

International rights group, Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), has published a report exposing individuals involved in diamond smuggling in Zimbabwe, particularly in Chiadzwa, Marange. The document, *Diamonds and Clubs: The Militarized Control of Diamonds and Power in Zimbabwe*, reveals that illegal diamond deals are currently sustaining the Zanu-PF regime, destabilizing the Government of National unity (GNU) and fuelling economic desperation. The report also highlights government-sponsored human rights abuses taking place in and around the diamonds fields, including the arrest of activist Farai Maguwu. Finally, PAC calls for the release of Maguwu and for the suspension of Zimbabwe from the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, a process designed to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the international market.

**I. Diamonds: “Starving the national treasury of any revenues from Marange is their most effective weapon.”<sup>1</sup>**

Corruption within Zimbabwe’s diamond industry is yet another example of the country’s long history of expropriation for political and economic gains. Indeed, according to PAC, those involved in the seizure of white-owned farm or the manipulation of foreign currency exchange are the same who are currently benefitting from diamond smuggling in Chiadzwa, the district in which Marange is situated, and River Ranch in the south.<sup>2</sup> Farm invasions by Zanu war veterans led to the destruction of the country’s agriculture industry, food and energy shortages and inflation. The issue of who controls the diamonds’ revenues is therefore crucial as it could greatly improve Zimbabwe’s economy. Instead, the diamonds from Marange and River Range continue to benefit a few individuals instead of the people of Zimbabwe as whole.

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<sup>1</sup> “Diamonds and Clubs: The Militarized Control of Diamonds and Power in Zimbabwe”, *Partnership Africa Canada*, June, 2010, pg 16.

<sup>2</sup> PAC, pg 7.

In *Diamonds and Clubs: The Militarized Control of Diamonds and Power in Zimbabwe*, PAC argues that Zanu-PF elements, such as Zanu-PF Minister of Defence Emmerson Mnangagwa and General Mujuru, and members of Joint Operations Command (JOC), Zimbabwe's security organization, are using diamonds revenue to undermine the unity government created in 2009 and maintain Zanu PF's power by starving the national treasury.

General Mujuru, husband of Vice President Mujuru, is said to be the owner of River Range, his goal being to control Zanu. Indeed, PAC emphasizes that while the two political parties in government are fighting for power, Zanu PF officials are fighting for the control of the party itself if Mugabe was to retire or die.<sup>3</sup> Minister of Mines Obert Mpofu himself is benefiting from the diamonds and is intimately involved in the running of Canadile, one of government's controversial joint venture partners in Marange. Particularly heavily involved in diamond smuggling are members of JOC, an organization put in place to safeguard Mugabe's presidency and made up of army generals, police commissioners and the minister of Defence. Most Zanu-PF political elites are linked to Zimbabwe's military establishment

As a result of Zimbabwe's lack of transparency and the indifference of local authorities, illegal diamonds without a Kimberley Process Certificate have found their way to places like Hong Kong, Belgium, Dubai and Mozambique, particularly in Vila de Manica. PAC warns that Zimbabwe may plunge into chaos if diamond smuggling is not stopped.<sup>4</sup>

## **II Human Rights Abuses on Zimbabwe's Diamond Fields**

Human Rights abuses in Chiadzwa have long been reported. According to New York based Human rights Watch, although killings have diminished in recent months, the armed forces

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg 3.

and the police on the ground continue to control the fields, leading to systematic human rights violations such as forced labour, physical abuse, dispossession, and harassment of local villagers who find themselves forced to dig for no fee.<sup>5</sup> The government has also announced that 4,207 of households would be relocated in order to expand diamond mining. HRW believes that the resettlement area lacks basic facilities and will not meet minimum international standards.

Local researchers and activists have also been persecuted. Most notable is the recent arrest of Centre for Research and Development Director (CRD) Farai Maguwu. The organization had been investigating ongoing human rights abuses on the diamond fields and Maguwu is accused of leaking documents belonging to JOC to Kimberley Process monitor for Marange, Abbey Chikane.<sup>6</sup> According to SW Radio Africa, the document shows that no security sector reform has been made under the Global Political Agreement (under the GPA, JOC was supposed to monitor rights abuses) and that security forces have continued illegal mining in Marange. Maguwu's arrest and the harassment of his family are yet another attempt by authorities to intimidate those seeking to expose ongoing abuses and corruption in the diamond sector.

Rights groups such as PAC, Human Rights Watch and Global Witness have called for an end to the state-sponsored violence.<sup>7</sup> But while Prime Minister Tsvangirai called transparent investigation into allegation of human rights abuses and pushed for compliance with KP minimum requirements, little has been done by the government. Indeed, when it was formed, the Unity Government divided ministries between the two parties and the current Mines Minister in Obert Mpofu from Zanu-PF.

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<sup>5</sup> "Deliberate Chaos: Ongoing Human Rights Abuses in the Marange Diamond Fields in Zimbabwe", *Human Rights Watch*, June, 2010, pg 5.

<sup>6</sup> "Chikane Slams Diamond Activist", *The Herald*, June 9, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Global Witness, "Global Witness rejects claim that diamonds are clean", *Global Witness.org*, June 8, 2010. [http://www.globalwitness.org/media\\_library\\_detail.php/989/en/global\\_witness\\_rejects\\_claim\\_that\\_zimbabwe\\_diamonds\\_are\\_clean](http://www.globalwitness.org/media_library_detail.php/989/en/global_witness_rejects_claim_that_zimbabwe_diamonds_are_clean) (accessed June 22, 2010).

### **III. Zimbabwe and the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme**

In its report, PAC strongly criticizes the Kimberley Process's attitude towards Zimbabwe and its failure to condemn the obvious corruption and human rights violations taking place in the country's diamond sector. The KPCS is an international diamond trade monitor introduced by the United Nations to certify the origin of rough diamonds and stem the trade of conflict diamonds. In November 2009, the KP considered suspending Zimbabwe's membership but refrained from it and gave it until June 2010 to improve its adherence. Abbey Chikane from South Africa was then appointed to monitor the process. A first report issued by Chikane played down the abuses taking place and in June, it was announced that the KP would most likely certify Chiadzwa's diamonds, leading rights groups to call for a reform of the Kimberley Process and particularly for a redefinition of the term "blood diamond." They argue that narrow definition of "blood diamond" means that countries such as Zimbabwe have been allowed to escape.<sup>8</sup> The KPCS defines conflict diamonds as gems used by rebel movements to finance wars against legitimate governments. PAC therefore demands that the KP broaden its mandate to include human rights violations committed by governments. Moreover, PAC argues that because Zanu-PF political elites are linked to Zimbabwe's military establishment, it should be considered as a "rebel movement" opposed to the democratic governance of Zimbabwe."<sup>9</sup>

Government officials and representatives of the two joint ventures, Mbada and Canadile, have been trying to present themselves as legitimate and to recognize the KP's authority yet this strategy has been adopted only to soften some of the Kimberley Process' members. KP Monitor Chikane's role in the arrest of Farai Maguwu has also been widely questioned as some believe

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<sup>8</sup> PAC, pg 24.

<sup>9</sup> PAC, pg 2.

that he is responsible for handing over evidence to security agents. PAC stated that the situation constituted a "massive breach of trust and challenge to the future of the KP in Zimbabwe".<sup>10</sup>

The KP held meetings June 21-23 in Israel in order to review Zimbabwe's case yet the members of the KP failed to reach an agreement on whether the country's diamonds should be certified as conflict-free. Meanwhile, Zimbabwe had already threatened to pull out of the KP if it does not get approval to export diamonds.<sup>11</sup> Minister Mpfu declared: "Those of you who dream of regime change, there will never be regime change in Zimbabwe. We fought for our liberation and we are ready to fight again."<sup>12</sup> He added Zimbabwe would be "immediately exporting its diamond stockpiles because we are KP compliant and we need the money to drive the economy forward."<sup>13</sup> A delegate present at the conference also expressed his concern, stating that "there is a growing concern from the KP that the Zimbabwean diamonds will be sold on the black market, especially in Asian markets, if it is not able to sell diamonds on the market."<sup>14</sup>

#### **IV. Zimbabwean Media Reaction**

The government's main newspaper, *The Herald*, has unsurprisingly continuously denied the existence of "blood diamonds" in Zimbabwe and, much like Minister Obert Mpfu, it argues that the country has now complied to the KP minimum requirements, stating that "Zimbabwe has patiently and diligently followed the recommendations of the KPCS."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, *The Herald* defined the activists' and the UN's attempts to have Zimbabwe expelled from the KP as a "plot," an attempt to "push Western agendas in Zimbabwe."<sup>16</sup> The newspaper also announced that Chikane himself apparently reported Maguwu to the authorities, therefore leading to his arrest.

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<sup>10</sup> PAC, pg 22.

<sup>11</sup> "We can do without the KPCS", *The Herald*, May 31, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> "Diamonds remain banned", SW Radio Africa, June 24, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Farai Mutsaka, "KP deadlocked over sale of diamonds", *Zimbabwe Independent*, June 24, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Violet Gonda, "State Threatens to Pull out of the Kimberley Process", SW Radio Africa, June 22, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> "We can do without the KPCS", *The Herald*, May 31, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> Hebert Zharare, "Diamond experts face new threat", *The Herald*, June 16, 2010.

Chikane is said to have heavily criticized Maguwu for illegally giving him secret state documents, arguing that this move could have to a diplomatic stand-off between Zimbabwe and his country South Africa.<sup>17</sup> The Herald has also continuously praised the support of countries such as Israel, India, Russia and several African nations while unsurprisingly criticizing their perpetual “detractors,” the US and the EU.

In one of their column, a writer for the *Financial Gazette* argues that the detractors’ attempts to call the stones “blood diamonds” is linked to the economic sanctions imposed on the country and that the whole should therefore been seen as conspiracy. The newspaper therefore calls for the Obert Mpofu to walk away from “this silly KP outfit and do our own thing.”<sup>18</sup> The writer adds that diamonds should be sold “away from the watchful eye of the KP.”<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, Zimbabwean independent newspapers such as *The Standard* and the *Zimbabwe Independent* have decried the Kimberley Process’s failure to stop the trade of conflict diamonds and have both published summaries of PAC and Human Rights Watch investigations.<sup>20</sup> The Standard has been particularly condemnatory of Abbey monitor for being manipulated by Zanu-PF and for reporting Farai Maguwu to the authorities.

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<sup>17</sup> “Chikane Slams Diamond Activist”, *The Herald*, June 9, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> “No more KP for our diamonds, Cds”, *The Financial Gazette*, June 3, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> See for example, Farai Mutsaka, “KP deadlocked over sale of diamonds”, *Zimbabwe Independent*, June 24, 2010, as well as “Marange Diamonds – The test that the KP failed”, *The Standard*, June 26, 2010.