



News release

Geneva, 5/11/2013

For immediate release

TRIAL and its partners Open Society Justice Initiative and Conflict Awareness Project welcome the decision of the Swiss Federal Prosecutor to open a criminal investigation into the activities of the Swiss refinery company Argor-Heraeus SA for laundering of looted gold and complicity in war crimes.

This decision follows the filing of a denunciation against the Swiss company, by the NGO TRIAL (Track Impunity Always) on 1 November 2013. The Swiss association against impunity along with Open Society Justice Initiative and Conflict Awareness Project welcomes the opening of the criminal investigation by the Swiss Federal Prosecutor.

« The opening of the investigation is a strong signal to corporations fueling war. Countries at war are not law-free zones and impunity is no longer ensured to those who break the law. The private sector can also be held accountable », said **Philip Grant, Director of TRIAL.**

« The Conflict Awareness Project is pleased that the Swiss Prosecutor is investigating Argor for criminal charges. For far too long, Argor has claimed that it was exonerated by the United Nations for its criminal involvement in the pillage of gold from Congo, which is not the case. The forensic evidence leaves no doubt that Argor was refining gold supplied by unlawful armed groups in the DRC », said **Kathi Lynn Austin, Executive Director of the Conflict Awareness Project.**

« The Swiss Federal Prosecutor's decision appears to be the first effort to hold corporate actors accountable for pillage and related offenses since the Second World War. This case goes far beyond Switzerland to the international commodity and financial markets. Companies who choose to trade directly or indirectly with unlawful armed groups must understand that they risk prosecution for the war crime of pillage », said **Kenneth Hurwitz, Senior Legal Adviser at Open Society Justice Initiative.**

The three NGOs now await the result of the investigation with trust and great interest.

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