must not stand shoulder to shoulder with companies built on pro-apartheid foundations.”

Carmen Mannarino, Masifundise Development Trust

Under international environmental and human rights law, South Africa has legal obligations to take any measures within its means to prevent significant harm to the environment, including harm outside its territories and to the climate system. Any exploration or extraction in Block 1 would impact marine ecosystems, fisheries, coastal communities and livelihoods in South Africa and neighbouring Namibia. Particular consideration must be given to coastal communities, small-scale, subsistence and customary fishers and other persons whose livelihoods, cultural practices and economic activities depend upon the marine and coastal environment.

Constitutional Court and International Court of Justice judgements

“In authorizing this transaction and the activities underlying them, South Africa risks being in violation of its international treaty obligations, and now also its own domestic law as set out by the Constitutional Court, and therefore being held responsible for the climate harm that will inevitably flow from them.”

Delme Cupido, Natural Justice (Cape Town)

Last week's South African Constitutional Court judgment in favour of protecting the Wild Coast against oil and gas exploration emphasised the importance of meaningful public participation in development projects that have significant impacts on the environment and coastal communities. The Court stated that public participation is closely linked to human dignity and agency. [3] This also means that fishing communities hold the right to reject any plan that threatens to extract from their waters and disrupt the livelihoods built over generations.

The judgment explicitly references the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ on climate as definitive for the obligation that rests on states to “prevent significant environmental harm, to act with due diligence and to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the global climate system”. Where a state authorizes activities which will materially contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, it is incumbent on states to exercise a “heightened level of diligence” and care. Failure to do so would, the Court said, attract international responsibility for the harm caused by those activities.

Climate Justice

“Climate change is a human rights issue. Approving new offshore oil extraction only serves to intensify South Africa’s climate vulnerability while also threatening the livelihoods, dignity and rights of coastal communities. We cannot claim to stand for climate justice and human rights while enabling new fossil fuel extraction that places people and ecosystems at risk in favour of profit.”

Gabriel Klaasen, Climate Justice Coalition

The transfer affects South Africa’s contribution to climate change and vulnerability to potential reparations, noting a social cost of carbon at USD 1,200 per ton. South Africa’s carbon emissions are higher than required for a 1.5 °C pathway and it remains the highest carbon emitter on the continent.

The letter also warns of the company’s unethical operations in Argentina. [4]

The importance of public participation must be recognised in a context of potential carbon emissions, intergenerational and transboundary impacts on marine ecosystems and coastal communities, and South Africa’s moral stance and legal obligations against Israel’s genocide and illegal occupation of Palestine.

The organisations request that, before any final decision is taken on the application, the Minister and PASA:

- Take into account the significant human rights and environmental concerns laid out in the letter;
- Ensure a fair and meaningful public participation process is conducted;
- Allow for further supplementary submissions.

They also request that information relating to the application is made public, and that the four organisations are registered as interested and affected parties.

A response has been requested by 31 August 2026.

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Notes

[1] Block 1 CBK is in an economically strategic location in the Orange Basin on South Africa's west coast, extending from the coastline to over 200 km offshore, along the border with Namibia. It is owned by OrangeBasin Energies (25%) and Azinam South Africa (75%), a wholly owned subsidiary of Eco Atlantic Oil and Gas. In June 2026, Eco Atlantic stated it had submitted an application to PASA to transfer 37% ownership and operatorship to Navitas Petroleum.

[2]

In its Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024, the International Court of Justice ("ICJ") concluded that Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory ("OPT") is unlawful and confirmed that all States are obliged not to recognise the resulting situation as lawful and not to render aid or assistance in maintaining it.

South Africa's proceedings against Israel under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide remain pending before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The Court has issued several binding provisional-measures orders in that case. All States parties to the Genocide Convention independently retain obligations to prevent genocide and to refrain from complicity where a serious risk is known or ought reasonably to be known.

In March 2026, South Africa and Colombia co-chaired The Hague Group Meeting on Accountability and the Enforcement of International Law in Palestine. Forty States participated. The co-chairs called on States to refuse recognition of illegal settlements, prevent companies from providing material support to Israel's unlawful presence, restrict the transfer of arms, military fuel and dual-use items, and conduct urgent reviews of public procurement and contracts to ensure that no public institution or public funds sustain Israel's unlawful occupation.

[3] Natural Justice, (14 August 2026). [Community rights come first – South Africa's Constitutional Court puts a final stop to Shell's unlawful oil and gas exploration/](#)

On 14 August 2026, the Constitutional Court delivered judgment in Sustaining the Wild Coast NPC and Others v Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy and Others; Natural Justice and Another v Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy and Others [2026] ZACC 33 ("Sustaining the Wild Coast").

[4] Navitas has been sanctioned by Argentina for offshore exploration activities in the Islas Malvinas/Falklands Islands without authority. The letter warns that this raises questions about Navitas's willingness to proceed with resource exploitation in contested territory despite formal objections, domestic prohibitions and unresolved international sovereignty claims.