

A U.S. advocacy group has filed a lawsuit against Apple, alleging the tech giant relies on minerals linked to conflict and human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, claims Apple has repeatedly denied.

International Rights Advocates, or IRAdvocates, a Washington-based nonprofit that uses litigation to address human rights violations, filed the complaint Tuesday in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. The group said Apple's supply chain still includes cobalt, tin, tantalum, and tungsten connected to child and forced labor and armed groups in Congo and Rwanda.

The lawsuit seeks a court ruling that Apple's practices violate consumer protection law, an injunction to halt allegedly deceptive marketing, and reimbursement of legal costs. It does not seek monetary damages or class certification.

IRAdvocates has previously sued Tesla, Apple, and other tech companies over cobalt sourcing, but U.S. courts dismissed that case last year. French prosecutors dropped a related case against Apple subsidiaries in December, citing insufficient evidence. A similar criminal complaint in Belgium remains under investigation.

The complaint names three Chinese smelters — Ningxia Orient, Jiujiang JinXin, and Jiujiang Tanbre as processors of coltan allegedly smuggled through Rwanda after armed groups seized mines in eastern Congo. U.N. and Global Witness investigators have linked this material to Apple's supply chain.

A 2025 University of Nottingham study cited in the complaint found evidence of forced and child labor at Congolese sites tied to Apple suppliers. The three smelters did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Congo produces about 70% of the world's cobalt and significant amounts of tin, tantalum, and tungsten, used in phones, batteries, and computers.

Apple has repeatedly denied sourcing minerals from conflict zones or using forced labor, citing supplier audits and its code of conduct. In December, the company said there was "no reasonable basis" to conclude that any smelters or refiners in its supply chain financed armed groups in Congo or neighboring countries.

Authorities in Congo say armed groups use mineral profits to fund conflict that has killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands. Apple said 76% of the cobalt in its devices was recycled in 2024, but IRAdvocates contends its accounting allows

mixing with ore from conflict zones.