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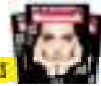
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# WORLD NEWS

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## London NGO Quits the Kimberley Process Over Thriving Blood-Diamond Trade

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**Global Witness, which helped set up the watchdog network, says the program is toothless and has failed to halt the trade in conflict diamonds by Zimbabwe and other scofflaw countries.**

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This holiday season, the question for spouses and lovers receiving diamond jewelry shouldn't be whether he went to Jared—or Tiffany, or Macy's, or any corner jewelry store in the United States.

An international agreement among diamond importing and exporting countries meant to prevent consumers from inadvertently buying so-called blood diamonds has been declared a failure and a lie by one of its main architects, the London-based NGO Global Witness, which bailed out of the program Monday. The Kimberley Process, implemented in 2003 to end the trade in conflict diamonds, not only has failed to do so, the group says, but it may well be helping tainted stones make it to the market under cover of its own guarantees.

"Nearly nine years after the Kimberley Process was launched, the sad truth is that most consumers still cannot be sure where their diamonds come from, nor whether they are financing armed violence or abusive regimes," Charmian Gooch, a founding director of Global Witness, said in a statement. "It has become an accomplice to diamond laundering—whereby dirty diamonds are mixed in with clean gems."

Global Witness's very public vote of no confidence is just the latest blow to the Kimberley Process's credibility over its handling of diamonds mined by Zimbabwe, considered by many to be the first real test of the scheme's ability to ensure that diamonds mined in contravention of basic human rights are not permitted into a retail display case. The issue of conflict diamonds first came to light at the turn of the century, when bloodthirsty rebels in Sierra Leone hacked off the limbs of civilians to scare them away from that country's rich mines, allowing the rebels to sell gem-quality diamonds into mainstream channels to finance their campaign of terror. Sierra Leone's plight was highlighted in the 2006 Leonardo DiCaprio movie Blood Diamond. Lately, however, Zimbabwe has become the poster child for conflict diamonds.



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Shannon Stapleton / Reuters / Landov

One of 75 Kimberley Process participants, Zimbabwe has rampant human- rights abuses at its Marange diamond fields that have been documented not only by organizations such as Human Rights Watch and news networks such as the BBC, but by the Kimberley Process itself. Since 2006, government forces loyal to President [Robert Mugabe](#)'s Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front party (ZANU-PF) have plundered the diamond fields, beating, killing, and sexually assaulting civilian miners. State security units use forced labor and child miners to dig their diamonds.

If ever there was a situation the Kimberley Process was meant to address, this seems to be it. But rather than act decisively to kick Zimbabwe out of the club and condemn its actions, the Kimberley Process has allowed it to continue. At issue, at least in part, is its own definition of conflict diamonds, which are defined as those mined by rebel groups fighting against an established government. It doesn't address violent tyranny by a government against its own people.

Bowing to political pressure from Zimbabwe's regional neighbors—and hamstrung by its perplexing policy that every decision, including whether to suspend a member for noncompliance, must be unanimous—the KP greenlighted Zimbabwean exports this summer, declaring them to be in compliance with its rules. That means that in the eyes of the Kimberley Process, [Zimbabwean diamonds are just as conflict-free](#) as Russian or South African diamonds.

'If you're going to buy a  
diamond, buy from jewelers who  
are open about what they  
actually do and don't know.'

That decision has led to a blowback in the diamond community, whose continued credibility in the eyes of the shopping public hinges on its claim that retailers aren't selling blood diamonds to unsuspecting buyers. Martin Rapaport, who runs one of the world's largest independent diamond exchanges, banned Zimbabwean diamonds from his network, whether or not they have Kimberley Process certificates. It was yet [another no-confidence vote](#) in the KP's ability to keep the supply lines clean.

Just two months after the Kimberley Process declared Zimbabwean stones to be conflict-free, Human Rights Watch [reported](#) on Aug. 31 that "Zimbabwe police and private security guards employed by mining companies in the Marange diamond fields are shooting, beating and unleashing attack dogs on poor, local unlicensed miners."

Global Witness, which first raised the issue of conflict diamonds in 1998, had finally had enough.

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Micklemoose

3 Days Ago

The only real way to be certain you aren't getting a blood diamond is simply not to buy them. Diamonds are too easy a material to abuse for criminal purposes. Even if they are mined cleanly, they are simply too useful as a method of laundering money.

Do your wife a favor and buy her some nice artistic metal jewelry. Better yet, buy her a week's vacation at an island resort without a number the kids can call her at.

barretlikes this.

REPLY

AsarHondo

3 Days Ago

The only reason that this group is making a big stink is because the GREAT ROBERT MUGABE SAID AFRICA FOR BLACK AFRICANS. If the diamond minds were in the hands of so called white people there would not be peep out of this whites organization supported by white mine diamond owners.

REPLY

Micklemoose

3 Days Ago

I hope the ghosts of those black africans that have been butchered by his regime haunt you throughout eternity.

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