

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **G8 arms exports fuelling poverty and human rights abuses**

### **New report from the Control Arms Campaign: Amnesty International, Oxfam, IANSA**

G8 member states are undermining their commitments to poverty reduction, stability and human rights with irresponsible arms exports to some of the world's poorest and most conflict-ridden countries, according to new research issued today. G8 weapons have been exported to countries including Sudan, Myanmar (Burma), the Republic of Congo, Colombia and the Philippines.

On the eve of a meeting of G8 foreign ministers in London (23-24 June), a new report reveals how the G8 countries -- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the USA -- are still supplying military equipment, weapons and munitions to destinations where they contribute to gross violations of human rights.

*"Each year hundreds of thousands of people are killed, tortured, raped and displaced through the misuse of arms. How can G8 commitments to end poverty and injustice be taken seriously if some of the very same governments are undermining peace and stability by deliberately approving arms transfers to repressive regimes, regions of extreme conflict or countries who can ill-afford them?"* said the Secretary General of Amnesty International, Irene Khan.

The report from Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) makes a clear case for the G8 to support the call from the UK government and 10 other countries for an international Arms Trade Treaty.

*"This research shows that, as well as the G8 being responsible for more than 80% of the world's arms exports, they persist in selling weapons that oppress the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. G8 foreign ministers meeting this week must back the Arms Trade Treaty and agree a process to make it happen,"* said Barbara Stocking, Director of Oxfam.

The report, *The G8: Global arms exporters - Failing to prevent irresponsible arms transfers*, exposes a series of loopholes and weaknesses in arms export controls common across many G8 countries:

Canadian military exports to countries involved in armed conflict or human rights abuse including light armoured vehicles and helicopters to Saudi Arabia and aircraft engines and handguns to the Philippines;

French exports in the UN category of "Bombs, grenades, ammunition, mines and other" to countries subject to European Union arms embargoes such as Myanmar and Sudan;

The use of German components in military equipment destined for countries involved in serious human rights violations such as German engines incorporated into military vehicles that have ended up in Myanmar;

A loophole in Italian law allowing large quantities of so-called "civilian firearms" to be exported to countries suffering gross human rights violations such as Colombia, the Republic of Congo, and China;

Russian exports of heavy weaponry including combat aircraft to states whose forces have committed abuses such as Ethiopia, Algeria, and Uganda;

Substantial US military aid to states carrying out persistent human rights violations including Pakistan, Nepal and Israel;

Japan's export of small arms and light weapons to countries with poor human rights records such as the Philippines;

The lack of control on UK equipment that can be used for torture or ill-treatment and the UK's increased use of "open licences" that allow companies to make multiple shipments without adequate scrutiny.

The examples included in the report show why a tough and enforceable Arms Trade Treaty is urgently needed. It should be international, legally-binding and based on international law -- especially human rights and humanitarian law -- because these universal standards if observed, would save lives, prevent suffering and protect livelihoods.

*"In view of the massive loss of life and destruction of property and livelihood's fuelled by irresponsible arms transfers, the G8 must turn rhetoric into reality and push for negotiations to start on an Arms Trade Treaty by 2006. To do anything less would be a disgraceful betrayal of the millions of men, women and children subject to human rights violations and fear of armed violence every day,"* said Rebecca Peters, Director of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

## **Background**

The Control Arms campaign was launched by Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) in October 2003. It aims to reduce arms proliferation and misuse and to convince governments to introduce a binding arms trade treaty.

**For a copy of the report please go to: [www.controlarms.org](http://www.controlarms.org)**

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