

BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2002
CONFLICT DIAMONDS

Our tradition teaches, . . .that it is our right, and our responsibility, to know and understand where our products are coming from, and what is going into their production. If the rabbis concerned themselves with such issues as wine mixed with water being sold in local shops, how much stronger would their reaction have been to conflict diamonds, whose very sale is mixed with blood and death.

(Press Statement, Rabbi David Saperstein, February 15, 2001)

Longstanding policies of Women of Reform Judaism stress human rights and the value of individual safety and well-being. The WRJ Board of Directors, deeply concerned about the horrors engendered in African civil strife that is funded by the sale of illegal diamonds, calls for government action to prevent importation of such diamonds to the United States.

Over the past decade, fueled by power seeking, poverty, famine, disease, as well as tribal and ethnic enmity, warfare has been widespread in many parts of Africa, creating enormous suffering for millions. Where the conflicts are funded by the theft, smuggling and sale of illegal diamonds for the purchase of weapons and military supplies, such as in Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, instability and bloodshed are perpetuated. Many thousands of men, women, and children have been slaughtered, mutilated, or raped; rebel groups that are funded by illegal diamonds have forced villagers into combat, slavery, or sexual slavery.

An international diamond certification system, known as the Kimberly process, is being developed, which would enable exclusion of conflict diamonds from the international market. A recent meeting of the Kimberly Process dealt with several provisions, including independent monitoring and a standard statistical database. The United States has not yet endorsed the provisions of the Kimberly process. In addition, the Clean Diamond Act, currently in Congress, would set up restrictions on the importing of diamonds from countries that have not implemented a system of control over their diamond supplies, thus ending the funding source for the brutal imposition of carnage.

Women of Reform Judaism, based on its ongoing commitment to human rights and distressed by the carnage funded by conflict diamonds,

1. Urges the US administration to endorse the Kimberly Process and
2. Calls on Congress to pass the Clean Diamond Act.

Moreover, WRJ calls on U.S. sisterhoods to:

1. Set up study groups to examine the issues involved in the sale of conflict diamonds and the atrocities it supports,

2. Urge the U.S. administration to endorse international efforts to exclude conflict diamonds from international markets and
3. Seek passage of legislation that would limit diamond imports to clean diamonds.