
Congo, Democratic Republic: Cell phones, forest destruction and death

"Could anyone imagine that cell phones are tainted with the blood of 3.2 million deaths since 1998? Also, that the same thing happens with some children's video games? And that mega-technologies contribute to forest depredation and spoliation of the rich natural resources of paradoxically impoverished peoples?" These are the opening lines of an article about the violence of coltan mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), written in 2003. The article talks about the long shadow of European colonialism and how this colonial past lies at the root of the conflict that still grips the country. The DR Congo, the world's leading producer of coltan, is also one of the main producers of several minerals that are strategic for the so-called 'energy transition'. More than 20 years after the article was published in the WRM Bulletin in 2003, the dispute over minerals continues to fuel a bloody conflict in the country. The political analysis presented then remains relevant today: "Behind the myth of ethnic rivalries, are hidden the old colonial powers that continue to ransack the wealth of post-Colonial Africa" while "Behind these states are the companies sharing out the zone." Imperial meddling in internal affairs and encroachment on the country's sovereignty reached new heights in late 2025, when the US government signed an agreement with DR Congo's leadership that would give the US priority access to minerals critical to its industry and 'energy' transition. (1) [This article](#) from 2003 helps to better understand this violent conflict that continues to disrupt the lives of many communities in the DR Congo.

Reference:

(1) The US-DRC agreement on critical minerals is available [here](#).