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## Inside the congo cobalt mines

A landmark legal case has been launched against the world's largest technology company by a Congolese family who say their children were killed or maimed while mining cobalt used to power smartphones, laptops and electric vehicles, the Guardian revealed. Apple, Google, Dell, Microsoft and Tesla were named defendants in a lawsuit filed in Washington, D.C., by human rights firm International Human Rights Advocates on behalf of parents and 14 children of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The lawsuit, conducted by barrister Siddars Kara, accuses the company of helping and gambling the deaths and serious injuries of children who claim to be working in cobalt mines in the supply chain. Families and injured children are seeking damages for forced labor and additional compensation for unjust enrichment, negligent supervision and intentional damages of emotional distress. This is the first time any of the tech companies have faced such a legal challenge. Cobalt is essential to power rechargeable lithium batteries used in millions of products sold annually by Apple, Google, Dell, Microsoft and Tesla. Insatiable demand for cobalt, eddy by the desire for affordable handheld technology, has tripled in the past five years and is expected to double again by the end of 2020. More than 60% of cobalt occurs in the DRC, one of the world's poorest and most unstable countries. A sliding image comparing aerial views of mines in the Colwezi-Casulo area from May 2016 to May 2019. Aerial view of the Casulo area of Colwezi. In the first photo, in May 2016, there are only residential houses. In May 2019, Congo Dongfang International Mining (a subsidiary of Chinese company Huayou Cobalt) built a mining site with walled boundaries and processed buildings (blue). Pink tarpaulins cover tunnels used for mining. Image courtesy of CNES/Airbus DS. Earthrise production. Extracting cobalt from the DRC has been linked to human rights abuses, corruption, environmental destruction and child labor. The lawsuit alleges that Apple, Google, Dell, Microsoft and Tesla all helped and gambled mining companies that profited from the labor force of children forced to work in dangerous conditions, eventually causing deaths and serious injuries. Family members claim their children are working illegally at a mine owned by British mining company Glencore. Court documents claim that cobalt from glencore-owned mines is sold to Emcore, a metals and mining trader based in Brussels, selling battery-grade cobalt to Apple, Google, Tesla, Microsoft and Dell. Other plaintiffs in the court documents say they worked at a mine owned by Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt, a major Chinese cobalt company that the lawsuit claims is likely to supply Apple, Dell and Microsoft and serve other defendants. In court documents, Congolese family Their children were driven by extreme poverty to save jobs at large mining site, and they claimed they paid as little as \$2 (£1.50) a day for dangerous work digging for raw toolcobalt rocks in dark, underground tunnels. Family members claim that some of the children died in the tunnel collapse, while others were paralyzed or suffered life-changing injuries as a result of the accident. Children selling cobalt on a mining hill adjacent to Lake Marlowe in the DRC. Pictured: A Sidhard Kara one plaintiff named Jane Doe 1 says in court papers that her nephew had to get a job at a cobalt mine when he was a young child after his family was unable to continue paying his \$6 monthly tuition. The lawsuit alleges that in April last year he was working at a mine operated by the Kamoto Copper Company, owned and controlled by Glencore. He was working underground in a tunnel, digging cobalt rocks, which collapsed and were buried alive. His family says he has never recovered his body. Another child, called John Doe 1, says he started working in the mines when he was nine years old. The lawsuit alleges that earlier this year he was working as a human mule for the Kamoto Copper Company, which burned a bag of cobalt rocks for \$0.75 a day and fell into a tunnel. After being dragged out of the tunnel by fellow workers, he says he was left alone at the mine site until his parents heard the news of the accident and arrived to help him. He is now paralyzed from the chest down and will never walk again. Other families included in the claim say the children died in the tunnel collapse, suffered serious injuries such as limbs and broken vertebrae while crawling through the tunnel or carrying heavy loads. Family members say they have not received compensation for the deaths and injuries. One of the key arguments in the lawsuit is that Apple, Google, Dell, Microsoft and Tesla had certain knowledge that the cobalt they use in their products was linked to child labor carried out in dangerous conditions, and was implicated in forced labor of children. The family claims in court documents that all the companies named as defendants entered mining companies and commercial ventures operating in the DRC, all of which gained significant financial benefits from the extensive illegal cobalt mining of children entering the global supply chain. Children selling cobalt near Lake Marlowe. Pictured: Siddars Kara court documents claim that Apple, Dell, Microsoft, Google and Tesla all have the authority and resources to oversee and regulate the cobalt supply chain, and that their inaction has contributed to the deaths and injuries of customers. On a tour of the DRC's mines, I witnessed tremendous inequality, pain and misery at the bottom of the supply chain, and we are all connected through the devices we use every day. Regardless of the outcome of this legal action, the voices of the children who lost their lives in this mine will be heard for the first time in court. A spokesman for Glencore said: Glencore notes the allegations contained in a US lawsuit filed on December 15, 2019. Glencore supports and respects human rights in a manner consistent with the Universal Declaration of Rights. Glencore's cobalt production at DrC is a byproduct of industrial copper production. Glencore's operations in the DRC do not purchase or process ore mined by artisans. Glencore does not tolerate any form of child, forced labor or forced labor. Apple said: Apple is deeply committed to the responsible sourcing of ingredients that go into our products. We have led the industry by establishing the most stringent standards for our suppliers, and we are constantly working to raise the bar for ourselves and our industry. In 2014, it was the first company to start mapping its cobalt supply chain to mining levels, and since 2016 it has published a full list of cobalt refineries identified each year, 100% of which are involved in independent third-party audits. If refineries are unable or unwilling to meet our standards, refineries will be removed from the supply chain. We removed six cobalt tablets in 2019. Dell Technologies is committed to responsible sourcing of minerals, including maintaining worker human rights and treating them with dignity and respect at all layers of the supply chain. We have never used any form of involuntary labor, fraudulent recruitment practices or child labor to procure operations on a bill. We work with our suppliers to responsibly manage our sourcing programs. Suppliers who have received reports of misconduct are investigated and removed from the supply chain if misconduct is found. We are currently investigating these allegations and have notified the Responsible Minerals Initiative as part of our complaint mechanism. Umicoor has been dealing with ethical supply for 15 years, ensuring issues related to human rights, child labor, safety conditions and environmental impacts related to cobalt extraction. We dispute this on any suspicion to the contrary. Microsoft did not respond to a request for comment, but a spokesman said in an interview with The Daily Telegraph that one of its suppliers is investigating and taking action in the case of suspicious behavior or violations. Huayou, Google and Tesla have also been approached for comment. June 22, 2018 Web News &t;br class=k-br>An integral part of most mobile devices sold worldwide and the demand for cobalt is soaring. However, the process of extracting minerals from the earth is at a huge human cost. A Sky News investigation found that four young children working in dangerous and flat conditions at a cobalt mine in the Democratic Republic of Congo were only 8p a day. Sky Special Correspondent Alex Crawford youtube.com youtube.com

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