

Press release

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AFREWATCH calls on the DRC authorities, in particular the National Minister of Mines and the Governor of Lualaba, to address the precarious and dangerous conditions of artisanal mining in this province.

The African Resources Watch, AFREWATCH, an organization that promotes and defends human rights in the natural resources sector, is concerned about the repeated rockfalls at the artisanal mining sites on the COMIDE mining license, a subsidiary of ERG, around the village of Kisankala, in the Lubudi territory, about 50 km from the town of Kolwezi.

These landslides, two in May alone, which occurred on 07 and 11 May 2025 respectively, have bereaved several families of diggers, the number of whom has not been communicated by the Lualaba authorities. According to several corroborating sources, rescue workers are trying to dig out other diggers who are still under the rubble today.

These diggers, because of the lack of Artisanal Exploitation Zones (ZEA) available to them, and with the complicity of the political and security authorities and the public services, are invading the concessions of private companies covered by research or exploitation permits, through cooperatives owned by their relatives. In the case of Kinsakala (Sierra quarry), the COMIBAKAT cooperative, which invaded the ERG concession, is said by several sources in Kolwezi to benefit from the political support of Mr. Alain KAPUPA and other individuals who are close relatives of the governor of Lualaba and the presidential family respectively. Unfortunately, AFREWATCH notes that this is not an isolated case. Any cooperative operating in a so-called "Tolerance Zone" has political or military protection at provincial level or in Kinshasa. In these areas, the precarious working conditions and lack of safety measures are the main cause of these accidents, which unfortunately are recurrent and long-lasting. AFREWATCH regrets the inaction of the authorities, which is further exacerbated by the conflict of interests, given that they cannot take action against their own interests or those of their relatives.

To deal with this situation, AFREWATCH recommends:

1. To the National Minister of Mines

- ✓ Take appropriate measures to put an end to the ordeal of artisanal miners in the DRC by providing them with proper artisanal mining zones, as required by the revised mining code of 2018;

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- ✓ To clean up the artisanal mining sector, which is now being invaded by public services and individuals who have no standing, and above all to put an end to cases of conflict of interest involving the provincial authorities and people using the name of the presidential family.

2. To the civil residence of the Head of State

- ✓ To carry out investigations to put an end to the bad practice of cooperative managers calling on people who are members of the presidential family to invade the concessions of private and public companies and to make small-scale operators work without protective measures;
- ✓ To make public the report of its investigations, to clear the name of the presidential family on which everyone is casting opprobrium; and to have the guilty punished.

3. To the provincial government

- ✓ Ensure that members of the provincial government, high-ranking members of the security services or their family members do not hold interests in cooperatives in accordance with the Public Officials Code and the Mining Code (article 27);
- ✓ To play its full part in ensuring the safety of citizens and their property, while taking measures to guarantee safe working conditions in areas where diggers operate.

4. To SAEMAP

- ✓ To ensure that artisanal operators are grouped together in cooperatives and to assist and support them so that their activities in the areas where they operate are organized in the best possible conditions;
- ✓ To denounce all cooperatives whose real owners are the political and security authorities or their relatives.

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