CONGO TO THE CAROLINAS

THE GLOBAL HARMS OF THE TECH OLIGARCHY'S AI AND DATA CENTER BUILDOUT

FACTSHEET

The Democratic Republic of Congo is a land rich in minerals that are vital to the AI and data center supply chain. This includes being the world's largest producer of cobalt and coltan, the second largest producer of copper, and other minerals such as uranium, lithium, and others.[1, 2, 3,]

At least 40,000 children, aged 6 to 17, are estimated to be working in mines in the Congo.[4] Some work for at least 12 hours a day without protective equipment in deep underground shafts that are susceptible to fatal mine collapses and injuries.[5] Mining exposes workers to systemic toxicity, including mercury poisoning, lung infections, and high rates of miscarriages.[6]Rivers become so polluted from mining that communities can no longer drink the water.

The U.S. and the broader international community have been systematically looting Congo since before it was violently carved up into the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1884-1885.[7] Today, Tech Oligarchs and the State work in lockstep to fuel the extractive industries, exploited labor, and geopolitical formations that bolster AI and data center expansion at the expense of Indigenous, Black, and other exploited communities across the globe. [8]

Understanding this pipeline of exploitation provides necessary context for assessing the full scale of harms from AI data centers and for identifying strategies to resist the tech oligarchy's empire-building project. Key connections to consider:

AI is built by exploitative industries like child labor in mining in the Congo, uranium mining on indigenous lands, and copper mining in Arizona. [9, 10, 11]

The extraction of land, minerals, water, and other resources relies on stripping local communities of agency and democratic processes.

- In the Congo, coltan mining is led by rebels and neighboring countries (Rwanda, Uganda & Burundi), which the United Nations has implicated as "the engine of the conflict in the DRC." [12] The U.S. provides training, financing, and military equipment to Rwanda and Uganda.[13]
- Across the globe, data centers are deliberately being built in areas perceived to be disempowered or are backed by the state apparatus to erode democracy or chill dissent and organized resistance.[14, 15, 16]

Workers are exploited at every stage of the AI and data center buildout, only to end up as targets in the crosshairs of AI surveillance and weaponization.

- Workers who assemble AI and data center hardware are subjected to chemical exposure, low wages, and grueling shift lengths, with women and people of color in the lowest ranks.[17]
- Training AI requires millions of underpaid, invisible workers who train, tag, and filter data so AI can retain the patterns it then repeats back to users. Data workers have described the trauma of having to repeatedly watch graphic and violent content, or label video footage without knowledge of how it is going to be used against civilians.[18]
- The propaganda of AI is a massive cover-up of the violence that AI is actually weaponized for – racialized violence, genocide, surveilling workers and labor organizers, automation of health care denials, and keeping people criminalized and locked up.[19, 20, 21, 22, 23]

WHAT CAN WE DO

Build Our Solidarity and Power. Be sure to speak to the full cycle of harms from the AI and data center buildout.

Join the Global Pressure on World Leaders. Demand that the U.S., the U.K., and the European Union cease their financing of the conflict in the Congo through their support of the Rwandan and Uganda governments.

Fight for Self-Determination. Support Congolese organizations on the frontlines of the conflict and exploitation in the Congo so that they can ultimately take control of their land, resources, and future. Join the **#FreeCongo Movement** and visit www.freecongo.org to get involved and take action.

This factsheet was compiled by MediaJustice, Friends of the Congo, Radical Futurist Lab, The Black Hive, Sunrise Triangle, and PSL Triangle based on years of documentation, research, and analysis of data center development across the globe.

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