Israeli Blood Diamonds – Please contact your MEPs re: KP meeting in Washington

May 10, 2012

Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign

http://www.ipsc.ie/press-releases/israeli-blood-diamonds-please-contact-your-meps-re-kp-meeting-in-washington

Send a message to your MEP to ask the EU representative at the Kimberley Process meeting in Washington on June 4th to call for a ban on Israeli diamonds that fund war crimes.

The sentencing of the blood diamond-funded former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, for war crimes and crimes against humanity will take place on 30th May. Together with a Kimberley Process (KP) meeting in Washington on June 4-7th it is sure to generate a lot more media reports about blood diamonds and so offers an opportunity to push the issue of Israeli blood diamonds into the media spotlight once again.

Our EU representative will have a seat at the KP table. It is important that we voice our concerns about the trade in diamonds from Israel that fund war crimes and crimes against humanity but which evade the human rights strictures of the Kimberley Process and are sold all over Europe labelled conflict-free. NGOs are seeking to have cut and polished diamonds included in the remit of the KP but the vested interests are resisting any such move which would pose a serious threat to Israel’s burgeoning diamond industry.

Please take a few moments to contact your MEPs and ask them to raise this issue in the EU parliament and with the EU Commissions which previously stated: “Kimberley Process implementation cannot be accompanied by human rights violations”. A template is attached.

As the time frame for action is quite narrow it is important that you so as soon as possible.  You can email all MEPs using the contact form here: http://contact.ie/contact

Please help us to monitor the uptake on this action and BCC emails to diamonds@ipsc.ie

Another promising development is the action by solidarity activists in Italy who are planning an Israeli blood diamond demonstration in Vicenza next Monday to coincide with a meeting there of the World Diamond Council http://www.worldjewelleryforum.com/press1 that will be attended by all the movers and shakers in the global diamond industry.

Best regards,  
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SAMPLE LETTER TO MEPS  
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The EU must act to end the trade in diamonds from Israel that fund war crimes

The conviction of former Liberian President Charles Taylor by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity has again cast the spotlight on the trade in blood diamonds. It is a timely reminder of the urgent need for reform of the Kimberly Process definition of a “conflict diamond” which presently only applies to rough diamonds that fund rebel movements and not to diamonds that fund government forces guilty of war crimes.

Last year the Kimberley Process allowed the export of blood-tainted diamonds from Zimbabwe where government forces stand accused of serious human rights violations. Human rights organisations wanted the definition of a “conflict diamond” broadened to take account of diamonds that fund rogue governments guilty of human rights violations but the KP failed to act and the diamonds from Zimbabwe were allowed to contaminate the global market.  As a result, Global Witness, a founding member of the KP, withdrew last December stating “most consumers still cannot be sure where their diamonds come from, nor whether they are financing armed violence or abusive regimes”. Other human rights organisations have indicated that they will also withdraw from the KP unless meaningful reform of the definition of a “conflict diamond”, accompanied by the inclusion of the cutting and polishing sector, is agreed this year.

Reform of the KP definition of a “conflict diamond” will be the main issue on the agenda at the KP Intersessional Meeting in Washington from June 4th – June 7th.  It is important that the EU representative at that meeting calls for a broadening of the KP definition of a “conflict diamond” to include all diamonds that fund gross human rights violations, including cut and polished diamonds which presently evade the criteria applied to rough diamonds.

The EU Commission has stated that Kimberley Process implementation cannot be accompanied by human rights violations;

Israel, a member of the KP, stands accused by the UN Human Rights Council of serious war crimes and possible crimes against humanity following the 2008/2009 assault on Gaza that left over 1400 people dead including more than 300 children;

The UN Human Rights Council investigation of the Israeli attacks on the humanitarian aid flotilla (including MV Mavi Marmara), bound for Gaza on 31 May 2010 during which nine people were murdered and many others injured, found that there was clear evidence to support prosecutions of the following crimes within the terms of article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention: – Willful killing; Torture or inhuman treatment; Willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health.

The investigation also considered that a series of violations of Israel’s obligations under international human rights law have taken place, including: – Right to life (art. 6, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights); Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (art.7, International Covenant; Convention against Torture);  Right to liberty and security of the person and freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention (art. 9, International Covenant);  Right of detainees to be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person (art. 10, International Covenant);  Freedom of expression (art. 19, International Covenant);

The EU is based on the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Recognising that EU policies which directly or indirectly affect children must be designed, implemented and monitored taking into account the principle of the best interests of the child;

Considering that evidence presented to the London session of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine in November 2010 indicated that the Israeli diamond industry contributes about $1 billion annually to the Israeli military and security industries and that every time somebody buys a diamond that was exported from Israel some of that money ends up in the Israeli military;

Diamonds exported from Israel are therefore helping to fund gross human rights violations in Palestine as well as Israel’s clandestine nuclear weapons programme which it refuses the International Atomic Energy Agency permission to supervise or inspect.

Given these facts, I call on you to ask the EU Commission to instruct the EU representative to the Kimberley Process to call for:

the Kimberley Process definition of a “conflict diamond” to be broadened to include all diamonds that fund gross human rights violations by any group or government;  
a ban on the export of diamonds from Israel until such time as it respects the human rights of the Palestinian people under its control and abides by the international human rights law and humanitarian law.

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