Press Release: South African BDS Coalition, Masifundise Development Trust, Natural Justice and the Climate Justice Coalition

27 November 2026

CSOs appeal oil and gas exploration right granted to Israeli company, Navitas

South Africa is at risk of indirectly contributing to genocide and illegal occupation in Palestine if it continues with its commercial relationship with Israeli oil and gas firm, Navitas Petroleum, which directly supports the "war effort" in Gaza. This comes after the Department of Minerals and Energy (DMRE) allowed for an oil and gas exploration right for a block off the west coast of South Africa to be transfered to Navitas earlier this year. A civil society appeal was lodged last week appealing the exploration rights granted to Navitas, based on legal, human rights, climate and environmental grounds [1].

The appeal raises various issues around South Africa's compliance with its constitutional, national and international law obligations. **Those issues can be summarised as follows:**

1. **Humanitarian international law violations**:

a) Genocide
b) Apartheid
c) Illegal occupation of Palestinian territories

Navitas donates to the Givati Brigade Association, an official non-profit of the Israeli Ministry of Defence. Navitas states that the donations serve to benefit 'the war effort', regular-service and reserve-duty soldiers. The Givati Brigade, stationed in Gaza and southern Lebanon, is responsible for human rights violations, including attacks that could constitute acts of genocide. It is against international law to maintain any economic relations with Israel which legitimises and sustains apartheid and illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. South Africa is also obligated to take action to and use all reasonable means to prevent genocide which includes its commercial relations.

The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, chaired by Navi Pillay, published a September 2025 report concluding that Israel had committed genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Furthermore, the Provisional Measures ruled on by the International Court of Justice in South Africa's case against Israel under the Genocide Convention imposes binding legal obligations on all state parties to do everything possible to ensure they are not complicit [2].

2. **International environmental law violations:**

a)Failure by the decision maker to take into consideration international transboundary pollution impacts.
b)Failure to notify or request processes to be instituted that would notify South Africa's neighbouring country, Namibia, regarding potential transboundary environmental harm that could occur in Namibia's waters.

3. **National environment management legislation violations:**

a)Failure to take into consideration relevant information.

The Block that Navitas has an exploration right for is Block 1 CBK, and lies in the Benguela Current Large Marine Ecosystem, which sustains West Coast fishing livelihoods already under pressure from climate change. The appeal demands that the government disclose how it assessed the risks of damage to marine habitats and fishing grounds, as well as the greenhouse gas emissions that could follow if exploration leads to oil or gas production.

4. **Failure to conduct public participation processes:**

a)Failure to undertake a process under the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) as the action would have an impact on the public.

As appellants, the CSOs have reserved their rights to make further supplementary affidavits for the appeal, as the DMRE has failed to respond to a previous letter of objection, public statements numerous letters and a PAIA application made by the appellants.

Minister Gwede Mantashe has been called on repeatedly to act on his obligations to ensure that decisions regarding South African resources comply with the South African constitution, domestic legislation, international law, and public opinion. An objection to the transfer was submitted in August 2026 and a PAIA freedom of information request submitted in September 2026. Neither received a response. [2]

The appeal against the granting of rights to Navitas was lodged with the Department of Minerals and Petroleum Resources (DMPR) on 5 November 2026 by the South African BDS Coalition, Masifundise Development Trust, Natural Justice and Climate Justice Coalition, together representing nearly 100 civil society organisations.

The organisations demand that the exploration right granted to Navitas is immediately cancelled, and that the decision is subject to a transparent and thorough public participation process.

"South Africa's commitment to the rule of law must govern the decisions taken by our government. Having approached the International Court of Justice to protect Palestinians from genocide, our government must explain the hypocrisy of approving Navitas to acquire rights

over our offshore resources while serious objections concerning human rights and international law remain unanswered.

Our appeal demands that the approval be tested against South Africa's Constitution and legal obligations, with full disclosure of the reasons and the record supporting it. Our history of struggle against apartheid requires consistency between the principles we defend internationally and the decisions we make at home." **Sirhaan Ché Khan, SA BDS Coalition.**

"The Constitutional Court has affirmed that South Africa has obligations under international law to protect the environment and to ensure that it does not authorize activities that will cause damage to the global climate system. The exploration and exploitation of petroleum resources in the Orange Basin would clearly constitute such an activity and may result in South Africa being held internationally responsible for the release of harmful greenhouse gas emissions and the resulting harm that they will cause." **Delme Cupid, Natural Justice**

"*Fisherfolk remain at the forefront of climate change impacted persons, and the externalities of savage profit-seeking capitalist endeavours are first felt in the fishers' net. Small-scale fishers' baskets are altered by climate change faster than policies can respond to, not to mention lengthy climate negotiations with weak implementation track records.*

Fisherfolk don't need more talk shops – the science backs up their first hand indigenous knowledge. Global warming threatens not only their livelihoods, but also their ability to exist. Fisherfolk along the South African coastline continue to fight off extractivist developers, from Shell to Navitas, and our message remains clear. Our oceans are not for profit, they are the foundation of our livelihoods, our culture, our future." **Riske Koopman, Masifundise Development Trust**

""*Southern Africa is a climate change hotspot, which means we will experience some of the worst impacts of intensifying climate change. We cannot afford to worsen climate change and expose our communities to the impacts of further oil explorations. At home, and around the world, the most vulnerable communities bear the worst consequences of climate impacts. Simultaneously, South Africa has clear obligations under international law: to prevent and not be complicit in genocide, to refuse recognition or assistance to Israel's unlawful occupation, and to take all lawful measures to end serious violations of international law and uphold international humanitarian law. These obligations must be upheld in practice, not merely in words.*"

Tara Nair van Ryneveld, Climate Justice Coalition

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Notes

[1] In September 2026, ownership and operatorship rights for Block 1 CBK were granted to Israeli company, Navitas Petroleum, one of the top privately traded earners that supports the Apartheid Israel economy. The block is within an ecologically and economically significant marine region in the Orange Basin on South Africa's West Coast, along its maritime border with Namibia.

[2] The Givati Brigade's role in genocide

In 2023, Navitas stated it would "perennially adopt the Givati Brigade" by donating to the Givati Brigade Association, an official non-profit of the Israeli Ministry of Defence that operates "with full IDF command coordination." In 2024 Navitas donated about USD 150,000 to the association.

Givati Brigade battalions have played a key role in Israel's atrocities in Gaza, as well as the illegal war in Southern Lebanon. For example:

- A 2025 report of the UN General Assembly explicitly discusses the role of the Givati Brigade in large-scale military operations, which included the destruction of educational facilities and the commission of "intentional" attacks.
- Soldiers from Rotem and Shaked Givati battalions stand accused of committing grave war crimes, including the siege and destruction of al-Shifa hospital, and demolishing and intentionally burning down schools in Beit Hanoun, including one that was sheltering displaced families.
- The Hind Rajab Foundation has filed criminal complaints against individual Givati Brigade soldiers for operations involving torture, forced displacement and destruction of civilian property.

In August 2026, the Givati Brigade Association announced the establishment of the Givati Drone Centre training facility. Drones are used for AI assisted 'targeting' such as 'Where's Daddy', which have been used to track individual Palestinians and murder them and their families in their homes.

Navitas also reports donations to the ZAKA organisation in 2023, a search and rescue non-profit that is accused of spreading dangerous false information about the events of 7th October 2023. As a first responder on the day, its members gave media interviews that were sometimes coordinated by the Israeli Government Press Office, in several instances presenting information that was later proven to be false or lacking evidence. The organisation has a close relationship with the Israeli state and is part of the hasbara propaganda campaigns.

Navitas Petroleum 'ESG Report 2024' available at *https://www.navitaspet.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Navitas_ESG_2024_ENG_FINAL.pdf*, accessed on 28 October 2026; Navitas Petroleum 'ESG Report 2023' available at *https://www.navitaspet.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Navitas_ESG_2023_ENG.pdf,* accessed on 28 October 2026;
United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel (A/HRC/59/26) - Question of Palestine'* (2025), available at https://www.un.org/unispal/document/report-of-the-independent-international-commission-of-inquiry-on-the-occupied-palestinian-territory-including-east-jerusalem-and-israel-a-hrc-59-26/, accessed on 29 October 2026
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