

Basic Facts on the Congo



History & Geography

1. Congo is located in the heart of Africa straddling the equator.
2. Congo is bordered by nine other African countries and is the size of Western Europe with a population of 110 million inhabitants.
3. The lingua franca is French however four major languages (Lingala, Kikongo, Tshiluba, and Swahili) are spoken in more than 250 ethnic groups.
4. Congo's Ishango Bones, a binary counting system and lunar calendar, are among the oldest mathematical artifacts in the world, dating to 20,000 BC.
5. The Kongo empire reigned during the period of African enslavement and prior to the Colonization era.
6. Congo was given to King Leopold II of Belgium at the 1884/85 Berlin Conference.
7. King Leopold II ruled Congo as his own personal property for 23 years (1885-1908) during which time approximately 10 million Congolese perished as the King extracted rubber and ivory.
8. As a result of international grassroots pressure, King Leopold II had to relinquish ownership of the Congo to the Belgian state in 1908 and Belgium ruled as a colonial power until 1960.

Politics

1. Congo obtained its independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960 under the elected leadership of Prime Minister Patrice Emery Lumumba who was overthrown within weeks and assassinated within months (January 17, 1961) by Western powers and Congolese sycophants.
2. Pursuant to Lumumba's assassination, the United States installed and backed dictator Joseph Desire Mobutu for over three decades.
3. U.S. allies, Rwanda and Uganda invaded the Congo twice (1996 & 1998) which resulted in the removal of Mobutu in 1997 and the unleashing of the deaths of nearly six million.
4. The overthrow of Mobutu resulted in the installation of Laurent Desire Kabila in 1997, who was assassinated in 2001 and followed by his son Joseph Kabila who remained in power until January 2019.
5. Felix Tshisekedi replaced Joseph Kabila as president of the Congo in the country's first peaceful transfer of power since the overthrow of Patrice Lumumba by Western powers in 1960. Tshisekedi was reelected to a second five-year term in December 2023.

The Tragedy

1. It is estimated that nearly six million people have died as a result of conflict and conflict related causes in the Congo since 1996.
2. Half of those who perished in the conflict are children under the age of five.
3. Hundreds of thousands of women have been raped as a weapon of war.
4. Seventy percent of Congolese live in extreme poverty earning less than \$2 per day.
5. The international community is systematically looting Congo's spectacular wealth.

The Potential

1. Congo's people represent its greatest potential with a population of 110 million, half under the age of 18.
2. Congo is a storehouse of strategic minerals (cobalt, copper, zinc, gold, diamond, silver, magnesium, germanium, uranium, coltan, petroleum and many other resources), which are vital to global industries such as the military, aerospace, technology, electronics, automobile, jewelry and others.
3. Congo possesses 64 percent of the world's reserve of coltan (a mineral found in cell phones and other electronic devices).
4. Congo is the largest producer of cobalt in the world and the largest producer of copper in Africa.
5. Congo is a part of the second largest rainforest in the world, which is vital in the fight against global warming and climate change.
6. Congo has the hydro capacity to provide electricity for the entire African continent, southern Europe and parts of the Middle East.
7. Congo has the agricultural capacity to feed the entire African continent.

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