https://internationalviewpoint.org/DRC-a-region-destroyed-by-a-French-company



Democratic Republic of Congo

DRC: a region destroyed by a French company

- IV Online magazine - 2026 - IVP622 - November 2026 -



Publication date: Thursday 19 November 2026

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

Perenco is a French oil production company specializing in buying up end-of-life oil wells, sold by major companies such as TotalEnergies, Shell, or ExxonMobil. By selling these wells at low prices, these multinationals avoid costly end-of-production work, while Perenco continues to extract and sell oil that is increasingly dense and viscous.

Large-scale pollution

A win-win relationship for these companies, but a lose-lose one for the environment and the population. Perenco is known for its extensive use of tax havens, but also for its particularly polluting activities. Recently, an investigation by Human Rights Watch revealed the responsibility of this company in environmental degradation and endangering populations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The oil fields are located in Muanda, the country's only coastal region, which stretches for about forty kilometres. The company uses flaring, a much less expensive process that involves burning gases present during extraction. These practices are banned, including by the DRC, because they are extremely polluting. Indeed, they release carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide.

Perenco also incinerates petroleum waste, such as drilling mud and waxy hydrocarbon deposits. These operations are located near housing: some torches are only 80 meters from the houses. Residents complain of various illnesses, including respiratory diseases, eye problems, headaches, and dizziness.

Towards the end of impunity?

Added to this are the reservoirs where the oil is stored, which regularly overflow when tropical rains hit the region. A government audit confirms the obsolescence of the pipelines, a consequence of a lack of maintenance and investment. By crossing fields and waterways, these facilities cause leaks that contaminate soils, groundwater, and rivers.

But Perenco's management prefers to shift its responsibilities onto the population. It accuses them of being the cause of these pollutions, by trying to steal oil or washing their vehicles.

In 2013, a Congolese Senate inquiry commission found lead and mercury levels in drinking water far exceeding WHO recommendations. In 2025, universities in the DRC and Cameroon recorded hydrocarbon pollution around oil wells operated by Perenco.

Although the regulations provide an exception to the ban on flaring in case of there being no alternative method, neither Perenco nor the DRC officials are able to confirm that this flaring was authorized.

The Sherpa and Friends of the Earth associations, after several years of legal battles, obtained a trial aimed at establishing the civil liability of the parent company in France for the ecological damage and dangers faced by the

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine

communities of Muanda. A conviction would create a precedent likely to curb, worldwide, the harmful activities of these rogue bosses against nature and peoples.

10 November 2026

*Translated by **International Viewpoint*** from **l'Anticapitaliste**.

PS:

If you like this article or have found it useful, please consider donating towards the work of International Viewpoint. Simply follow this link: Donate then enter an amount of your choice. One-off donations are very welcome. But regular donations by standing order are also vital to our continuing functioning. See the last paragraph of this article for our bank account details and take out a standing order. Thanks.

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine