

Felipe Pallares

# "I'm Sorry"

Will we ever hold Apple accountable for their  
human rights violations?



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Apple has had a history of being caught up in human rights controversies for their immoral work environments found throughout their lower supply chain. Often Apple has taken to shift responsibility to suppliers for the conditions their unofficial workforce are put through to make their product a reality.

In 2012 The New York Times published a slam piece on the irresponsible and immoral work environment seen in the outsourced factories in China owned by Taiwanese electronics contract manufacturer Foxconn. The article details the last day of 22 year old college graduate Lai Xiaodong, one of the 4 people whose life was taken by an explosion in the Foxconn iPhone factory in Chengdu caused by improper management of combustible aluminum dust buildup.

The article revealed that this wasn't an isolated incident of safety being an issue for Apple's outsourced partners. In January 2010, Chinese workers at a factory owned by Wintek, one of Apple's manufacturing partners, went on strike after rumours speculated that they were being exposed

to toxins while working there. News investigations revealed that over a hundred employees were injured by n-hexane, a chemical that can cause nerve damage and in some cases paralysis.

Aside from exposing safety concerns related to improper practices at Apple manufacturing factories, the article provided a detailed account of the day to day experience of their employees, exposing the long work hours, exposure to mishandled chemicals, and unfair wages characteristic of Apple's manufacturing level. They also saw in their investigation that child labour was a common practice within these factories seeing up to 91 cases in an audit to Apple's suppliers in 2010 (Beckett, 2012).

Flash forward to September 2019. China Labor Watch, a nonprofit advocacy group for worker rights, released a report accusing the Zhengzhou Foxconn factory of numerous labour rights violations, most of all having already been exposed years ago. The report is based on the findings of covert investigators employed at

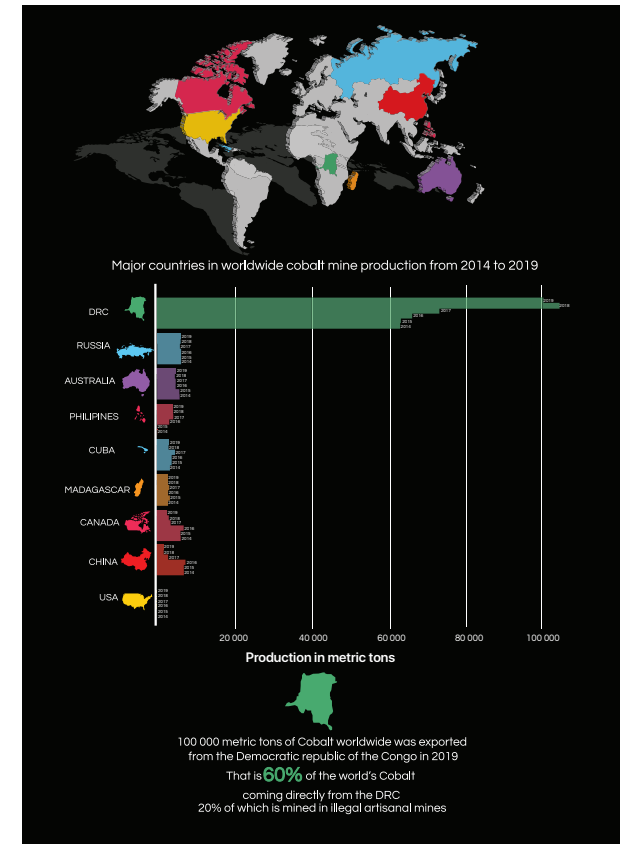
Zhengzhou Foxconn factory, one of whom worked there for over four years.

Among the findings, the investigation revealed that working conditions have remained relatively unchanged over the years, with wages insufficient to support a family living in Zhengzhou, and social insurance contributions falling short of the legal requirement. The report additionally claims that Foxconn has abused limitations on overtime and dispatch laborers as specified under Chinese labour law, featuring the standard utilization of student laborers and enormous extents of impermanent momentary dispatch laborers to deal with the deluge of requests during peak seasons. In December 2019 a Guardian article named Apple as litigants in a claim documented in Washington DC by human right firm International Rights Advocates for 14 guardians and kids from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Their latest controversy detailed in the suit was the aftereffect of an investigation launched by anti-slavery economist Siddharth Kara. The suit argues that the

defendants benefited financially from the death and disfigurement of children who mined for cobalt under their supply chain. This cobalt being used to make batteries in cell phones, workstations and electric vehicles. Other defendants in this included Google, Dell, Microsoft and Tesla.

The families argue in the claim that their children were working illegally at mines owned by UK mining company Glencore, incentivised by extreme poverty to place themselves in these dangerous environments.

Based on observing the impacts of human rights related controversies during these times compared with their consistent climb in yearly revenue, it's hard to say whether or not this lawsuit will make a great impact on the public image of Apple as their power as a staple of modern life makes them infallible in the public eye.



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