

*For God so loved  
the world...  
shouldn't we?*

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***Praying for the World  
One Country at Time***



**CONGO**  
**November 27, 2011**

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

### Full Name

Democratic Republic of the Congo

### Religion

Christianity and Islam

### Capital

Kinshasa

### Population

67 million

### Location

Central Africa, northeast of Angola. The country's area is slightly less than one-fourth the size of the US or two-thirds the size of Western Europe.

### Leadership

Republic (in name only). Current president Joseph Kabila became Congo's president when his father Laurent was assassinated in 2001. He is a former guerrilla fighter who participated in nearly a decade of war that ravaged the country. **ON NOVEMBER 28, 2011 (TOMORROW!) THE COUNTRY WILL HAVE ITS ONLY SECOND GENERAL ELECTION IN FOURTH DECADES.**

### Overview

A vast country with immense economic resources, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) has been at the centre of what could be termed Africa's world war. This has left it in the grip of a humanitarian crisis. The five-year conflict pitted government forces, supported by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, against rebels backed by Uganda and Rwanda. The war claimed an estimated three million lives, either as a direct result of fighting or because of disease and malnutrition. It has been called possibly the worst emergency to unfold in Africa in recent decades. The history of DR Congo has been one of civil war and corruption. After independence in 1960 its first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, was seized and killed by troops loyal to army chief Joseph Mobutu. In 1965 Mobutu seized power, later renaming the country Zaire. He turned Zaire into a springboard for operations against Soviet-backed Angola and thereby ensured US backing. But he also made Zaire synonymous with corruption. After the Cold War, Zaire ceased to be of interest to the US. Thus, when in 1997 neighboring Rwanda invaded it to flush out extremist Hutu militias; international community overlooked the humanitarian crisis, which has since been given a status of genocide.

**Economy** The war had an economic as well as a political side. Fighting was fuelled by the country's vast mineral wealth, with all sides taking advantage of the anarchy to plunder natural resources. DR Congo has abundant mineral wealth. With 13% of the world's hydropower potential, its network of rivers could power much of Africa. It has more than 70% of the world's coltan, used to make vital components of mobile phones, 30% of the planet's diamond reserves and vast deposits of cobalt, copper and bauxite. With foreign help, there has been some recent progress in the economic development, but it is being impeded by continued fighting, uncertain legal framework, corruption, and a lack of transparency in government policy. Coffee, diamonds, copper, cobalt, and crude oil are among the main exports.

## Prayer Concerns

DR Congo's civil war has claimed an estimated three million lives, either as a direct result of fighting or because of disease and malnutrition. It has been called possibly the worst emergency to unfold in Africa in recent decades.

According to many international experts DR Congo can be considered the world's worst country. Few societies have accumulated so many woes. Only Somalia, Chad and Sudan (when it included South Sudan) have worse rankings in the International Failed State Index. UN's human development index put DR Congo on the very bottom of 187 countries surveyed. The government is unable to provide security, decent education, or health services. Ordinary citizens are poor, hungry, under-informed, and frequently use expressions like the "state is dying but not yet dead" or "the state is ever present but completely useless". The citizens of DR Congo pray to be delivered from the brutal militias that still control parts of the eastern provinces, where rape has become so commonplace that the country is frequently referred to as "the rape capital of the world".

Unfortunately for the people of DR Congo, its resource wealth has rarely been harnessed for their benefit. The natural riches have attracted rapacious adventurers, unscrupulous corporations, vicious warlords and corrupt governments and divided the population between competing ethnic groups. DR Congo's rainforest, the largest in the world after Brazil, is being destroyed for the sake of harvesting coltan, a critical component of cell phones and other small electronics.

St. Andrews is directly (even if modestly) involved in providing assistance to DR Congo by purchasing fair traded Congo Coffee through the Equal Exchange. The Congo Coffee Project was created by Equal Exchange in partnership with the Panzi Hospital in the DR Congo, which offers programs for more than 2,000 survivors of sexual violence each year. The hospital provides life-saving treatment, counseling, and aftercare programs for women and others in need of healing.

