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Comm Design 1

Topic: Exploitation of the Congo for Minerals Used in Technological Goods

<https://wits-uwo.medium.com/the-role-of-tech-in-the-congos-silent-genocide-fef09e9729f7>

- Over 64% of the world's reserves of Coltan is found in the Congo. Coltan is necessary for the creation of
  - Laptop computers
  - Cellular phones
  - Jet engines
  - Rockets
  - Digital still cameras
  - Game consoles
  - Video cameras
- Over 80% of the world's reserve of Cobalt is found in the Congo
  - Airbags in vehicles
  - Dyes and pigments
  - Magnets
  - Steel-belted radial tires
  - Corrosion and wear-resistant alloys
- Men, women, and children are enslaved to mine Coltan and Cobalt. Over 50,000 children are driven by extreme poverty to work in mining sites for less than two dollars a day, for backbreaking and dangerous work. Many of them are killed in tunnel collapses while others are paralyzed or suffer life-altering injuries from accidents.
- Five of the world's largest tech companies (Apple, Dell, Google, Microsoft, and Tesla) were being sued in a federal class action lawsuit over the deaths and injuries of Congolese children mining for Cobalt. And of course they were absolved.

<https://abcnews.go.com/International/us-court-absolves-top-tech-companies-congo-child/story?id=107839639#:~:text=The%20five%20tech%20giants%20%2D%2D,documents%20seen%20by%20ABC%20News.>

- Cobalt is used in rechargeable batteries of electric vehicles and electronic gadgets, its demand is growing due to the green transition as we shift to net-zero.
- in a 3-0 decision on Tuesday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia held that the tech companies **could not be held liable**, with the court decision stating they did not have anything more than an "ordinary buyer-seller transaction" with suppliers in the DRC.
- the case claims that the defendants "know and have known for a significant period of time" about the human rights violations in the DRC's cobalt mining supply chain.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/09/drc-cobalt-and-copper-mining-for-batteries-leading-to-human-rights-abuses/>

- The expansion of industrial-scale cobalt and copper mines in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has led to the forced eviction of entire communities and grievous human rights abuses including sexual assault, arson and beatings.
- The DRC has the world's largest reserves of cobalt, and the seventh largest reserves of copper.
- Demand for cobalt is expected to reach 222,000 tonnes by 2025, having tripled since 2010.
- "We found repeated breaches of legal safeguards prescribed in international human rights law and standards, and national legislation, as well as blatant disregard for the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights."

- Since mining activities resumed, hundreds of residents have been told to leave, or have already had to move. Communities have not been adequately consulted and plans to expand the mine have not been made public. Some residents found out their houses were to be demolished only after red crosses appeared on their properties.
  - Evictees said compensation offered by COMMUS was inadequate to buy them equivalent homes. One former resident said: “I had a large house, with electricity, water...Now, I have a small house that was all I could afford with the compensation...we have to drink water from wells ... almost no electricity.”

<https://www.vogue.com/article/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-conflict-how-to-help>

- Armed groups vie for control of Congolese mining zones. These rebel groups violently occupy parts of Congo, killing people with impunity. Women and girls are subject to sexual violence and at risk of sexual slavery, and children are taken from school and recruited as soldiers or to work in mines... These miners—children as well as adults—are endangered by poor safety regulations. Mines can collapse, and though exposure to the minerals is linked to health issues causing neurological, kidney, and autoimmune impairment, children often dig by hand.
- Neighboring countries, particularly Rwanda, according to the UN, are behind the violence. The biggest rebel group, M23, was created by Rwanda and Uganda, and is financed primarily by Rwanda. China and Western countries (particularly the United States, Belgium, and France)

are also implicated in the exploitation of Congo's resources: besides creating the conditions for its instability, they have also, as Amnesty International reports, failed to ensure that they are respecting international human rights in their global operations—including in their supply chains.

- Some miners are enslaved when they fail to provide enough ore to middlemen and dealers, or forced into labor by armed militias. Nearly seven million people have been internally displaced. This insecurity has caused the largest hunger crisis in the world, affecting 26 million people.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3093289/#:~:text=Reports%20from%20the%20DRC%20indicate,and%20guns%2C%20among%20other%20atrocities.>