

## **Zama zamas operating despite COVID-19 Lockdown Announcement by President**

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It is business as usual for the zama zama miners at an illegal mine, near Carletonville. The zama zamas are operating in disused mine shafts in mines where they wash gravel by hand to find precious metals. The conditions are unhygienic and dangerous, and the zama zama miners work without protective clothing.\* “Mining is a big trade and I am interested in finding employment with a mine as an Artisan,” said a 37-year-old zama zama miner.

“I work with the well experienced guys, former mineworkers, who understand how a mine operates. Having been exposed to the mine, I have knowledge on the operations and all the languages. Illegal mining is the easiest and most profitable way to make money,” he said. “[With] the high levels of poverty and unemployment, many of the individuals have little choice but to become illegal miners. The zama zama work is dangerous, but is the only way to put food on the table for our families,” he continued.

“I respect the rules and regulations announced by the President, but to stay at home will not put food on the table. Our government [should have] planned for us. Coronavirus is real and many people are dying. I know that I can be arrested for doing what am doing, but the police are not doing anything because they are benefitting from this kind of a job,” he said.

*\*The FAJ journalist was not allowed to take pictures. The nearby security for the mining operation were heavily armed.*

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