

February 26, 2010



## Urge Congress to support S. 891/H.R. 4128 to help improve the lives of our Congolese sisters and brothers

# ACTION ALERT

**Take Action Now!** Visit the Action Center now <http://actioncenter.crs.org> to urge your members of Congress to help stop the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by co-sponsoring H.R. 4128 in the House of Representatives or S.891 in the Senate. We need to ensure that these bills move forward quickly.

**Why is action important now?** The violent conflict in the Eastern DRC has by some estimates killed more than five million people - most from malnutrition, disease, and lack of access to health care - and has currently displaced more than 1.7 million people from their homes. Related to the conflict, an estimated 400,000 women and girls have been raped in the Eastern DRC in the past ten years. Humanitarian assistance is vitally needed to support the DRC's victims of violence and displacement, but we must also address its causes, including the trade of so-called "conflict minerals."

Much of the instability, displacement, conflict, and sexual violence in the Eastern DRC is financed by armed groups' control over lucrative mines and mineral trade routes. One of several such "conflict minerals" is coltan, a critical component for the production of cell phones, laptops, and other electronics. Much of the DRC's coltan is being illicitly mined in conflict zones and illegally exported through neighboring countries. We can help the people of the DRC by reducing the ability of armed groups to finance violence with illicitly mined conflict minerals.

**What do H.R. 4128/S.891 seek to accomplish?** Both bills require companies to provide more information about where the minerals they are purchasing come from. While in different ways, both bills call for on-going documentation of the links between mining and human rights violations in the DRC, including maps of mines and mineral trading routes that finance conflict. They also promote more humanitarian and development assistance for affected communities in the DRC.

As noted in recent letters to [House](#) and [Senate](#) Committees with jurisdiction over this bill, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) believe that passage H.R. 4128 and S.891 can improve the lives of millions of people in the Eastern DRC. While we believe certain provisions of H.R.4128 will be more effective than counterpart provisions in S. 891, we support both bills as key steps in reducing violence in the Eastern Congo and will work to strengthen both bills as they move through the legislative process.

**What does this issue have to do with my Catholic faith?** Our Catholic faith calls on us to uphold the life and dignity of the human person by alleviating human suffering and promoting justice and solidarity worldwide. Many lives are being lost and abused as horrific violence is used as a weapon to gain control of mines and trading routes. Therefore we must work to help end this violence and assist people in developing nations to realize the benefits of natural resource extraction and restrain the misuse of their mineral wealth.

The Catholic bishops of the DRC have identified conflict minerals as a critical issue and traveled to the U.S. to focus attention to these drivers of the crisis. Our Holy Father, Benedict XVI, stated in his encyclical letter, *Charity in Truth*: "The stockpiling of natural resources, which in many cases are found in the poor countries themselves, gives rise to exploitation and frequent conflicts between and within nations. These conflicts are often fought on the soil of those same countries, with a heavy toll of death, destruction and further decay. The international community has an urgent duty to find institutional means of regulating the exploitation of non-renewable resources..."

**What is the Church doing about this issue?** The U.S. Catholic Church, through [CRS](#), is working in the DRC to provide emergency health and nutrition to affected populations, education for displaced children, assistance to victims of sexual violence, programs to prevent violence against women, and agricultural development. CRS supports local advocates who are calling on their governments to be more transparent in the use oil, gas, and mining revenues and seeking regulatory improvements of those extractive industries. CRS also supports conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts in the region.

In the U.S., USCCB and CRS are mobilizing one million Catholics as part of [Catholics Confront Global Poverty](#) to learn, pray and act to support policies that alleviate the negative impact of natural resource extraction on poor people worldwide.

**For more information contact:**

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