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## **Tainted Love: blood diamonds still cast shadow over Valentines Day**

Diamonds mined illegally in conflict zones are still finding their way onto the international market and being sold in cities such as London, New York and Paris, warned Global Witness today. The continued existence of so-called 'blood diamonds' poses a serious problem for consumers looking to demonstrate their love with a diamond ring this Valentines Day (Feb 14).

Proposing on Valentines Day is a hard one to get right. Roughly 10% of all marriage proposals are made on the big day, but 80% of those on the receiving end feel that this betrays a lack of imagination. And they're the lucky ones – a recent survey in the US showed that 15% of women send themselves flowers on Valentines Day.

The last thing anyone with the conviction to make it as far as the jewellers needs is added anxiety about who might have suffered to produce their ring. So Global Witness is encouraging consumers to demand that jewellers provide more information about where their products are sourced.

“Consumer pressure will be vital to ensure that the diamond industry finally acts to eliminate conflict diamonds once and for all,” said Elly Harrowell, campaigner at Global Witness. “Some progress has been made in recent years but the unpalatable truth is that around the world civilians are still suffering terribly as a consequence of the diamond trade.”

In 2003, following a global outcry about the problem of conflict diamonds, an international certification scheme was established to monitor the trade. Countries who signed up to the Kimberley Process were obliged to demonstrate that their diamonds were not bankrolling brutality and conflict.

The scheme set an important precedent and has helped diminish the trade in conflict diamonds. However loop holes, poor regulation, and problems with implementation mean that consumers cannot place full faith in it. One significant challenge currently facing the scheme is the case of Zimbabwe, which despite evidence of widespread human rights abuses and military presence in mines, remains a member and continues to export diamonds.

“Kimberley Process members need to get serious about stamping out the systematic abuse of civilians in countries like Zimbabwe, otherwise the credibility of the whole scheme will be undermined” said Harrowell. “They will be more inclined to act if they hear a strong message from retailers and consumers that continued links with such violence will no longer be tolerated.”

Consumers can also put pressure on retailers to do their bit by ensuring every link in the diamonds supply chain is stringently checked from mine to shop floor. Questions consumers can ask include:

- Do you know where the diamonds you sell come from?
- Can I see a copy of your company's policy on conflict diamonds?
- Can you show me a written guarantee from your suppliers that your diamonds are conflict free?
- How is the supply chain audited?

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### Notes

- Global Witness has been campaigning on blood diamonds for 12 years. We are observer members of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. In 2003 we were co-nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for our work on conflict diamonds
- Sources for Valentines Day statistics: Diamond Information Centre, US Census Bureau
- For more information on Global Witness' work on conflict diamonds visit [www.globalwitness.org](http://www.globalwitness.org)