

[Home](#)
[News Releases](#)
[About HRW](#)
[Get Involved](#)
[Publications](#)
[Info by Country](#)

[Africa](#)
[Americas](#)
[Asia](#)
[Europe/Central Asia](#)
[Middle East/N.](#)
[Africa](#)
[United States](#)

[Global Issues](#)

[Arms](#)
[Children's Rights](#)
[Economic, Social & Cultural Rights](#)
[HIV/AIDS](#)
[International Justice](#)
[LGBT Rights](#)
[Prisons](#)
[Refugees](#)
[Torture and Abuse](#)
[United Nations](#)
[Women's Rights](#)
[More...](#)

Previous Months

[October 2004](#)
[November-December 2004](#)
[January 2005](#)
[February 2005](#)
[April 2005](#)
[May 2005](#)
[June 2005](#)

Impact

July 2005

- [Congo: HRW Report Halts Purchase of Tainted Gold](#)
- [Argentina: Court Strikes Down Military Amnesty](#)
- [Uganda: Torture Committee Confirms HRW Findings](#)

D.R. Congo: HRW Report Halts Purchase of Tainted Gold

A Human Rights Watch report highlighting two multinational gold corporations for their connection to abuses by rebel groups in northeastern Congo has prompted one company to agree to halt the purchase of "tainted gold" and the other to investigate its operations in the region. Our [report](#), released in South Africa in June, traces how Congolese gold smuggled to Uganda and



A child miner works in the grueling conditions of an open pit gold mine in Watsa, northeastern Congo. ©2004 Marcus Bleasdale.

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- [Latest News](#)
- [E-mail updates](#)

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- [Who we are, what we do](#)
- [What others say about us](#)
- [Financial statements](#)

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[Film Festival](#)
[Photo Galleries](#)
[Audio / Video](#)
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[RSS](#)

then bought by international companies supports armed groups responsible for committing horrific human rights abuses against Congolese civilians. Human Rights Watch has documented the massacre, torture, rape, and mutilation of tens of thousands of civilians by rebel groups since the start of the Congolese war in 1998.

Swiss gold refinery Metalor Technologies has agreed to end its purchase of gold from Uganda "because of controversy over the origin of the supplies following investigations by U.N. experts and Human Rights Watch." AngloGold Ashanti, a South African-based company whose relationship to a murderous local rebel leader was documented in our report, has publicly committed to make no further payments to armed groups and has begun an internal investigation into its activities in the region. The company has said that it will support the development of a gold monitoring body (a key recommendation of our report) comprised of companies, civil society, governments, and multilateral institutions to ensure that gold production in the Congo is conducted in a manner that respects human rights. Since the release of Human Rights Watch's report, the primary Uganda-based traders have halted their operations for fear of facing legal suits or further investigations by the United Nations.

Read [more](#) about our work in Congo.

Argentina: Court Strikes Down Military

international community in the cause of human rights for all."

[Link to Us](#)

Amnesty

In a landmark victory against impunity, Argentina's Supreme Court struck down two amnesty laws that prevent military officers from facing prosecution for human rights violations. Human Rights Watch has long pressed for the repeal of these laws, which allow hundreds of military officials to escape accountability for their role in the abductions, torture and killings committed during the country's military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983. At least 14,000 people were 'disappeared' during that time, known as Argentina's 'dirty war.' In meetings with the Argentine government in 2003, we called for an end to amnesty laws; Argentina's Congress annulled these laws that same year. Human Rights Watch hopes that the recent Supreme Court decision will set a precedent for other countries in the region, such as Chile, Uruguay, and Colombia, where amnesty laws still exist. Read [more](#) about the Supreme Court's ruling.

Uganda: Torture Committee Confirms HRW Findings

In its annual meeting, the [U.N. Committee Against Torture](#) relied heavily on testimony gathered by Human Rights Watch in forming its findings and recommendations on Uganda. In conjunction with the Uganda-based Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, Human Rights Watch submitted a 14-page [briefing](#) to the Committee detailing the torture of political opponents, alleged rebels and criminal suspects by Ugandan military intelligence agents, police and

security forces. Human Rights Watch found that detainees have been held indefinitely in unofficial places of detention called "safe houses" where they are tortured. The Committee called on the government of Uganda to end impunity for violators of human rights and urged it to abolish "safe houses." Separately, feeling the pressure of the international community and following direct intervention by Human Rights Watch, the Ugandan government released on bail two opposition parliamentarians whom it had arrested on politically motivated charges. Read [more](#) about our work in Uganda.

IN THE NEWS:

[Enforceable Corporate Standards are Needed](#)

In the *Financial Times*, Executive Director Kenneth Roth argues that governments, and specifically the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, should adopt enforceable standards of corporate social responsibility.

[Vietnam Must Transition to Democracy](#)

In the *New York Sun*, Media Director Minky Worden urges the U.S. government to confront Vietnam, whose transition to a market-based economy has yet to be accompanied by a respect for human rights.

[Government Smothers Activism in Pakistan](#)

Pakistan Researcher Ali Dayan Hasan reports in the *International Herald Tribune* on

the public beating and arrest of human rights activists in Pakistan under President Musharraf's repressive "mullah-military alliance."

[Protect Women's Rights in Uganda](#)

In the *Daily Monitor*, Women's Rights Division Deputy Director Janet Walsh exposes the Ugandan government's failure to support a bill that would criminalize domestic rape and protect women in marriage.

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