

Somalia seeks stability

Somalia's president agreed yesterday to a national reconciliation conference to try to end 16 years of anarchy, as African governments considered sending peacekeepers. AP

Correction

In the January 31 issue of Metro, the Committee for a Unified Independent Party media director was misidentified. Her name is Sarah Lyons. METRO

For the record **Valerie Salembier**, publisher of Harper's Bazaar

Bagging the knockoffs

A fashion mag declares cultural warfare on counterfeiters

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INTERVIEW. In a culture driven by a love of excess, the knockoff has become an icon.

It fuels commerce on Canal Street, it spills over into knockoff "purse parties" that have replaced suburban Tupperware sales and, more tragically, enslaves children in factories and funds criminal organizations.

Valerie Salembier, the publisher of Harper's Bazaar and chair of the New York City Police Foundation's board of trustees, says the latter is too high a price to pay for a fake label. While her publication has helped raise awareness through stories and her foundation has helped raise funds to fight counterfeiting, she says it isn't enough to counter both ignorance and consumer mentality.

Though it can be argued that publications like Harper's owe their existence to a fascination

with high-end fashion — and prompt those of more modest means to procure low-cost "couture" — Salembier says that connection gives both herself and designers all the more reason to fight counterfeiting and its effects.

Metro spoke with Salembier about the true cost of knockoffs, the moral baggage they carry and the cultural conundrum they cause.

When you buy a fake Prada bag on Canal Street, what is your money really paying for?

It's illegal, first of all. What you're paying for a counterfeit product goes to organized crime syndicates and child labor. When we did our last summit, Juan Carlos Zarate from the U.S. Department of the Treasury informed us of a money laundering scheme in which the funds went directly to Hamas. So consumers should think about whether they're funding terror or child

Fighting fakes

To help combat counterfeiting of everything from DVDs to jet engines, Salembier recommends visiting the **INTERNATIONAL ANTICOUNTERFEITING COALITION** at www.iacc.org and reporting counterfeiting to iaccsleuth@iacc.org. She also recommends visiting the following sources for more information:

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE at www.doc.gov

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY at www.ustreas.gov

labor and about their own safety.

What role does child labor play in the creation of knockoffs?

It's so savage as to defy what we believe as a nation. You have rural Chinese parents selling their children, usually girls, to counterfeit goods manufacturers so they can send money home. When you think about how they are treated — shackled to their work stations and working 18-hour days — it's morally reprehensible.

But major retailers have been accused of exploiting child labor as well. What's the difference?

The answer is that it is the youngest children who are employed by the counterfeiters — kids 7, 8 or 9 years old. In the past 15 years, at least in China, the use of child labor by companies has decreased, especially after companies like Nike got caught.

What is the overall cost of knockoff goods?

Globally, the sale of counterfeit goods is a \$600 billion industry.

Department stores have had off-the-rack items from designers for years, and it only seems to degrade the status of the brand. What do you say to people who cite that?

More people want the



PHOTO COURTESY OF PETER LINDERBERGH

Salembier says the low cost of a major-label knockoff comes at the expense of child labor and national security.

collection and, you're right, there is a cachet to owning the real thing. Until consumers really understand what the cash for counterfeit goods funds, there will still be talk of that.

What's the best way to avoid a fake?

The only place a consumer

should buy a luxury product is at the brand's store. Anything else would be a fake. You have these people on the corners who I call "sales associates" who sell fakes and say they have the "real thing" under the cart. No. Even if it's a \$300 Gucci bag, it's just an expensive fake.