



global witness

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Return of the blood diamond: how the crisis in Zimbabwe is undermining international efforts to eradicate conflict diamonds

Zimbabwe's Zanu PF political and military elite are seeking to capture the country's diamond wealth through a combination of state-sponsored violence and the legally questionable introduction of opaque joint-venture companies, a new report from Global Witness reveals today.

Return of the Blood Diamond criticises the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, set up to end the trade in conflict diamonds, for repeatedly failing to react effectively to the crisis in Zimbabwe. Partnership Africa Canada also released a report today, examining the political economy of the diamond industry in Zimbabwe. The Kimberley Process meets in Israel next week.

"Over the past three years, the national army has visited appalling abuses on civilians in Marange's diamond fields. Nobody has been held to account for these crimes, and now it turns out that the joint venture companies nominally brought in to improve conditions are directly linked to the Zanu PF and military elite. Thanks to the impunity and violence in Zimbabwe, blood diamonds are back on the international market," said Elly Harrowell, Global Witness campaigner.

The Global Witness report describes how the Minister of Mines, Obert Mpofu, a Zanu PF stalwart, has been at the forefront of efforts to block oversight of the joint venture companies, Canadile Miners and Mdaba Diamonds. He has imposed his allies as board members, and sidelined the state mining company, ZMDC. Mbada Diamonds is chaired by Robert Mhlanga, former Air Vice Marshal, and erstwhile star witness at Morgan Tsvangirai's trial for treason.

"The investment deals have been done with scant regard for legal process against a background of violence and intimidation, and are dangerously lacking in transparency. This leaves the door wide open for state looting and corruption, and raises the very real possibility of internationally certified diamonds financing renewed political violence in Zimbabwe," said Harrowell.

Instead of suspending Zimbabwe for flagrant breaches of its code, members of the Kimberley Process have settled on a weak compromise agreement, which Zimbabwean authorities have repeatedly breached. Indeed, Minister Mpofu was recently quoted in the press as saying, "we are going to benefit from our diamonds whether with the KP or not".

"Mpofu and his cronies have demonstrated a flagrant disregard for the scheme's rules. They seem intent on pursuing their violent, self-serving exploitation of the country's diamond wealth. Nobody should be under the illusion that this is about anything other than lining the pockets of Zanu PF and their allies, who are being squeezed by economic sanctions," said Harrowell.

Global Witness is calling on international governments to suspend Zimbabwe from the Kimberley Process scheme until it can prove its diamonds aren't bankrolling violence and abuse.

Zimbabwe must immediately withdraw the army from the diamond fields, hold rights abusers to account and suspend imports and exports of rough diamonds until the diamond sector meets international standards. It should also suspend the introduction of new investors into Marange until the legality of current joint ventures can be established, and effective oversight implemented.

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