

# 500 Years Is Long Enough! Human Depravity in the Congo

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*I would like to tell you something about human depravity and illustrate just how widespread it is among those we often regard as 'responsible'. I am going to use the Democratic Republic of the Congo as my example.*

As I illustrate and explain what has happened to the Congo and its people during the past 500 years, I invite you to consider my essential point: Human depravity has no limit unless people like you (hopefully) and me take some responsibility for ending it. Depravity, barbarity and violent exploitation will not end otherwise because major international organizations (such as the UN), national governments and corporations all benefit from it and are almost invariably led by individuals too cowardly to act on the truth.

## The Congo

Prior to 1482, the area of central Africa now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo was part of the Kingdom of the Kongo. It was populated by some of the greatest civilizations in human history.

## Slavery

However, in that fateful year of 1482, the mouth of the Congo river, which flows into the Atlantic Ocean, became known to Europeans when the Portuguese explorer Diogo Cao claimed he 'discovered' it. By the 1530s, more than five thousand slaves a year (many from inland regions of the Kongo) were being transported to distant lands, mostly in the Americas. Hence, as documented by Adam Hothschild, the Congo was first exploited by Europeans during the Atlantic slave trade. See [King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa](#).

Despite the horrific depredations of the militarized slave trade and all of its ancillary activities, including Christian priests spreading 'Christianity' while raping their captive slave girls, the Kingdoms of the Kongo were able to defend and maintain themselves to a large degree for another 400 years by virtue of their long-standing systems of effective governance. As noted by Chancellor Williams' in his epic study [The Destruction of Black Civilization: Great Issues of a Race from 4500 B.C. to 2000 A.D.](#) the Kingdoms of the Congo prior to 1885 – including Kuba under Shyaam the Great and the Matamba Kingdom under Ngola Kambolo – were a cradle of culture, democracy and exceptional achievement with none more effective than the remarkable Queen (of Ndongo and Matamba), warrior and diplomat Nzinga in the 17th century.

But the ruthless military onslaught of the Europeans never abated. In fact, it continually expanded with ever-greater military firepower applied to the task of conquering Africa. In

1884 European powers met in Germany to finally divide 'this magnificent African cake', precipitating what is sometimes called 'the scramble for Africa' but is more accurately described as 'the scramble to finally control and exploit Africa and Africans completely'.

## Colonization

One outcome of the Berlin Conference was that the great perpetrator of genocide – King Leopold II of Belgium – with the active and critical support of the United States, seized violent control of a vast swathe of central Africa in the Congo Basin and turned it into a Belgian colony. In Leopold's rapacious pursuit of rubber, gold, diamonds, mahogany and ivory, 10 million African men, women and children had been slaughtered and many Africans mutilated (by limb amputation, for example) by the time he died in 1909. His brutality and savagery have been documented by Adam Hochschild in the book [\*King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa\*](#) which reveals the magnitude of human suffering that this one man, unopposed in any significant way by his fellow Belgians or anyone else, was responsible for inflicting on Africa.



Source: Medium

If you want to spend a few moments in touch with the horror of what some human beings do to other human beings, then I invite you to look at the sample photos of what Leopold did in 'his' colony in the Congo. See [“A Nightmare In Heaven” – Why Nobody Is Talking About The Holocaust in Congo](#).

Now if you were hoping that the situation in the Congo improved with the death of the monster Leopold, your hope is in vain.

The shocking reality is that the unmitigated horror inflicted on the Congolese people has barely improved since Leopold's time. The Congo remained under Belgian control during World War I during which more than 300,000 Congolese were forced to fight against other Africans from the neighboring German colony of Ruanda-Urundi. During World War II when Nazi Germany captured Belgium, the Congo financed the Belgian government in exile.

Throughout these decades, the Belgian government forced millions of Congolese into mines and fields using a system of 'mandatory cultivation' that forced people to grow cash crops for export, even as they starved on their own land.

It was also during the colonial period that the United States acquired a strategic stake in the enormous natural wealth of the Congo without, of course, any benefit to the Congolese people. This included its use of uranium from a Congolese mine (subsequently closed in 1960) to manufacture the first nuclear weapons: those used to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki. See ['Patrice Lumumba: the most important assassination of the 20th century'](#).

### Independence then Dictatorship

By 1960, the Congolese people had risen up to overthrow nearly a century of slavery and Belgian rule. Patrice Lumumba became the first Prime Minister of the new nation and he quickly set about breaking the yoke of Belgian influence and allied the Congo with Russia at the height of the Cold War.

But the victory of the Congolese people over their European and US overlords was shortlived: Patrice Lumumba was assassinated in a United States-sponsored coup in 1961 with the US and other western imperial powers (and a compliant United Nations) repeating a long-standing and ongoing historical pattern of preventing an incredibly wealthy country from determining its own future and using its resources for the benefit of its own people. See ['Patrice Lumumba: the most important assassination of the 20th century'](#).

So, following a well-worn *modus operandi*, an agent in the form of (Army Chief of Staff, Colonel) Mobutu Sese Seko was used to overthrow Lumumba's government. Lumumba himself was captured and tortured for three weeks before being assassinated by firing squad. The new dictator Mobutu, compliant to western interests, then waged all-out war in the country, publicly executing members of the pro-Lumumba revolution in spectacles witnessed by tens of thousands of people. By 1970, nearly all potential threats to his authority had been smashed. See ["A Nightmare In Heaven" - Why Nobody Is Talking About The Holocaust in Congo'](#).

Mobutu would rape the Congo (renamed Zaire for some time) with the blessing of the west – robbing the nation of around \$2billion – from 1965 to 1997. During this period, the Congo got more than \$1.5 billion in US economic and military aid in return for which US multinational corporations increased their share of the Congo's abundant minerals. 'Washington justified its hold on the Congo with the pretext of anti-Communism but its real interests were strategic and economic.' See ['Congo: The Western Heart of Darkness'](#).



## Invasion

Eventually, however, Mobutu's increasingly hostile rhetoric toward his white overlords caused the west to seek another proxy. So, ostensibly in retaliation against Hutu rebels from the Rwandan genocide of 1994 – who fled into eastern Congo after Paul Kagame's (Tutsi) Rwanda Patriotic Army invaded Rwanda from Uganda to end the genocide – in October 1996 Rwanda's now-dictator Kagame, 'who was trained in intelligence at Fort Leavenworth in the United States, invaded the Congo with the help of the Clinton Administration' and Uganda. By May 1997 the invading forces had removed Mobutu and installed the new (more compliant) choice for dictator, Laurent Kabila.

Relations between Kabila and Kagame quickly soured, however, and Kabila expelled the Rwandans and Ugandans from the Congo in July 1998. However, the Rwandans and Ugandans reinvaded in August establishing an occupation force in eastern Congo. Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia sent their armies to support Kabila and Burundi joined the Rwandans and Ugandans. Thus began 'Africa's First World War' involving seven armies and lasting until 2003. It eventually killed six million people – most of them civilians – and further devastated a country crushed by more than a century of Western domination, with Rwanda and Uganda establishing themselves as conduits for illegally taking strategic minerals out of the Congo. See ['Congo: The Western Heart of Darkness'](#).

During the periods under Mobutu and Kabila, the Congo became the concentration camp capital of the world and the rape capital as well. 'No woman in the path of the violence was spared. 7 year olds were raped by government troops in public. Pregnant women were disemboweled. Genital mutilation was commonplace, as was forced incest and cannibalism. The crimes were never punished, and never will be.'

Laurent Kabila maintained the status quo until he was killed by his bodyguard in 2001. Since then, his son and the current President Joseph Kabila has held power in violation of the Constitution. 'He has murdered protesters and opposition party members, and has



continued to obey the will of the west while his people endure unspeakable hells.'

## Corporate and State Exploitation

While countries such as Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, South Korea, Switzerland and the UK are heavily involved one way or another (with other countries, such as Australia, somewhat less so), US corporations make a vast range of hitech products including microchips, cell phones and semiconductors using conflict minerals taken from the Congo. This makes 'companies like Intel, Apple, HP, and IBM culpable for funding the militias that control the mines'. See [“A Nightmare In Heaven” – Why Nobody Is Talking About The Holocaust in Congo](#).

But many companies are benefitting. For example, a 2002 report by the United Nations listed a 'sample' of 34 companies based in Europe and Asia that are importing minerals from the Congo via, in this case, Rwanda. The UN Report commented: 'Illegal exploitation of the mineral and forest resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is taking place at an alarming rate. Two phases can be distinguished: mass-scale looting and the systematic and systemic exploitation of resources'. The mass-scale looting occurred during the initial phase of the invasion of the Congo by Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi when stockpiles of minerals, coffee, wood, livestock and money in the conquered territory were either taken to the invading countries or exported to international markets by their military forces or nationals. The subsequent systematic and systemic exploitation required planning and organization involving key military commanders, businessmen and government structures; it was clearly illegal. See [‘Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo’](#).

For some insight into other issues making exploitation of the Congo possible but which are usually paid less attention – such as the roles of mercenaries, weapons dealers, US military training of particular rebel groups and the secret airline flights among key locations in the smuggling operations of conflict minerals – see the research of Keith Harmon Snow and David Barouski: [‘Behind the numbers: Untold Suffering in the Congo’](#) and [‘Merchants of Death: Exposing Corporate-Financed Holocaust in Africa; White Collar War Crimes, Black African Fall Guys’](#).

*Has there been any official attempt to rein in this corporate exploitation?*

A little. For example, the Obama-era US Dodd-Frank Financial Reform Act of 2010 shone a spotlight on supply chains, pressuring companies to determine the origin of minerals used in their products and invest in removing conflict minerals from their supply chain. This resulted in some US corporations, conscious of the public relations implications of being linked to murderous warlords and child labor, complying with the Act. So, a small step in the right direction it seemed. See 'The Impact of Dodd-Frank and Conflict Minerals Reforms on Eastern Congo's Conflict' and [‘Congo mines no longer in grip of warlords and militias, says report’](#).

In 2011, given that legally-binding human rights provisions, if applied, should have offered adequate protections already, the United Nations rather powerlessly formulated the *non-binding* [‘Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights’](#).

And in 2015, the European Union also made a half-hearted attempt when it decided that smelters and refiners based in the 28-nation bloc be asked to certify that their imports were

conflict-free *on a voluntary basis*! See [‘EU lawmakers to limit import of conflict minerals’](#).

However, following the election of Donald Trump as US President, in April 2017 ‘the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission suspended key provisions of its “conflict minerals” rule’. Trump is also seeking to undo the Obama-era financial regulations, once again opening the door to the unimpeded trade in blood minerals by US corporations. See [“A Nightmare In Heaven” – Why Nobody Is Talking About The Holocaust in Congo](#) and [‘Trump Moves to Roll Back Obama-Era Financial Regulations’](#).

Today

Despite its corrupt exploitation for more than 500 years, the Congo still has vast natural resources (including rainforests) and mineral wealth. Its untapped deposits of minerals are estimated to be worth in excess of \$US24 trillion. Yes, that’s right: \$US24trillion. With a host of rare strategic minerals – including cobalt, coltan, gold and diamonds – as well as copper, zinc, tin and tungsten critical to the manufacture of hitech electronic products ranging from aircraft and vehicles to computers and mobile phones, violent and morally destitute western governments and corporations are not about to let the Congo decide its own future and devote its resources to the people of this African country. This, of course, despite the international community paying lip service to a plethora of ‘human rights’ treaties.

Hence, violent conflict, including ongoing war, over the exploitation of these resources, including the smuggling of ‘conflict minerals’ – such as gold, coltan and cassiterite (the latter two ores of tantalum and tin, respectively), and diamonds – will ensure that the people of the Congo continue to be denied what many of those in western countries take for granted: the right to life benefiting from the exploitation of ‘their’ natural resources.

In essence then, since 1885 European and US governments, together with their corporations and African collaborators, have inflicted phenomenal ongoing atrocities on the peoples of the Congo as they exploit the vast resources of the country for the benefit of non-Congolese people.

But, you might wonder, European colonizers inflicted phenomenal violence on the indigenous peoples in all of their colonies – whether in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, the Caribbean or Oceania – so is their legacy in the Congo any worse?



Source: Medium

Well, according to the The Pan-African Alliance, just since colonization in 1885, at least 25 million Congolese men, women and children have been slaughtered by white slave traders, missionaries, colonists, corporations and governments (both the governments of foreign-installed Congolese dictators and imperial powers). 'Yet barely a mention is made of the holocaust that rages in the heart of Africa.' Why? Because 'the economy of the entire world rests on the back of the Congo.' See [“A Nightmare In Heaven” – Why Nobody Is Talking About The Holocaust in Congo](#)'.

So what is happening now?

In a sentence: The latest manifestation of the violence and exploitation that has been happening since 1482 when that Portuguese explorer 'discovered' the mouth of the Congo River. The latest generation of European and American genocidal exploiters, and their latter-day cronies, is busy stealing what they can from the Congo. Of course, as illustrated above, having installed the ruthless dictator of their choosing to ensure that foreign interests are protected, the weapon of choice is the corporation and non-existent legal or other effective controls in the era of 'free trade'.

The provinces of North and South Kivu in the eastern Congo are filled with mines of cassiterite, wolframite, coltan and gold. Much mining is done by locals eking out a living using Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining (ASM); that is, mining by hand, sometimes with rudimentary tools. Some of these miners sell their product via local agents to Congolese military commanders who smuggle it out of the country, usually via Rwanda, Uganda or Burundi, and use the proceeds to enrich themselves.

Another report on South Kivu by Global Witness in 2016 – see [‘River of Gold’](#) and [‘Illegal gold trade in Congo still benefiting armed groups, foreign companies’](#) – documented evidence of the corrupt links between government authorities, foreign corporations (in this case, Kun Hou Mining of China) and the military, which results in the gold dredged from the Ulindi River in South Kivu being illegally smuggled out of the country, with much of it ending up with Alfa Gold Corp in Dubai. The unconcealed nature of this corruption and the obvious lack of enforcement of weak Congolese law is a powerful disincentive for corporations to engage in 'due diligence' when conducting their own mining operations in the Congo.

In contrast, in the south of the Congo in the former province of Katanga, Amnesty International and Afreewatch researchers tracked sacks of cobalt ore that had been mined by artisanal miners in Kolwezi to the local market where the mineral ore is sold. From this point, the material was smelted by one of the large companies in Kolwezi, such as Congo Dongfang Mining International SARL (CDM), which is a smelter and fully-owned subsidiary of Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt Company Ltd (Huayou Cobalt) in China, one of the world's largest manufacturers of cobalt products. Once smelted, the material is typically exported from the Congo to China via a port in South Africa. See [“This is what We Die for”: Human Rights Abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Power the Global Trade in Cobalt](#).

In its 2009 report [“Faced with a gun, what can you do?” War and the Militarisation of Mining in Eastern Congo](#) examining the link between foreign corporate activity in the Congo and the military violence, Global Witness raised questions about the involvement of nearly 240 companies spanning the mineral, metal and technology industries. It specifically identified four main European companies as open buyers in this illegal trade: Thailand Smelting and Refining Corp. (owned by British Amalgamated Metal Corp.), British Afrimex, Belgian Trademet and Traxys. It also questioned the role of other companies further down the manufacturing chain, including prominent electronics companies Hewlett-Packard, Nokia, Dell and Motorola (a list to which Microsoft and Samsung should have been added as well). Even though they may be acting ‘legally’, Global Witness criticized their lack of due diligence and transparency standards at every level of their supply chain. See [‘First Blood Diamonds, Now Blood Computers?’](#)

Of course, as you no doubt expect, some of the world's largest corporate miners are in the Congo. These include [Glencore](#) (Switzerland) and [Freeport-McMoRan](#) (USA). But there are another 20 or more mining corporations in the Congo too, including [Mawson West Limited](#) (Australia), [Forrest Group International](#) (Belgium), [Anvil Mining](#) (Canada), [Randgold Resources](#) (UK) and [AngloGold Ashanti](#) (South Africa).

Needless to say, despite beautifully worded ‘corporate responsibility statements’ by whatever name, the record rarely goes even remotely close to resembling the rhetoric. Take Glencore’s lovely statement on ‘safety’ in the Congo: [‘Ask Glencore: Democratic Republic of the Congo’](#). Unfortunately, this didn’t prevent the 2016 accident at a Congolese mine that one newspaper reported in the following terms: ‘Glencore’s efforts to reduce fatalities among its staff have suffered a setback with the announcement that the death toll from an accident at a Congolese mine has risen to seven.’ See [‘Glencore reports seven dead in mining accident’](#).

Or consider the Belgian [Forrest Group International](#)’s wonderful ‘Community Services’ program, supposedly developing projects ‘in the areas of education, health, early childhood care, culture, sport, infrastructure and the environment. The FORREST GROUP has been investing on the African continent since 1922. Its longevity is the fruit of a vision of the role a company should have, namely the duty to be a positive player in the society in which it operates. The investments of the Group share a common core of values which include, as a priority, objectives of stability and long-term prospects.’

Regrettably, the Forrest Group website and public relations documents make no mention of the company’s illegal demolition, without notice, of hundreds of homes of people who lived in the long-standing village of Kawama, inconveniently close to the Forrest Group’s Luiswishi Mine, on 24 and 25 November 2009. People were left homeless and many lost their livelihoods as a direct consequence. Of course, the demolitions constitute forced evictions,



which are illegal under international human rights law.

Fortunately, given the obvious oversight of the Forrest Group in failing to mention it, the demolitions have been thoroughly documented by Amnesty International in its report [‘Bulldozed – How a Mining Company Buried the Truth about Forced Evictions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’](#) and the satellite photographs acquired by the American Academy for the Advancement of Science have been published as well. See [‘Satellite imagery assessment of forced relocations near the Luiswishi Mine’](#).

Needless to say, it is difficult for Congolese villagers to feel they have any ‘stability and long-term prospects’, as the Forrest Group’s ‘Community Services’ statement puts it, when their homes and livelihoods have been destroyed. Are company [chairman George A. Forrest and its CEO Malta David Forrest](#) and their family delusional? Or just so familiar with being violently ruthless in their exploitation of the Congo and its people, that it doesn’t even occur to them that there might be less violent ways of resolving any local conflicts?

Tragically, of course, fatal industrial accidents and housing demolition are only two of the many abuses inflicted on mining labourers, including (illegal) child labourers, and families in the Congo where workers are not even provided with the most basic ‘safety equipment’ – work clothes, helmets, gloves, boots and facemasks – let alone a safe working environment (including guidance on the safe handling of toxic substances) or a fair wage, reasonable working hours, holidays, sick leave or superannuation.

Even where laws exist, such as the Congo’s Child Protection Code (2009) which provides for ‘free and compulsory primary education for all children’, laws are often simply ignored (without legal consequence). Although, it should also be noted, in the Congo there is no such thing as ‘free education’ despite the law. Consequently, plenty of children do not attend school and work full time, others attend school but work out of school hours. There is no effective system to remove children from child labour (which is well documented). Even for adults, there is no effective labour inspection system. Most artisanal mining takes places in unauthorized mining areas ‘where the government is doing next to nothing to regulate the safety and labour conditions in which the miners work’. See [“‘This is what We Die for’: Human Rights Abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Power the Global Trade in Cobalt’](#).

In addition, as noted above, given its need for minerals to manufacture the hitech products it makes, including those for western corporations, China is deeply engaged in mining strategic minerals in the Congo too. See [‘China plays long game on cobalt and electric batteries’](#).

Based on the Chinese notion of ‘respect’ – which includes the ‘principle’ of noninterference in each other’s internal affairs – the Chinese dictatorship is content to ignore the dictatorship of the Congo and its many corrupt and violent practices, even if its investment often has more beneficial outcomes for ordinary Congolese than does western ‘investment’. Moreover, China is not going to disrupt and destabilize the Congo in the way that the United States and European countries have done for so long. See [‘China’s Congo Plan’](#) and [‘China vs. the US: The Struggle for Central Africa and the Congo’](#).

Having noted the above, however, there is plenty of evidence of corrupt Chinese business practice in the extraction and sale of strategic minerals in the Congo, including that documented in the above-mentioned Global Witness report. See [‘River of Gold’](#).

Moreover, Chinese involvement is not limited to its direct engagement in mining such as gold dredging of the Ulindi River. A vital source of the mineral cobalt is that which is mined by artisanal miners. As part of a recent detailed investigation, Amnesty International had researchers follow cobalt mined by artisanal miners from where it was mined to a market at Musompo, where minerals are traded. The report summarised what happens:

‘Independent traders at Musompo – most of them Chinese – buy the ore, regardless of where it has come from or how it has been mined. In turn, these traders sell the ore on to larger companies in the DRC which process and export it. One of the largest companies at the centre of this trade is Congo Dongfang Mining International (CDM). CDM is a 100% owned subsidiary of China-based Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt Company Ltd (Huayou Cobalt), one of the world’s largest manufacturers of cobalt products. Operating in the DRC since 2006, CDM buys cobalt from traders, who buy directly from the miners. CDM then smelts the ore at its plant in the DRC before exporting it to China. There, Huayou Cobalt further smelts and sells the processed cobalt to battery component manufacturers in China and South Korea. In turn, these companies sell to battery manufacturers, which then sell on to well-known consumer brands.

‘Using public records, including investor documents and statements published on company websites, researchers identified battery component manufacturers who were listed as sourcing processed ore from Huayou Cobalt. They then went on to trace companies who were listed as customers of the battery component manufacturers, in order to establish how the cobalt ends up in consumer products. In seeking to understand how this international supply chain works, as well as to ask questions about each company’s due diligence policy, Amnesty International wrote to Huayou Cobalt and 25 other companies in China, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, UK, and the USA. These companies include some of the world’s largest and best known consumer electronics companies, including Apple Inc., Dell, HP Inc. (formerly Hewlett-Packard Company), Huawei, Lenovo (Motorola), LG, Microsoft Corporation, Samsung, Sony and Vodafone, as well as vehicle manufacturers like Daimler AG, Volkswagen and Chinese firm BYD. Their replies are detailed in the report’s Annex.’ See [“This is what We Die for”: Human Rights Abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Power the Global Trade in Cobalt](#)’.

As backdrop to the problems mentioned above, it is worth pointing out that keeping the country under military siege is useful to many parties, internal and foreign. Over the past 20 years of violent conflict, control of these valuable mineral resources has been a lucrative way for warring parties to finance their violence – that is, buying the products of western weapons corporations – and to promote the chaotic circumstances that make minimal accountability and maximum profit easiest. The Global Witness report ‘Faced with a gun, what can you do?’ cited above followed the supply chain of these minerals from warring parties to middlemen to international buyers: people happy to profit from the sale of ‘blood minerals’ to corporations which, in turn, are happy to buy them cheaply to manufacture their highly profitable hitech products.

Moreover, according to the Global Witness report, although the Congolese army and rebel groups – such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a rebel force opposed to the Rwandan government that has taken refuge in the Congo since the 1994 Rwanda genocide – have been warring on opposite sides for years, they are collaborators in the mining effort, at times providing each other with road and airport access and even sharing their spoils. Researchers say they found evidence that the mineral trade is much more extensive and profitable than previously suspected: one Congolese government

official reported that at least 90% of all gold exports from the country were undeclared. And the report charges that the failure of foreign governments to crack down on illicit mining and trade has undercut development endeavors supposedly undertaken by the international community in the war-torn region.

### Social and Environmental Costs

Of course, against this background of preoccupation with the militarized exploitation of mineral resources for vast profit, ordinary Congolese people suffer extraordinary ongoing violence. Apart from the abuses mentioned above, four women are raped every five minutes in the Congo, according to a study done in May 2011. 'These nationwide estimates of the incidence of rape are 26 times higher than the 15,000 conflict-related cases confirmed by the United Nations for the DRC in 2010'. Despite the country having the highest number of UN peacekeeping forces in the world – where the [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) (MONUSCO) has operated since the turn of the century – the level of sexual violence soldiers have perpetrated against women is staggering. 'Currently, there is still much violence in the region, as well as an overwhelming amount of highly strategic mass rape.' See '[Conflict Profile: Democratic Republic of Congo](#)'.

Unsurprisingly, given the international community's complete indifference, despite rhetoric to the contrary, to the plight of Congolese people, it is not just Congolese soldiers who are responsible for the rapes. UN 'peacekeepers' are perpetrators too. See '[Peacekeepers gone wild: How much more abuse will the UN ignore in Congo?](#)'

And the Congo is a violently dangerous place for children as well with, for example, Child Soldiers International reporting that with a variety of national and foreign armed groups and forces operating in the country for over 20 years, the majority of fighting forces have recruited and used children, and most still exploit boys and girls today with girls forced to become girl soldiers but to perform a variety of other sexual and 'domestic' roles too. See [Child Soldiers International](#). Of course, child labour is completely out of control with many impoverished families utterly dependent on it for survival.

In addition, many Congolese also end up as refugees in neighbouring countries or as internally displaced people in their own country.

As you would expect, it is not just human beings who suffer. With rebel soldiers (such as the Rwanda-backed M23), miners and poachers endlessly plundering inadequately protected national parks and other wild places for their resources, illegal mining is rampant, over-fishing a chronic problem, illegal logging (and other destruction such as charcoal burning for cooking) of rainforests is completely out of control in some places, poaching of hippopotamuses, elephants, chimpanzees and okapi for ivory and bushmeat is unrelenting (often despite laws against hunting with guns), and wildlife trafficking of iconic species (including the increasingly rare mountain gorilla) simply beyond the concern of most people.

The Congolese natural environment – including the UNESCO World Heritage sites at Virunga National Park and the Okapi Wildlife Reserve, together with their park rangers – and the indigenous peoples such as the Mbuti ('pygmies') who live in them, are under siege. In addition to the ongoing mining, smaller corporations that can't compete with the majors, such as Soco, want to explore and drill for oil. For a taste of the reading on all this, see '[Virunga National Park Ranger Killed in DRC Ambush](#)', '[The struggle to save the "Congolese unicorn"](#)', '[Meet the First Female Rangers to Guard One of World's Deadliest Parks](#)'

and [‘The Battle for Africa’s Oldest National Park’](#).

If you would like to watch a video about some of what is happening in the Congo, either of these videos will give you an unpleasant taste: [‘Crisis In The Congo: Uncovering The Truth’](#) and [‘Conflict Minerals, Rebels and Child Soldiers in Congo’](#).

## Resisting the Violence

So what is happening to resist this violence and exploitation? Despite the horror, as always, some incredible people are working to end it.

Some Congolese activists resist the military dictatorship of Joseph Kabila, despite the enormous risks of doing so. See, for example, [‘Release the Congolese activists still in jail for planning peaceful demonstrations’](#).

Some visionary Congolese continue devoting their efforts, in phenomenally difficult circumstances including lack of funding, to building a society where ordinary Congolese people have the chance to create a meaningful life for themselves. Two individuals and organizations who particularly inspire me are based in Goma in eastern Congo where the fighting is worst.

The [Association de Jeunes Visionnaires pour le Développement du Congo](#), headed by Leon Simweragi, is a youth peace group that works to rehabilitate child soldiers as well as offer meaningful opportunities for the sustainable involvement of young people in matters that affect their lives and those of their community.

And Christophe Nyambatsi Mutaka is the key figure at the [Groupe Martin Luther King](#) that promotes active nonviolence, human rights and peace. Christophe’s group particularly works on reducing sexual and other violence against women.

There are also solidarity groups, based in the West, that work to draw attention to the nightmare happening in the Congo. These include [Friends of the Congo](#) that works to inform people and agitate for change and groups like Child Soldiers International mentioned above.

If you would like to better understand the depravity of those individuals in the Congo (starting with the dictator Joseph Kabila but including all those officials, bureaucrats and soldiers) who enable, participate in or ignore the violence and exploitation; the presidents and prime ministers of western governments who ignore exploitation, by their locally-based corporations, of the Congo; the heads of multinational corporations that exploit the Congo – such as Anthony Hayward (Chair of Glencore), Richard Adkerson (CEO of Freeport-McMoRan), George A. Forrest and Malta David Forrest (Chair and CEO respectively of Forrest Group International), Christopher L Coleman (Chair of Randgold Resources) and Srinivasan Venkatakrishnan (CEO of AngloGold Ashanti) – as well as those individuals in international organizations such as the UN (starting with Secretary-General António Guterres) and the EU (headed by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission), who ignore, provoke, support and/or profit from this violence and exploitation, you will find the document [‘Why Violence?’](#) and the website [‘Feelings First’](#) instructive.

Whether passively or actively complicit, each of these depraved individuals (along with other individuals within the global elite) does little or nothing to draw attention to, let alone work to profoundly change, the situation in the Congo which denies most Congolese the right to a meaningful life in any enlightened sense of these words.



If you would like to help, you can do so by supporting the efforts of the individual activists and solidarity organizations indicated above or those like them.

You might also like to sign the online pledge of [‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’](#) which references the Congo among many other examples of violence around the world.

And if you would like to support efforts to remove the dictatorship of Joseph Kabila and/or get corrupt foreign governments, corporations and organizations out of the Congo, you can do so by planning and implementing or supporting a nonviolent strategy that is designed to achieve one or more of these objectives. See [Nonviolent Defense/Liberation Strategy](#).

If you are still reading this article and you feel the way I do about this ongoing atrocity, then I invite you to participate, one way or another, in ending it.

For more than 500 years, the Congo has been brutalized by the extraordinary violence inflicted by those who have treated the country as a resource – for slaves, rubber, timber, wildlife and minerals – to be exploited.

This will only end when enough of us commit ourselves to acting on the basis that 500 years is long enough. Liberate the Congo!

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