

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: POL 30/024/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 118

Embargo Date: 14 May 2004 00:01 GMT

EU arms exports threatening global security

Published

Arms export controls in the expanded European Union are dangerously ineffective so stringent new regulations are urgently needed to protect human rights and safeguard people's security, Amnesty International said today.

EU arms, security equipment and services are contributing to grave human rights abuses and the scale of potential abuse is now enormous. The major EU arms exporting countries - France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom - account for one third of the world's arms deals. With ten new Member States, the EU now has over 400 small arms companies in 23 countries, almost as many as the USA.

In a report released today -- *Undermining Global Security: the European Union's arms exports* -- Amnesty International highlights serious flaws in the European Union's key arms control agreements, especially the 1998 EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.

The report calls for a toughening and widening of the EU Code to prevent the irresponsible export of surplus arms, arms components and security equipment used for repression as well as licensed arms production in third countries, arms brokering and transporting of arms.

"The enlarged EU now has an opportunity to become a more coherent and effective international voice for positive change. But in order to do this, the EU must put its own house in order." said Amnesty International.

The report identifies major weaknesses, omissions and loopholes in the existing EU arms export controls, including:

- The involvement of an Italian joint venture company in the manufacture of vehicles used as mobile execution chambers in China
- UK export of components for Chinese military aero engines despite an EU arms embargo on China

A failure to control the huge "transit trade" of arms through the Netherlands allowing the export of armoured vehicles to Israel despite their use against civilians
The transfer of Czech and Polish surplus weapons to governments such as Yemen with a history of diverting weapons to third countries
Spanish satellite intelligence, military equipment and training have been promised to Colombia despite concerns that the Colombian government's policies are exacerbating the human rights disaster there
The supply by a German technology company of surveillance equipment to Turkmenistan despite a history of the government there using such methods for political repression
French helicopters and parts manufactured under licence in India, delivered to Nepal where armed forces have used helicopters to shoot and kill civilians.

The EU has this year promised a complete review of its Code of Conduct on Arms Exports and a meeting today of the EU arms control committee COARM is the latest part of that process.

Amnesty International is concerned that the review will not be wide or deep enough to address the serious flaws which allow the abuse of human rights. The organization is also calling for the European Union to promote a legally binding global arms trade treaty to underpin a strengthened EU Code.

For a copy of the report: *Undermining Global Security: the European Union's arms exports* please go to <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engact300032004>

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>