



8 April 2015

We are human rights organizations, writing to ask you to sign the statement below by fellow jewelry companies and organizations, calling for criminal defamation charges against the award-winning journalist and human rights activist, Rafael Marques de Morais, to be dropped. Rafael Marques currently faces charges of criminal defamation relating to his book, *Blood Diamonds: Corruption and Torture in Angola*.

The book alleges human rights abuses against Angolan villagers involving Angolan military officials and private security companies contracted by mining firms, in the course of diamond mining operations. It includes reports of 500 cases of torture and 100 killings, as well as forced evictions, land seizures, and other abuses. Generals in the Angolan army are major shareholders of some diamond firms implicated in the book, and the prosecutor has charged that his reporting is defamatory to them.

Mr. Marques faces nine years in prison and damages equivalent to US\$1.2 million. In addition to nine charges previously filed against him, on Tuesday 24 March, when his trial was scheduled to begin, the prosecution added fifteen further charges of defamation. The judge also decided at this hearing to hold proceedings *in camera* – behind closed doors, with the press and public excluded. The case is now adjourned until 23 April.

Several dozen human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption [NGOs worldwide](#) including Amnesty International, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Transparency International have expressed grave concerns over irregularities in the proceedings against him to date, and that Mr. Marques will not receive a fair trial in Angola.

Days before his trial, the Index on Censorship [awarded](#) Mr. Marques the 2015 Freedom of Expression Award for journalism – the latest in a string of major awards for Mr. Marques's work.

All jewelry and diamond firms, regardless of whether or not they source directly or indirectly from Angola, should work toward a global diamond supply chain free from human rights abuses. In addition to being the responsible thing to do, this is in their own interest: when an industry is associated with serious human rights violations, all companies in that sector are at risk of reputational damage.

Respectfully yours,

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
International Service for Human Rights

Front Line Defenders
Open Society Institute for Southern
Africa - Angola

Further information:

[“Call for Criminal Defamation Charges to Be Dropped Against Journalist”](#), 23 March 2015, signed by representatives of Media Legal Defence Initiative, Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, National Endowment for Democracy, PEN International, Reporters Without Borders, SHERPA, Transparency International, World Movement for Democracy

[“Open Letter From Human Rights and Free Press Groups Calling for Charges Against Rafael Marques de Morais to Be Dropped”](#), 23 March 2015, signed by 36 representatives of human rights, transparency & press freedom NGOs including Amnesty International, Global Witness, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa, Intl. Commission of Jurists, Intl. Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Publish What You Pay, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, Southern Africa Litigation Centre

[“Angolan journalist faces further charges over blood diamonds claims”](#), Sam Jones, The Guardian (UK), 25 March 2015

Open statement calling for charges to be dropped against journalist Rafael Marques de Morais in Angola

We, the undersigned companies and industry organizations, are concerned over reports of human rights abuses in the diamond sector in Angola, and over efforts by the Angolan Government to criminally prosecute the award-winning journalist and human rights activist Rafael Marques de Morais on charges of libel against a number of Angolan generals.

Mr. Marques currently faces charges of criminal defamation relating to his book, *Blood Diamonds: Corruption and Torture in Angola*. The book alleges hundreds of cases of torture and killings of Angolan villagers involving Angolan military officials and private security companies contracted by mining firms, in the course of diamond mining operations. Generals in the Angolan army are major shareholders of some diamond firms implicated in the book. Mr. Marques faces nine years in prison and damages equivalent to US\$1.2 million on criminal defamation charges relating to the book.

Over 30 human rights, press freedom, and anti-corruption [NGOs worldwide](#) including Amnesty International, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Transparency International have expressed grave concerns over irregularities in the proceedings against him to date, and that Mr. Marques will not receive a fair trial in Angola.

As jewelry firms, we wish to work toward a global diamond supply chain free from human rights abuses, regardless of whether or not we source directly or indirectly from Angola.

We respectfully call on the Angolan Government to drop all charges against Rafael Marques.

Furthermore, we request the Presidency to order the formation of an independent commission that will fairly and objectively investigate the allegations of human rights abuses committed against artisanal diamond mining communities reported by Rafael Marques.