

LEBER JEWELER INC

ESTABLISHED IN 1921

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Leber Jeweler Inc., the first retail jeweler in the United States wholly dedicated to socially responsible jewelry, has expressed outrage over the decision by the Kimberley Process governing body to allow Zimbabwe to remain a member in good standing, despite overwhelming evidence of blatant human rights violations directly tied to diamond mining in that country. The Kimberley Process entered into force in 2003 to stem the flow of conflict diamonds into the global supply chain and is a critical component of the US Clean Diamond Trade Act.

Smuggling of conflict diamonds and other precious minerals out of Zimbabwe is rampant, with revenue benefiting allies of Robert Mugabe and not the people of Zimbabwe. In an effort to drive independent miners from the Chiadzwa diamond fields in Marange, in October 2008, the Zimbabwean military and police launched a crackdown that killed hundreds of miners and injured scores more in a campaign described by Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights as “resembling a war.” Violence and lawlessness pervade the mine area, much of which is owned by the Aim-listed firm African Consolidated Resources (ACR).

According to Brian Leber, president of Leber Jeweler Inc, “The Kimberley Process has failed.” Leber adds “The current chair of the Kimberley Process, Namibian deputy mining minister Bernhard Esau, has said that calls to suspend Zimbabwe from the Kimberley Process over human rights abuses ‘will not be taken seriously.’ Unfortunately, he has lived up to his word.”

With other diamond-producing countries like Russia and South Africa defending Zimbabwe from expulsion, efforts by civil society groups to hold the Mugabe regime accountable were thwarted.

“It is up to consumers to say ‘No’ to Zimbabwean diamonds,” said Leber. “Unless a seller can guarantee the diamonds they sell do not come from Zimbabwe, an ‘unknown origin’ diamond may very well be funding the violence that plagues Zimbabwe.”

Leber Jeweler Inc. is a third-generation family-owned, Chicago-based jewelry company founded in 1921.

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