

“Blood Diamonds” Financing War Crimes in Gaza. President of London Diamond Bourse: “We Must ‘Finish the Job’”

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In a sinister ultimatum laced with dark undertones, Harry Levy, President of the London Diamond Bourse, referring to the ongoing Israeli bombardment of Gaza, has written to colleagues in Israel telling them “we must ‘finish the job’, with hopefully the Palestinians wanting to ‘live for Palestine rather than die for Palestine’.

It’s not clear how Mr. Levy, who describes himself as “an outsider”, intends to help “finish the job”. At best this would necessitate bludgeoning Palestinians into submission; at worst it is a recipe for genocide.

This brazen, partisan intervention in support of Israel’s latest assault on the defenceless besieged residents of Gaza may well be a reaction to the growing calls from Palestinian civil society and human rights activists in many countries for people of conscience to reject diamonds from Israel, where the industry is an [important source of funding](#) for the military.

On Sunday [an article](#) in the Israeli diamond industry website revealed that Levy sent a letter to the president of the Israeli Diamond Exchange indicating his support for the illegal Israeli military action in Gaza.

In menacing and inflammatory tones, he expressed concern about the situation in Israel without displaying any comparable concern for the defenceless victims of Israel’s aggression in Gaza which has so far claimed the lives of more than 500 Palestinians, the vast majority of whom are women, children and elderly.

In a not so subtle indication of his lack of enthusiasm for a proposed ceasefire, Levy said it “was good in some ways, but always after a few months it goes back to the same situation”.

He is also reported to have stated that peace will not come about until Hamas and its allies gives Israel a proper commitment to recognise it as a country with a majority of Jewish people “within boundaries in its present position”. This amounts to an endorsement of racist character of the ethnic cleansed Jewish state, a rejection of the 1967 borders as the basis of the internationally accepted two state solution, and a rejection of the Palestinian right of return as set out in UN Resolution 194.

In an encouragement to Israel to continue with its latest orgy of violence and bloodshed, he expresses his fear that “Israel will again stop and allow the [sic] Hamas to re-arm and prepare for the next round”.

His intervention could be ignored but for the fact that the diamond industry is of critical importance to the Israeli economy, which is heavily reliant on diamond exports for the foreign currency needed to sustain Israel's occupation and wars of aggression in the region.

His partisan intervention is particularly foolhardy at a time when growing numbers of people are being alerted to the trade in Israeli diamonds, which many believe should be regarded as blood diamonds and banned.

In recent times human rights activists have staged protests in London, Dublin, Hong Kong, Basel, Zurich, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Vicenza and New York to highlight the trade in Israeli blood diamonds.

In 2011 a broad spectrum of Palestinian society, represented by over fifty different organisation including trade unions, farmers, fishermen and others, [called on people of conscience](#) to reject diamonds from Israel.

In 2013 South African human rights groups, trade unions and major civil society organisations [called for Israel to be expelled](#) from the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and an end to the export of rough diamonds from South Africa to Israel.



The London Diamond Bourse is an integral part of the British jewellery industry and this provocative statement by its leader tarnishes the entire industry which human rights activists already accuse of laundering Israeli blood diamonds under the umbrella of the [discredited Kimberley Process](#) regulatory scheme.

Harry Levy is a leading figure in the global diamond industry and has held a number of roles throughout [his career](#) one of which was chairman of the British Jewellers Association.

Simon Rainer, the present head of the British jewellery Association, [previously posed the question](#) : “*what if a democratically elected government is using diamond wealth to suppress indigenous populations?*” Well that is precisely what is happening now in Gaza. Revenue from the Israeli diamond industry is being used by the regime to slaughter Palestinians. The violence, which many observers believe amounts to war crimes, is being encouraged by the head of the London Diamond Bourse – a major centre for the distribution of diamonds from Israel throughout the British jewellery market.

According to [data published](#) by the Israeli Bureau of Statistics, in 2013 Israeli diamond export to the UK were valued at \$ 475 million.

The British Jewellers Association has so far remained silent about the events in Gaza, but unless it disassociates itself from Levy’s statement its silence will be seen as tacit approval.

The London Diamond Bourse and the British Jewellers Association should denounce the comments of Harry Levy and ask that he withdraw them immediately. His position as head of leading pillar of the jewellery industry is untenable and he should resign forthwith.

Along with that, British jewellers should heed the call from Palestinian civil society and take immediate steps to end the trade in diamonds from Israel.

The diamond industry has acted before to stem the flow of blood diamonds used by rebel groups when diamond-funded human rights violations made global headlines over a decade ago. Today, however, [blood diamonds](#) that fund the world’s fourth most powerful military force, which has slaughtered over 500 Palestinians in Gaza in the past two weeks, continue to flood the market. Jewellers should be aware that cut and polished blood diamonds are not just a threat to the lives and well being of people in Gaza – they also threaten the diamond brand image which will be indelibly linked to Israel’s bloodletting and war crimes in Gaza.

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