

Context

Because death is the purpose of uranium mining and the nuclear fuel chain that produces nuclear weapons components, all those along the nuclear fuel chain are injured by this weaponry. The United States' apparatus compels exploitation and conceals information to maintain control of the global nuclear-industrial complex, while obscuring facts related to nuclear contamination. This secrecyⁱ and oppression initiates not only health crises of peoples and ecological systems, but also corrupts institutions, contributing to international instability and armed conflicts. Such is the case for the Shinkolobwe region and its peoples, who have suffered from US threats, intimidation, coercion, torture, and murder when human witnesses of crimes against humanity testify or attempt to testify about uranium mining and related impacts. The violent power of the US secrecy state have practically abolished freedom from fear and freedoms of expression, assembly, movement, and association.

The US exploited Congolese peoples, who had suffered from generations of colonial displacement, oppression, torture, slavery, and murderⁱⁱ that was caused by the US Ally.ⁱⁱⁱ The US researched, observed, and monitored the open pit uranium mine in the Shinkolobwe region to prevent enemy access before, during, and after WWII.^{iv} The US is responsible for these crimes against humanity,^v which it enabled through secrecy.

Secrecy

The US failed to report in the US Federal Reserve Bank that it was purchasing uranium.^{vi} The US failed to report to its legislative body that it was using slave labor to produce a product that poisoned all those within proximity to it. As part of efforts to protect Manhattan Project workers from radiation exposure, the US tested the effects of ionizing radiation on humans and concealed these procedures until pressured to release information.^{vii} It is unknown if Congolese workers or their families were experiment or testing subjects. It is known that the effects of radiation were concealed from Congolese workers and that they were segregated from other Congolese behind barbed wire.^{viii} In 1947 the US Atomic Energy Commission proposed to keep secret the experiments that it had performed on humans.^{ix} This secrecy led to corruption and extortion.

In 1954 journalists were seen near the uranium mine of Shinkolobwe and the Congo declared that unauthorized persons would be shot on sight in that area.^x This US demand corrupted democratic institutions by concealing information. As part of US control of information, after WWII, efforts were made to misinform US and global populations about the Manhattan Project, including the crimes that the US committed at Shinkolobwe and the impacts of ionizing radiation and toxic pollution that came with mining.^{xi} The US still has not shared accurate information relevant to prevention and treatment of communities affected by ionizing radiation and toxic contaminants related

to uranium mining and transport. US secrecy policies and influence should be amended to comply with international instruments. The ability to explain human rights violations in this report is limited by US secrecy.

Uranium Mining

Most of the uranium for the Manhattan project was from Shinkolobwe mine, which re-opened in 1921 for uranium mining under the ownership of “Union Minière de Haut Katanga” (UMHK), which was registered under Belgium, with which the US had formal agreements at the State level regarding the mine.^{xii} The forced labor that occurred at this mine, which served the US Manhattan Project, violated Belgian law and Congolese traditional law. The US was obsessed with the Manhattan Project timeline. The US was drawn to the availability of the economical high-quality uranium^{xiii} that was made possible by grabbing workers, land, and resources from Indigenous Peoples. The peoples’ rights were ignored completely. The US relied on this accessible uranium deposit in order to win World War II.^{xiv} The US has prevented accountability processes from addressing its participation in illegal activities at Shinkolobwe by silencing, repressing, and oppressing those who wish to share the facts.

Manhattan Project came to the Congo

US officials organized with UMHK and Belgium the mine security, containment of workers, and the transport of the richest uranium known at the time, deemed essential to the Manhattan Project. Families working in the mines were not considered human and colonizers did not value human rights. The US injured workers and their families by causing exposure, sickness, and death as communities were disappeared by US requirements for speedy appropriation of Congolese wealth with forced labor by Congolese peoples.^{xv} The initiation of the Manhattan Project in Shinkolobwe dehumanized Congolese daughters, sons, mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers were also tortured and killed with ionizing radiation, toxic pollution, injuries from work and security personnel who blocked workers’ escape until Congolese workers had provided the quantity of uranium that the US wanted.

The US did not inform workers and families of the risks or how to reduce risks of radioactive or toxic pollution. Though the US knew from its experiments that children were endangered, they did not share information on prevention or treatment of the problem. The US did not provide protective gear and their captive labor could not negotiate for it.^{xvi} Thus the US failed to fulfill its responsibilities as a state ruled by law.

The US militarized the Shinkolobwe region of Katanga in the 1950s,^{xvii} while still withholding support for poisoned workers and their families, thus preventing those victimized by the crime from gaining the capacity to productively report it, study it, and repair from it.^{xviii} Meanwhile, the US demanded complete control of peoples’ territories and resources from their capital across the Atlantic. When Democratic Republic of the

Congo (DRC) Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba put Congolese Peoples first and acted independently of the US, the US plotted to kill Prime Minister Lumumba. Thus the US continued to corrupt democratic institutions. Seven months after he took office and four months after a US-sponsored UN-backed coup, Prime Minister Lumumba was assassinated in the Shinkolobwe region.^{xix}

Colonial Consequences

Today, states silence those who attempt to raise their voice and raise awareness about the crimes against humanity that the US perpetrated against Congolese Peoples. US political pressure with physical manifestations quiets those who try to discuss the radioactive invasion, abduction and imprisonment of forced laborers from Shinkolobwe. It is difficult to effectively discuss the contamination of civilian families that made up communities with vibrant cultural, social, economic, and political life prior to the occupation of their communities and ecosystems by agents of destructive foreign powers. Those who hear these stories feel fear because of the violent removal^{xx} from affected communities of those who discuss it.

The US demand for uranium irradiated the Shinkolobwe region and increased shooting incidences, displacing families and their communities from their ancestral ceremonial grounds, ancestors' graves, and Indigenous Peoples' educational programs that depended on healthy ecosystems to teach children how to sustainably develop options for their food, clothing, health, and housing. By eradicating Indigenous Peoples and tribal peoples from the Shinkolobwe region, the US exacerbated the mine's ecological destruction, violated human rights, and further accelerated climate change by preventing successful sustainable societies and their governments from managing human involvement with the environment and mitigating contamination and climate change in the Shinkolobwe region. The US prevented community-based land management and imposed security-based social and environmental control.

According to the attached ASADHO/KATANGA report, in 2004 a landslide occurred where diggers extracted without technical support and without fundamental rules of safety and human dignity. The official report was eight deaths while ASADHO/KATANGA reported by interviewing witnesses that there were over 100 people dead or missing under the rubble. Katanga provincial governor had ordered evacuation of the village. All the huts were burned down in August (the forceful removal followed the massive mine collapse that occurred in July 2004.) The UNEP-OCHA joint team^{xxi} visited a desolated area cleansed of witnesses. However, the US has not remediated the waste piled up in front, between the road and the mine, since the mine's closure.

Congolese displaced by the US return to the Shinkolobwe region out of desperation. This forces them to be exposed to ionizing radiation. Displaced Shinkolobwe Peoples

are now displaced internally in DRC and also to Zambia, South Africa, US and beyond. Radioactive contamination has caused the permanent loss of life-giving homelands.

Displacement

Elimination of homelands cannot justify eliminating peoples or their communities or families. Uranium-nuclear victims displaced by the US from Shinkolobwe struggle with integration, information, education, and orientation. Researching the root cause of the reason why they are refugees is a necessary burden for recovery. US exploitation of the Shinkolobwe mine is one of the main root causes for displacement of Congolese Peoples. Advocacy, information, assistance, and formalization of status is needed for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

Coordinated processes, procedures, and mechanisms should be supported by US, in accordance with their human rights obligations, to compensate for loss of livelihood, homes, and community infrastructure of dislocated or displaced communities of Shinkolobwe, according to the dignity required by human rights instruments.

Analysis

The DRC Presidential Decree no. 04/017^{xxii} of 01/27/2004, classified the Shinkolobwe region as an area off-limits to mining activity while human and environmental needs of affected communities of Shinkolobwe region are ignored. The US, through the DRC, acts to protect the uranium in the mine from enemies^{xxiii} with disregard for the humans contaminated by US activities in the Shinkolobwe region. There have been no legal instruments at any level addressing the concerns of Shinkolobwe affected communities and their ecosystems. DRC prohibits use of the Shinkolobwe mine for safety reasons, however, no living arrangements or safe community infrastructure have been provided by Belgium, US, or DRC since the US invaded Indigenous Peoples' communities to get uranium during WWII.

The children forced to labor have become great-grandparents. They and their descendants need safe space to present the pain of Shinkolobwe to the world so communities can be restored. Support is needed for shelter, health care, education, and rehabilitated food systems that will feed many generations of uranium-affected descendants in the future. Today Congolese affected communities suffer from repression and health issues. To restore communities and their ecosystems, research support is needed from institutions led by affected Congolese communities.

Obstacles to freedom from fear and freedoms of expression, assembly, movement, and association are being: threatened, followed, terminated from work, exiled, arrested, tortured, disappeared, and murdered. The US replaced Belgium as the colonial power in the Congo, creating fear and terror that silences witnesses and punishes investigators, reporters, and community leaders. The US fails to provide information,

data, and health services to survivors and their injured descendants. We want the HRC to act for restoration of the communities and peoples affected by Shinkolobwe in a manner similar to that of HRC Resolution 51/35.^{xxiv}

The assaults on the bodies of those exposed to ionizing radiation and toxic pollution continue to cause an early death while new generations are exposed to forever-radiation impacts. Additionally, the mutagenic and teratogenic harms of ionizing radiation, some of which were suspected by the US during the Manhattan Project, continue today, arbitrarily depriving Congolese of life. While the US withholds medical treatment based on US scientific research, the US continues today to witness torture and killing of individual community members and the destruction of peoples and their communities that are affected by US uranium mining at Shinkolobwe mine, simply because their territory had something that the US wanted.

Conclusion

Since the Manhattan Project began until today, no one with power to remedy the situation pays attention to Congolese affected communities or expresses concern for our human value. US influence has weakened IAEA monitoring and reporting. IAEA, tasked with assessing such crises, fails to thoroughly report impacts, especially where affected communities are colonized, impoverished, or part of non-dominant states.^{xxv} The IAEA acted more as a law enforcement agency focused on the US interest of keeping their enemies from accessing the Congolese Peoples' uranium than as a safety agency that protected the Congolese Peoples from ionizing radiation or toxic pollution linked with the Manhattan Project. The international community should engage with sensitivities to Africans matters which violate the universal human rights to be recovered from the harm caused them by the same international community (ILO C169 Articles 3, 15.2, C170; Convention Against Torture Article 14).

The US, leading the international community, has violated Article 5m especially (b)-(e), of Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) by denying equality before the law to Congolese Peoples and their communities, which were hurt by the Manhattan Project. OHCHR should build out an independent commission focused on implementing all restorative measures with all instruments upheld but with thematic focus on this CERD and the Declaration on the Right to Development as understood by ICESCR, CERD and Environmental Conventions and related Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

US involvement in slavery^{xxvi} and systematic ecological destruction in the Congo to get uranium for nuclear weapons was followed by terrorist policies and practices to silence witnesses. This is the responsibility of the US state. The US is obliged under the ILO Conventions 169 and 170 to restore Congolese tribal peoples and workers who were harmed by the sudden and forceful demand by the US military for uranium to serve the

Manhattan Project.

This denial of freedoms and rights to life violates the UN Convention against Genocide, UN Convention against Torture (CAT), Convention against Corruption (CAC), United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and Covenant on Civil & Political Rights (ICCPR).

Further, this this denial of freedoms and rights to life also violates instruments that the US should ratify and implement: optional protocols to CAT, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC Art. 2-4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 22-24, 26-29, 31, 32, 37, 39, 40), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Art. 11) and optional protocols, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR Art. 1, 2, 6-13, 15), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD Art 8, 14), Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

Recommendations:

1. Decolonize the Shinkolobwe region. Call the US to stop limiting the free speech of peoples and their communities and their individual members.
2. Ensure that Shinkolobwe community and survivors of the uranium-nuclear industrial complex can freely and safely share their stories and oral histories, research data, information, and facts, and present their history of the US exploitation of the uranium mine in order to build US armaments with the Manhattan Project, including those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.^{xxvii} Put a dedicated Shinkolobwe mechanism in place to protect those involved in reporting. The local communities urgently need to establish a safe way for a UN Special Rapporteur inquire on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable livelihood with a non-toxic environment.
3. We ask the HRC to call on the US to uphold their obligations to UDHR Articles 1-11, 13-21, 23-25, 27-29. We ask the HRC to hold the US accountable for crimes against humanity, support the DRC to recover from US interference^{xxviii}, and end reprisals against those raising issues about Shinkolobwe, especially its relationship with the US. We ask for OHCHR-led international processes to ensure all can safely, research, discuss, or share memories or facts regarding Shinkolobwe.
4. Recovery for survivors, release those persecuted, imprisoned, or exiled because of US racketeering efforts to silence witnesses. investigate and report disappearance of persons and communities near Shinkolobwe. Support community members' return, even if only to visit sacred sites, ancestor's graves, and ceremonial grounds.
5. We ask HRC to call for an independent commission and related organizations or processes to be established to cooperate with the Shinkolobwe communities and to determine the technical assistance and capacity-building needs of affected peoples and their ecosystems as well as pursuing transitional justice in its efforts to address the nuclear legacy in Shinkolobwe.

6. The US must provide the location of all uranium- or nuclear-related waste and support and cooperate in permanent disposal of waste. The US must support research, monitoring, and data related to restoration of ecosystems as much as humanly possible.
7. Establish a center for research to prevent and treat the effects of ionizing radiation, to deal with dangers, examine logistics of cleanup, evacuations, return or relocation of survivors, monitoring radioactive and related toxin contamination, collecting data and providing assistance in case of accidents or radioactive releases. Support Community-led health boards to provide for affected workers and Shinkolobwe community members to continue research that is accountable to the affected communities and that does not repeat the mistakes of other such commissions. Ensure that affected communities can direct all research and studies and maintain rights to their own data.
8. Define the scope of what the US did in the Shinkolobwe region, including identifying and locating all workers and their families to determine how they were affected to provide affected communities' long-term restorative solution. Ensure that this as yet uninvestigated impact of slavery in uranium mines and related effects will never happen again. Recommend that the US ratify and implement the ILO Conventions 29, 77, 81, 87, 98, 111, 115, 121, 122, 124, 130, 131, 135, 138, 139, 141, 142, 143, 148, 154, 155, 156, 159, 161, 169, 170, 174, 187, 190, 191, P029 P081, P155 and conventions against slavery. Recommend that the US implement ILO C176.
9. The US to support the affected State and other international organizations and mechanisms in coordinated action to restore the freedom from fear and freedoms of speech, assembly, movement, and association regarding the ongoing disaster at Shinkolobwe with no retaliation or reprisal.
10. The US must share all data and information available related to human and ecosystem exposure or remediation or materials related to the mined. Ensure that it is presented in the language of affected peoples and their communities.
11. Ensure that displaced Congolese communities have the power to develop migrant solutions. We call for HRC to address in a dedicated space the intersectioning impact of climate crisis/disaster on food, water, energy, air, health, economic, along with uranium environmental impacts, trafficking and population displacement and propose that development disasters such as uranium mining and transport be included.
12. We call for IAEA to disclose all the data from 2004 (Oct.-Nov.) joint study with WHO exports led by UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).^{xxix} We request the study that concluded "No immediate risks to the environment were observed," stated by environmental expert Alain Pasche of the United Nations assessment team.
13. We call for US to support the UNEP/OCHA Unit could remedy the illicit trafficking of dangerous uranium ore from Shinkolobwe by supporting or helping the Congolese peoples and government to take concrete, sustainable measures to close it down. The health of peoples reflects the health of states.
14. We ask HRC to establish an investigation to find out the total number of deaths by 2004 landslide disaster where diggers extracted without technical support and without fundamental rules of safety and human dignity.

15. We call HRC to examine US exploration and exploitation agreements, and the conditions under which they were signed in Africa in relation to good governance and the rights of peoples to dispose of and benefit from their natural resources.
16. With urgency, we must adopt new international rules to strictly monitor and regulate all uranium mining, development, and trade that upholds the Charter and core international instruments.

ⁱ Nuclear Truth Project. *Challenging Nuclear Secrecy*. 2025 <https://nucleartruthproject.org/challenging-nuclear-secrecy>

ⁱⁱ Mohamed, S. (2024, October 28). Belgian colonialism in Africa: causes and consequences. World Policy Hub. <https://worldpolicyhub.com/belgian-colonialism-in-africa-causes-and-consequences>

ⁱⁱⁱ Sakon, F. W. (1973). *BELGIAN--ALLIED RELATIONS, 1940-1945*. University of Georgia.

^{iv} Helmreich, J. E. (1998). *United States relations with Belgium and the Congo, 1940-1960*. University of Delaware Press.

^v Williams, A. S. (2023). *White malice : the CIA and the neocolonisation of Africa*. Hurst Publishers.

^{vi} Lewis, D. (2021, February 28). The legacy of the involvement of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki - MIT Faculty Newsletter. <https://fnl.mit.edu/january-february-2021/the-legacy-of-the-involvement-of-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-in-the-bombs-dropped-on-hiroshima-and-nagasaki>.

^{vii} Openness, D. O. E. Human Radiation Experiments: Roadmap to the Project. *ACHRE Report*, "How Does Radiation Affect Humans", 1-5.

^{viii} Zoellner, T. (2024, February 20). A (Radioactive) cut in the earth that will not stay closed. Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-radioactive-cut-that-will-not-stay-closed>

^{ix} Openness, D. O. E. Human Radiation Experiments: Roadmap to the Project. *ACHRE Report*, "How Does Radiation Affect Humans", "Chapter 13: The Practice of Secrecy". (AEC proposed classification of experiment documents for reasons of "public relations.")

^x Williams, S. (1 September, 2016). How a rich uranium mine thrust the Congo into the centre of the Cold War. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/how-a-rich-uranium-mine-thrust-the-congo-into-the-centre-of-the-cold-war-64761>

^{xi} give the message that the uranium came from Canada, as a way of deflecting attention away from the Congo," (Susan Williams)

^{xii} Swain, F. (2022, February 28). The forgotten mine that built the atomic bomb. <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200803-the-forgotten-mine-that-built-the-atomic-bomb>

^{xiii} Nichols, K. D. (1987). *The road to Trinity*. William Morrow and Co. Inc., New York.

^{xiv} Roediger III, H. L., & Zerr, C. L. (2022). Who won World War II? Conflicting narratives among the allies. *Progress in Brain Research*, 274(1), 129-147. ("when asked why the US dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, most people of ten countries said it was to win the war")

^{xv} Honors of Distinction Magazine. (2024, November 9). The forgotten mine that built the atomic bomb. Honors of Distinction Magazine. <https://honorsofdistinctionmag.com/the-forgotten-mine-that-built-the-atomic-bomb>

^{xvi} Nukewatch. (2023, October 23). Before Hiroshima & Nagasaki there was Shinkolobwe. <https://nukewatchinfo.org/before-hiroshima-nagasaki-there-was-shinkolobwe>

^{xvii} Williams, S. (2018, July 31). Congolese uranium and the Cold War. New African Magazine. <https://newafricanmagazine.com/14835>

^{xviii} Mputubwele, N. (2023, August 21). The dark history 'Oppenheimer' didn't show. WIRED. <https://www.wired.com/story/the-dark-history-oppenheimer-didnt-show>

^{xix} De Witte, L. (2002). *The assassination of Lumumba*. Verso.

^{xx} Margaret Sekaggya, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Margaret Sekaggya : addendum, A/HRC/13/22/Add.2., UN Human Rights Council, 24 February 2010. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/677555> ("Golden Misabiko, president of the ratanga section of Association Africaine pour la défense des droits de l'Homme (ASADHO/ratanga, or African Association for the Defense of Human Rights) who was arrested on 24 July, 2009 following the publication of a report by ASADHO/ratanga on the clandestine exploitation of the Shinkolobwe uranium mine...") Such impacts

affect peoples' infrastructures.

^{xxi} Democratic Republic of the Congo: Assessment mission of the Shinkolobwe Uranium Mine (November 2004). OCHA. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-assessment-mission-shinkolobwe-uranium-mine-november-2004>

^{xxii} RDC(DRC). decret n 04/017 du 27 janvier 2004 portant classement en zone-interdite aux activites minières et/ou aux travaux de carrieres de la zone de shinkolobwe situee dans le territoire de kambove district du haut-katanga province du Katanga.

<https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Droit%20economique/Code%20Minier/D04.017.27.01.2004.htm>

^{xxiii} Uranium, cobalt, copper: The painful legacy of the Shinkolobwe mines in the DRC | Heinrich Böll Stiftung. (2023, October 9). Heinrich Böll Stiftung. <https://www.boell.de/en/2023/10/09/uranium-cobalt-copper-painful-legacy-shinkolobwe-mines-drc>

^{xxiv} Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 7 October 2022 51/35. Technical assistance and capacity-building to address the human rights implications of the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands.

<https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/RES/51/35>

^{xxv} Arno, M. G., Katanic Arno, J., Halter, D. A., Hamilton, I. S., & Berry, R. O. (2009). Radiological characterization of a Copper/cobalt mining and milling site-16322. <https://inis.iaea.org/records/kyd7q-g8536> (Radiological characterization was done to meet World Bank and International Finance Corporation Social & Environmental Sustainability standards. "Native villages" appear to be undisturbed by mining but data was not published.)

^{xxvi} Susan Williams (*Public Affairs*, 2016), 332 pp, *Spies in the Congo: America's Atomic Mission in World War II*

^{xxvii} Williams, S. (24 August, 2016). The link between uranium from the Congo and Hiroshima: a story of twin tragedies. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/the-link-between-uranium-from-the-congo-and-hiroshima-a-story-of-twin-tragedies-64329>

^{xxviii} The CIA undermined postcolonial Africa from the start. (2021, November 7).

<https://jacobin.com/2021/11/us-cia-intervention-africa-white-malice-susan-williams-book-review>

^{xxix} Democratic Republic of the Congo: Assessment mission of the Shinkolobwe Uranium Mine (2004, November 30). OCHA. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/democratic-republic-congo/democratic-republic-congo-assessment-mission-shinkolobwe-uranium-mine-november-2004> (From the sample they study team took, joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit addressed strong recommendation to ban access to the mine, saying that they have found particularly high uranium content of soil and water.)