

Blood Minerals

In the Congo, a humanitarian crisis is happening funded by the Western world

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country in Central Africa that has been having issues for years now with a very harsh way of life. The average life expectancy there is about 60 years while in the USA the average life expectancy is 77 years. Issues started heating up in the country in the mid 1990's when [The First Congo War](#) a civil war that spilled over into Sudan and Uganda took place shortly after their neighboring country, Rwanda started experiencing a mass genocide between two tribes the Tutsis and the Hutus which resulted in 1 million deaths. This was just the start of modern issues in The Congo but they have been facing problems since 1960 during the Cold War when they finally became independent from the rule of Belgium. Even though this country is filled with issues we still rely on them to provide us with resources for technology.

The Congo is filled with the mineral known as Cobalt and is the world's [top producer](#). Cobalt is used in many [different electronics](#) like laptops, phones, and even the rechargeable batteries within electric vehicles. The need for this mineral has caused [slave-like labor](#) with people being forced to work in dangerous conditions including children to mine for Cobalt just being paid a mere few dollars a day. Children have been seen using their bare hands to dig up the dirt to get to the minerals they are being forced to find. Fumes released from Cobalt are toxic to humans and have even contaminated their local water supplies. These mines are very illegal but continue to be used as the money made from Cobalt is well enough for people's greed to take over.



Cobalt mine workers in the Congo

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2023/ev-cobalt-mines-congo/>)

This situation is very similar to the blood diamond situation in Africa [including](#) but not limited to Angola, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. These countries have an abundance of diamonds that they sell to countries like America but the diamonds are mined through [war, death, and slavery](#). Rough working conditions aren't the only issues occurring in the Congo as murder, rape, and war crimes are commonly being committed

by rebel groups with Rwanda even deploying its army to aid the rebel group known as M23. This rebel group is ruthless and targets innocent civilians including women and children with cases of [women being raped](#) by multiple different people in front of their own families. In 2022 alone roughly [38,000 cases](#) of Gender Based Violence were reported including some cases happening within IDP camps (Internally Displaced People) which are supposed to keep these civilians protected from these horrendous crimes. Furthermore, people inside these camps do not have access to Post-Exposure Prophylaxis kits which prevent HIV from spreading through the body and must be taken within 72 hours of when a person first contracts HIV. With how many sex crimes happen the HIV virus has been common and can kill people if not treated properly and thoroughly.



An IDP camp (<https://www.mnnonline.org/news/refugee-crisis-escalates-in-eastern-drc/>)

Civilians in the Congo have had it very rough even if they aren't working in the mines. They are being treated very poorly and have no steady access to basic resources to survive.. They have no access to proper medical care, they are being raped frequently by rebel groups, and in other cases killed by the masses. The Democratic Republic of Congo is a war zone that is not fit for human life with a majority of the issue being because of technology. In first-world countries like American citizens rely on technology in everyday life and that creates a huge industry for cobalt with the Congo being a 3rd world country. People see it as a way to get themselves out of poverty but don't know how to go about it in an ethical way. Recognition is not common for these crimes committed over there so most people don't question what goes behind the making of their electric car, lithium batteries, cellular phone, computer, television, or even a vape.



M23 Rebel Group

(<https://apnews.com/article/africa-rwanda-united-nations-peacekeeping-forces-angola-c995421228c480461af02cc68dc9b4aa>)