

A Comprehensive Analysis Of Blood Diamonds And The Insurgent Groups

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Introduction

For many centuries, diamonds have been viewed as a world symbol of love and marriage. However, a significant part of the world diamonds come from war-torn areas, where bloodshed is a normal occurrence. In some countries, rebel groups use the profit from the illegal sThisdiamonds to purchase weapons for their insurgent operations. In this paper will also introduce a comprehensive analysis of blood diamonds and the insurgent groups that mine them. The paper will also discuss the violation of basic human rights that these rebel groups commit on a regular basis.

Discussion

Blood diamonds, or conflict diamonds, have long been used for illegitimate trading of weapons and funding civil war in various African countries. The monies are used to fund violence and violation of human rights in various countries in Africa. The illegal trading of diamonds has been used by African Warlords to purchase weapons. Some of the most affected countries include Angola, the DRC, and Sierra Leone. The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate the true history of the blood diamond industry in West Africa. It is an industry that is very popular in Sierra Leone. The country has gone through many hurdles, which has resulted in extensive destruction and violation of human rights.

Conflict diamonds are sold illegally to various parts of the world in order to finance insurgents against nationally and internationally recognised institutions. Even though efforts have been put in place to stop the trade, the impact of the civil war in the affected countries has left nothing but shambles. The war has always been between governments and warlords. There is always the saying that “Diamonds are a girl’s best friend”. Such has turned into nothing but a saying whose purpose is a publicizing strategy.

It all began with a small discovery by a 15-year-old boy. It would be followed by decades of bloodshed. Somewhere between 1866 and early 1867, a teenage boy known as Erasmus Jacobs collected a glittery rock from the ground in De Kalka ranch. The land was situated in the southern region of Orange River in Cape Colony, present South Africa. The region was controlled by the British controlled region in what is currently known as South Africa.

After playing with the shiny stone for a while, the boy later presented it to a neighbouring friend, shalk Van Niekerk, who often gathered rare pebbles. Through agreed terms, Niekerk presented the

stone to a trader, who later presented it to a magistrate. When the magistrate realised that the rock could cut glass, he stated, "I am certain this is diamond." Boyes, the Magistrates, then took the piece to a local pharmacist, Dr Guybon Atherstone, who lived in Graham's town. The pharmacist reported that the stone was a 21.25 yellow diamond. The shiny pebble was acquired by the Cape colony's governor for 500 sterling pounds and was later presented at the 1867 Paris show. The pebble was called the "Eureka" diamond. Soon after, Niekerk found another, more spectacular piece.

By definition, blood diamonds can be described as diamonds mined from regions under the control of rebel groups fighting against national and international bodies. Sierra Leone is the most affected country. It is a small country located on the west coast of Africa. For the last two decades, the country has been under constant terror. The war is fought between rebel groups and the Sierra Leone government. The rebel groups took control of the richest diamond mines in Sierra Leone in the early nineties. Any profit made from the sales of the diamond was used to purchase weapons. The rebel groups were made up of teenage boys who were forced to conscript. The rebel group utilise different violent tactics to inflict terror on innocent civilians. Some of the popular tactics include Kidnapping, amputation, and torture, among others.

In numerous cases, they kidnapped innocent women and children as well as old men, stuck out their arms and legs, and then cut them off using crude weapons. Through such tactics, they inflicted fear among the civilians.

A Case Of Sierra Leone

The conflict diamonds in various African countries sparked significant social problems for Sierra Leone. The conflicts resulted in the collapse of the country's social framework. The RUF, for instance, forced underage boys and adults into slavery and the role of child soldiers to safeguard the people against the regime forces. The rebel group seized children at a very young age and trained them to use gun technology and how to kill citizens.

Campbell states that "the poverty rates in Africa provided a chance of labour exploitation" (Campbell 127). Poverty provides opportunities for people to profit from the misery of others in various trades. His statement provides an extremely valid argument. The people of war-torn countries are so poor and often live off very little resources. Therefore, for the rebel group, it seemed useful to use cruelty and exploit the civilians. The RUF wilfully captured young boys and adults, irrespective of the cost.

The children were guaranteed that they would gain total power and control of the rich diamond mines. Civilians forced to work for the rebel groups were not paid, and instead, they sided with the exploitative rules set by the rebel group for them to survive. If anyone rebelled against the set rules, they were exterminated immediately. These are evident social implications that were brought to attention by these activities.

Extremely young children were forced into child soldiers, compelled to kill their friends and families.

The extent of mental anguish that came with being a child soldier, in the end, ruined their lives forever. The Sierra Leone community was socially devastated as a result of the traumatic events that the rebel group induced the children and the community at large. The civilians had the endless anxiety of whether they would ever see another day. Such had a huge mental and physical impact on them. Onuzulike's article reviews the role and impact of the RUF on child soldiers.

Onuzulike proceeds to point out that "Many of the children were forced to depend on the manipulative adults who promised to offer them power and security that their families could no longer offer" (Onuzulike 306). Children often look up to their parents and guardians as their key figures. However, once the children are separated from their parents, they will seek new leaders. Therefore, in the event of Sierra Leone, children were captured from their guardians by the rebel group and now looked up to the new leaders of the rebel group as their mentors and figureheads. Zwick provides the concept of "key representations of child soldiers" (Zwick et al.). It is a structure that explains the influence of war and violence on child soldiers who were forced into their new roles.

How The Problem Of Blood Diamond Emerged

In 1950, the Sierra Leone Government had already given up on controlling most of its diamond mines. Foreign investors were forced to seek their own security for both their employees and the mining sites. The outcome was the birth of illegal diamond trading. Most of the smuggled diamonds were traded in Liberia. The government seemingly tried to impose unintentional rules that increased illegal trading when it opened the Alluvial mining scheme in 1956. The new rules allowed locals to receive mining licenses, and the number of illegal miners plunged to approximately 80,000 people.

With very little political leadership skills, the government placed even more responsibility in the hands of the foreign miners. As a result, illegal diamond mining flourished. By the early 1990s, Sierra Leone had a corrupt regime, and open illegal diamond trading attracted armed rebels. On March 23rd, 1991, a civil broke out in the country when the RUF invaded the mines.

Through the decade-long civil war, fighting was much concentrated around the rich diamond regions. The RUF understood that whoever controlled the mines was in full control of Sierra Leone. Since the beginning of the civil war, Sierra Leone suffered total desolation. It is entirely dependent on international support from South Africa, Nigeria, and the United States, among other countries.

Sierra Leone descended into bloody horror in the mid-1990s. As the war began between the rebel groups and the government-backed forces, elections were planned, where people were supposed to vote using their thumbprints. To ensure people didn't vote, the rebel groups began a campaign of cutting off limbs so they couldn't vote. The violence was so intense that Nigerian troops, together with the UN peacekeepers, were sent to dethrone the people in power and try to bring back normalcy. In the late 1990s, the rebel group and the Sierra Leone government signed a peace agreement, marking the cessation of decade-long moments of violence.

The primary intention of the RUF was to gain total power and wealth. They didn't have any regard for the needs of the people. In 2013, the Sierra Leone government reported that the RUF soldiers made over 70% of human rights violations. 80% of all the clashes involved the rebels as the prime fighting group. The violations led to political unrest throughout the entire nation. The violations were followed by clashes between the regime and the RUF for a decade. Beginning with the wrong understanding of the RUF's objectives is what resulted in the ultimate collapse of the country's political structure.

As part of the agreement, the rebel groups had to give up their weapons, meaning that the rebels would not have the resources to wage war. However, they used the remaining profits to force more civilians into slavery and excavate more diamonds to purchase new arms in what formed a continuous circle of crisis. Therefore, the next time you look at that glittering stone, don't just contemplate its magnificence. Think of the lives that may have been lost when the piece reached your hands.

The industry within Sierra Leone has resulted in significant unrest over the years. The acts done by the RUF and other rebel groups were politically underserved and were condemned by many neighbouring countries. In order to understand the implications of the blood diamond, it is important to explore the political context of this nature. The Rebel group, RUF, was established to take over the government. The group's catchphrase was "No more slavery, No more master. Power to the people." However, the idea was a misrepresentative slogan. Through the catchphrase, the civilians trusted and tied up with the rebels until they discovered their primary objective. Voeltz points out that "the profits from the blood diamonds was a significant representation of the armed groups to prolong the civil war." (187-189).

The mining of blood diamonds has caused bloodshed, child labour, and human rights violations. A combination of these issues has hindered the country's overall development. These are illegally traded products that are used to support war rather than public development. Since the time they surfaced in the mid-1990s, they have only resulted in troubles rather than growth.

The Sierra Leone community dug the mines with the hope of improving their livelihood. However, in most cases, the product was smuggled illegally to members of the government. At the peak of their production, Sierra Leone accounted for approximately 4 % of the global diamond production. RUF, together with other rebel groups, gained control of the larger and rich mines by controlling the production of diamonds. These diamonds are now spread in entire Africa, fuelling conflict.

Even though blood diamonds gave rise to insignificant economic growth, the greater portion was used to finance rebel groups through the purchase of weapons. Civilians in various parts of Africa are now ready to risk their lives to obtain better living standards. Poverty levels in Africa are very high. Residents in impoverished regions often seek any opportunity that would earn them simple daily earnings to cater for their homes as well as eating (Falls 457). One of the most common sources of income in Sierra Leone is the search for diamonds. The opportunity cost of mining diamonds is more significant than human rights for most of the poor residents.

Local, National, And International Response

Due to the growing concerns by the local, national and international community about blood diamonds from war-torn regions such as Sierra Leone and South Africa, a meeting was conducted in May 2000 in Kimberly, South Africa, to seek ways of prohibiting the purchase or sales of diamonds from the affected regions. Later the same year, the United Nations adopted a resolution backing the certification scheme that would indicate the point of origin of any piece of diamond. The agreement came to be named the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme (KPCS).

While some in the business view the Kimberly process as the much-awaited solution to the conflict diamonds, the guiding principle was voluntary. They only minimised the violence but never mitigated the issue. Therefore, it was up to the consumers to buy conflict-free products or request the certificate of origin. However, People continued to lie and run around the newly established system. However, the more the consumer presses for the certifications, the more the sellers will try to ensure that the consumers are content. The biggest problem for diamond companies and African countries would be if the general public stopped buying their products completely.

Due to the grave murders and violence, the world has made small steps in an effort to eliminate blood diamonds. The UN established embargos on blood diamonds while offering peacekeepers, among other sources of help, to the affected countries. The Kimberly process was also introduced. The process was implemented to monitor the origin of diamonds until they reached the hand of the distributor. At the local level, Sierra Leone implemented the Clean Diamond Act. The Act restricted the trading of illegal diamonds outside the country. The Clean Diamond Act, together with the Kimberly Accord, just attempted to minimise the illegal trading of diamonds. While such resolutions were both a good start, it is clear that the impact of the conflict will take more time to fade away. While these resolutions are both a good start, it is clear that it will take more time for this conflict to be resolved.

The film, "Blood Diamond" is one of the key inspirations for this research (Voeltz). The movie demonstrates that if people stopped buying diamonds, the ordeals would stop because they would understand that the product cost someone's hand. So, it's important to speak up. Such would support various organisations that have desperately tried to bring peace and help the affected countries. With the tragedies that occurred over the decade, it is clear that modern Africa has taken measures to eliminate any such sources of death and violence. Whether the measures taken by various African countries are more or less dramatic solutions, further actions need to be taken since enough lives have been lost.

Blood diamonds are still being produced in the rebel-controlled regions but in high secrecy. These regions are still known as conflict diamond zones. As indicated earlier, Blood diamond is utilised by rebels to buy weapons and finance violence and various military operations against the government. Moreover, the finances are used to oppress the civilians of the affected region. The diamonds are

usually seized during mining activities from legitimate workers or retrieved from forced women and children. The products are then smuggled into the international market, where they are sold as legitimate products. It is often believed that a huge number of weapon dealers and illegitimate dealers have played a key role in enabling the actions of these rebellious activities.

Diamonds are still fuelling conflict in various West African countries. In Cote d'Ivoire, diamonds are still being mined and smuggled to neighbouring countries as well as international traders. In 2017, the United Nations reported that poor regulations have allowed over \$23 million of blood diamonds from African countries to get into the legitimate market through Ghana, where they are branded as conflict-free. The Kimberly Accord was established to prevent the trade of illegal diamonds. However, the process is not firm enough to accomplish the set objectives.

In an article written by Miller, he conducted a detailed investigation into the lives of villagers who had first-hand information on how the blood diamond operated. A small village known as Kodu, Sierra Leone, is one of the most popular areas in the world where Blood Diamond is located. However, the level of poverty is very high compared to some cities around the world. In the small town, there are no social amenities such as electricity, sanitation, or hospitals (Miller 213-15). The average life expectancy in Kodu is a mere 39 years.

Miller dug deeper to provide detailed information about the blood diamond. First, the wages of the locals could not cover even the smallest expenses on a daily basis. While the thriving diamond industry makes annual profits of approximately sixty billion dollars, most of the residents survive barely with anything. The gruelling task is to find diamonds that most thought would change their lives. Many expected that if they found a diamond, their lives would change for the better. They would have been able to afford better education and better healthcare as well as improve the community as a whole. However, to many, the stingy salary of approximately \$250 per year is not worth the chance to dig off the earth in the search for the diamond.

The economic struggles for the poor in Sierra Leone demonstrate the reality of the situation. Moreover, the repercussions would be severe if they were caught smuggling the diamonds out of the mines for individual purposes. Most of the miners do not have any idea what the diamond is used for. All they see is an opportunity to improve their lives. Many depend on smuggling blood diamonds in order to survive.

It is clear that blood diamonds have been one of the most controversial issues for decades because the industry has been financing weapons and violence in various regions in Africa. The illegal traders purchased illegal diamonds in exchange for weapons to the rebel groups. The groups violate numerous human rights, such as child labour, torture and kidnapping. However, through raising awareness in the consumer territory regarding the illegal trade of diamonds, measures such as the Kimberly Accord and the stringent measures on blood diamonds should be encouraged. As a result, the illegal trade of diamonds will be systematised, and the purchase of legal products will offer numerous benefits for different regions around the world.

Angola, DRC, Liberia and Sierra Leone are still in the process of recovering from decade-long devastation from the diamond-funded wars. To date, diamonds are still being used for money laundering and organised crimes, among other illegal activities. However, the number of conflict cases of conflict diamonds has reduced significantly due to the peace agreement signed between the various Western countries and South Africa. The measures could prevent any future occurrences of violence. However, unless the Kimberly accord is strengthened, diamond-fuelled wars might be experienced in the future.

Recommendations

In order to safeguard legitimate diamond trading in Africa, it is important to ensure that diamonds can never be used to fund violence. The Kimberly accord must incorporate the involved governments to have a regulated system put in place that includes rigorous checks on the industry. Moreover, the diamond industry should establish meaningful systems to support the key objectives of the Kimberly accord. Strong systems in all the involved countries will ensure that traders have sufficient assurance that the diamond is conflict-free, irrespective of its form. Therefore, it is important for the diamond industry to be committed to stopping the trade of blood diamonds and exposing individuals and organisations that are breaking the law.

It is well known within the industry those engaging in illegal trading, but most in the trade are still turning a blind eye. Therefore, the industry must act in conjunction with law enforcement agencies to hold those conducting trade outside the Kimberly accord accountable. Traders also have the obligation to ask for any certifications to make sure that the product they are dealing with is conflict-free. The participating government and the NGOs should also take active roles in addressing the political, social and economic issues facing the industry to make sure it contributes to positive development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the diamond trade benefits many countries that are deprived of better healthcare, education, and improved infrastructure. Moreover, imposing sanctions on conflict diamonds and encouraging the rest of the world to join the legal trade would help in advancing the economies of countries such as Sierra Leone. Moreover, this will also help in improving the political and economic stability of various African countries.

The legal diamond trade could also help in funding children's education and provide many people with better healthcare. Sierra Leone, together with other affected countries, could have had a huge GDP and developed its infrastructure and education. Education about illegal trade might lead to consumers stopping the cruel intentions of the rebel groups and the oppression they impose on civilians. Informed consumers will stop purchasing blood diamonds, which has affected many countries.

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