

AI WEEK 1999

THE TERROR TRADE TIMES FOCUS ON AFRICA

[FINAL TEXT - NB PLEASE REFER TO PROOFS FOR ITALICS AND ACCENTS]

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PAGE 1 - INTRO

‘We are asking you to read this paper. To get angry. But most of all to act. Listen to the voices of those across Africa. Help break the chain of repression.’

Disarming the killers

Five years ago there was genocide in Rwanda. The attempted destruction of an entire ethnic group, the Tutsi, together with sections of the Hutu community. Unarmed women, men, children, the old, the helpless were hunted down without mercy, often by neighbours, people they knew. They were herded into villages, cornered in modern hospitals, trapped in quiet churches. They were tortured, murdered and mutilated. As many as one million people died. And the world stood by and let it happen.

No. That is not exactly true. Many individuals, companies and some governments assisted the killers in their work. For years before the killing began, the Hutu-dominated government of Rwanda busily collected arms and security equipment from many lands. This deadly hoard of assault rifles, grenades and machetes went straight into the hands of murderers, many of whom had been trained by French troops. Even after the slaughter was underway, the arms kept pouring in. After a UN arms embargo was imposed, the arms still got through. Deadly weapons reportedly from France, China, Belgium, South Korea, Israel and South Africa were later found in the arsenals of the killers.

Yet none of the individuals and companies who fuelled a genocide (such as Mil-Tec, a company based in the United Kingdom) have ever been brought to justice. Not one. Some arms-supplying governments helped make sure of that by hampering the work of the 1995 UN Commission of Inquiry, established to investigate how weapons reached the killers. The arms dealers were left to ply their deadly trade with impunity, and now business is flourishing.

Arms have once again reached Rwanda, a country in the grip of a renewed civil war between Hutu rebels and the present Tutsi-dominated government forces. During 1997 and 1998 thousands of ordinary people were abducted and murdered by both sides. The bloody slaughter has also been exported to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where thousands of people are being put to death on account of their ethnicity or perceived political beliefs, as foreign arms dealers and governments equip their killers.

Elsewhere in Africa, countries such as Angola, Burundi, the Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda stand as grim testament to the devastation wrought by the abundance and misuse of military and security equipment and training.

As a result of lax export controls, the easy availability of small arms (such as pistols, assault rifles, sub-machine guns and landmines) and security equipment and services to government forces, even in lands nominally at peace, facilitates the arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, torture or murder of anyone these government forces deem a threat. Throughout Africa, state repression and the arms and security trade are inextricably linked, whether it be the provision of electroshock batons to torturers in Angola, the use of tear gas and water-cannon against pro-democracy activists in Kenya, or the military training given to the Togolese security forces.

Most of these countries, indeed most of the world, have received arms, military and security equipment or training from a select group which includes Bulgaria, China, France, Germany, Israel, Romania, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the USA. It is the saddest of ironies that among this group are numbered the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the states especially charged with maintaining peace and security throughout the world. Even deeper is the irony that some of these powerful countries now deny sanctuary to African refugees fleeing human rights violations.

The governments, companies and individuals that have supplied deadly goods and services to forces violating human rights, or have acquiesced in such transfers, are linked in a chain of repression which stretches from the killing grounds of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, the torture chambers of Angola, the beaches of Togo or the streets of Kenya, back to quiet market towns in England and France, to Russia's industrial heartlands, to the neat classrooms and lecture theatres of US military academies.

They are linked by a chain along which sealed cargo-loads of grenades and assault rifles flown from Israel and Albania reached killers waiting at Goma airport in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). They are linked as the money returns to the banking houses through clandestine and circuitous routes via false companies and offshore accounts.

It is often a complex chain, but it can be broken. And it must be broken.

It is Amnesty International's mission to seek out the links, to discover which companies have put weapons in the hands of human rights abusers and which governments have allowed them to do so. To smash these networks by targeting the arms producers, exporters and brokers, as well as the human rights abusing recipients.

To do this, we need your help. In this newspaper, as well as describing some of the terrible crimes committed throughout the continent of Africa by government forces and rebel groups, we give you information so that you can help put an end to the abuses and stop the slaughter. How? By stopping the supply of arms and training to the killers and torturers. By ensuring that your government never allows military, security or police equipment, weaponry, personnel or training to fall into the hands of those who are likely to use it for human rights abuses. By shining a spotlight on the arms traders and brokers, the manufacturers and trainers, all those who are making profits from the repression of others. Act Now.

"The soldiers arrive, they burn, they raid, they loot. Our house was burned, and we fled... My mother was killed... At 65 years old, she couldn't run away when the men with arms approached, and she hid in a ditch. That was when one of them shot her in the head... No one dares point the finger at the assassins because they have the strength of their arms."

Anonymous testimony from Rwanda, 1998

PHOTOS:

Top: Thousands of weapons collected after the end of a six-year conflict are destroyed in Mali, March 1996
Above: Liberian militiamen, April 1996

**THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO:
The slaughter of a nation**

- Horrendous human rights abuses are taking place as government and rebel forces fight for control of the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Each side is formed by labyrinthine regional alliances. Alliances which are using weapons and expertise from friendly governments and companies around the world to destroy the lives of thousands of Congolese civilians.
- Thousands of children, some reportedly as young as seven, have been used as soldiers.

Untrammelled suffering

Your thoughts are elsewhere when an unexpectedly sonorous voice blares from your family's radio, announcing an urgent message from the government.

After the appropriate fanfare, the message begins. "People must bring a machete, a spear, an arrow, a hoe, spades, rakes, nails, truncheons... electric irons, barbed wire, stones..."

Then the speaker goes on to tell you why.

"In order, dear listeners, to kill the Rwandan Tutsi, who are currently in Ituri district."

Just over a year ago, in August 1998, this announcement was made by a government official in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at the beginning of a period of armed conflict in which human rights abuses committed by all sides have put the lives of millions of civilians at risk.

On 2 August 1998, Congolese armed groups with the help of government troops from Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi launched a military campaign to seize power in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since then DRC President Laurent-Désiré Kabila has been using all the means at his disposal to fight back.

President Kabila's coalition to quell the rebellion consists of sections of the Congolese armed forces still loyal to him, along with government troops from Angola, Chad, Namibia, Zimbabwe and reportedly Sudan, and armed opposition groups from Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

These governments and armed opposition groups have reportedly both been the beneficiaries of flows of arms or military expertise from countries as diverse as the USA and North Korea.

So, for example, the Congolese citizen who was listening to the government message on his radio in disbelief could be killed in a shoot-out between a US-trained Rwandese government soldier and a member of Rwanda's interahamwe who took part in the 1994 genocide.

Or he could be killed by a troop from Burundi carrying weapons which came from Bulgaria, as the troop takes revenge for an attack by an Angolan government soldier on one of their comrades from the Angolan armed opposition.

It would almost be farcical if it were not so heartbreaking. The citizens of the Democratic Republic of Congo, one of the poorest countries on earth, have been pulled into a war they don't want as the states around them play their games of geopolitics.

Thousands of civilians have been massacred as all parties wage a war against them, and many others have "disappeared" or been abducted, tortured, raped since the outbreak of fighting.

The abundance of weapons channelled to all sides has contributed to the climate of violence, paranoia and impunity. Those who have supplied arms have done so knowing full well that these transfers are likely to contribute to further human rights abuses.

There is no greater example of the chaos, the huge magnitude of human suffering, caused by untrammelled flows of soldiers and arms regionally and internationally.

The situation might get even worse. In November 1998 the UN Commission of Inquiry reported that “[t]he situation in the Great Lakes region is rapidly heading towards a catastrophe of incalculable consequences which requires urgent, comprehensive and decisive measures on the part of the international community.”

The same UN Commission of Inquiry went on to add that “[t]he danger of a repetition of tragedy comparable to the Rwandan genocide of 1994, but on a subregional scale, cannot be ruled out.” Controls on movements of military and security equipment and armed troops need to be set in place NOW. See the ‘Act Now’ section on these pages for details of how you can help – or, if you need any more persuading, take a look at the other articles on this page which detail the horrific human rights abuses inflicted by all sides in the conflict, and the extent to which the international community is mired in these abuses.

Government forces encourage slaughter of civilians

The propaganda put out by the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo continued throughout August 1998.

Government representatives appeared on television and radio to instruct Congolese citizens to slaughter the local Tutsi population. “Jump on the people with long noses, who are tall and slim and want to dominate us... Wake up, be aware of our destiny so as to defeat the enemy.”

A 12 August 1998 government radio bulletin declared: “The entire population has become a military population from today onwards... You will detect enemies and massacre them without mercy, victory is assured.”

The strategy of the Democratic Republic of Congo authorities was simply to foster popular hatred and fear of the Tutsi ethnic group, whom they linked with the invading forces from Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. They armed civilians with guns and instructed them to defend their “homeland” from the enemy, who were described as “a virus, a mosquito and filth which must be crushed with determination and resolve”.

The resonance of these calls should not be underestimated. When combatants from the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) – the coalition of opposition groups – approached the capital, Kinshasa, around 26 August 1998, the authorities encouraged ordinary civilians to seek out “rebels” hiding in the city. In addition to people with Tutsi appearance, there were reports that the mentally ill, those wearing sports clothing, or with red mud on their shoes (which is not found in Kinshasa) were also targeted.

By the next day, Kinshasa was the site of great cruelty and killing. Numerous suspected rebel combatants or supporters were burned alive with petrol or flaming tyres around their necks. One young man suspected of being a rebel combatant was attacked by a group of local people, his skull split open by machete blows, and his body thrown into the street and burned.

Charred bodies were seen by local fishermen floating in the Congo river, others were thrown into the Ndjili river. From the Kintambo and Masina districts of Kinshasa came reports describing how people accused of being rebels were buried alive.

The numbers killed in this butchery are unknown although Amnesty International has subsequently documented allegations of several mass graves near Kinshasa, containing hundreds of bodies. Members of other ethnic groups such as the Ngbandi, Ngbaka and Ngombe have also been targeted. In January 1999, for example, several hundred unarmed civilians were reportedly murdered by government forces in and around Zongo and Libenge in Equateur province.

Government forces have also detained hundreds of Tutsi and others accused of supporting the rebels. Most of these detainees had taken no part in the fighting. Although by July 1999 several hundred had been released and relocated to other countries, others still live in daily dread of future reprisals by government forces or by civilian crowds incited to attack them.

Amnesty International has also received information that during August 1998 at least 100 women and young girls were raped by government forces in and around Kinshasa, and there have been consistent reports of rapes and murder carried out by members of government forces as they transport women to places of detention.

Rebel forces kill thousands and use rape as weapon of war

In the course of its fighting against President Kabila's forces, the RCD has been responsible for atrocities as horrendous as, and apparently more widespread than, those perpetrated by government troops and their allies.

To avenge the killing of about 30 RCD and Rwandese troops, RCD combatants killed more than 850 unarmed civilians on 24 August 1998 in and around Kasika Roman Catholic parish in South-Kivu province. They killed a local traditional chief with a knife and removed his heart. One pregnant woman had her stomach opened. Children were held by their feet, their heads bounced against walls or trees. Many of them were thrown into latrines.

During these attacks, the RCD combatants reportedly opened fire on the townsfolk gathered at the main market place in Kilungutwe. Nearly 200 people fell under a hail of bullets.

One 32-year-old survivor told what happened next. "After the killing of all those you see at the market, they told us to regroup. In this house we were 54 people. They killed us two at a time. They forced us to strip naked at the entrance – our clothes were used to tie our arms. One part was used to cover the eyes. This is how more than 200 people were killed."

The survivor of the Kilungutwe massacre continued: "In our prison, a young boy cried, demanding to know what we had done, and he was strangled in front of us. The fact that I am alive is a miracle. Moreover, I wonder whether I am alive."

Reports are continuing to surface that hundreds of civilians were massacred by the RCD and its allies in late 1998 and early 1999. In the first few days of 1999, for example, RCD forces reportedly killed more than 1000 unarmed civilians at Makobola near Uvira in South-Kivu province. Amnesty International has also received a list of 109 unarmed civilians killed on 17 March 1999 by the RCD at Burhinyi in the Mwenga territory of South-Kivu province. Many other massacres, mainly of the Congolese Hutu ethnic group, by the RCD and Rwandese army have been reported in North-Kivu province.

The RCD and its allies have singled out women for sexual violence, and have used rape as a weapon of war. Immediately after capturing the town of Bukavu, one RCD commander ordered his men to search out and rape townswomen. Dozens of cases of rape were subsequently recorded, including the rape of a 14-year-old girl by four soldiers.

Fuelling the flames of conflict

Despite overwhelming evidence of mass human rights abuses committed by both sides, government forces and rebels have been able to obtain new supplies of weapons, equipment, training and personnel to continue their campaigns of torture and murder.

The following examples are meant only to indicate the range of arms, security equipment and personnel that are flooding into the Great Lakes region. The scale and numbers of states involved in the conflict, the complexity of legal and illicit arms supply routes, and the high levels of secrecy surrounding these deals and troop movements, make a comprehensive analysis impossible.

Government forces

There have been numerous reports that Zimbabwean and/or Angolan aircraft have been involved in the indiscriminate bombing of populous districts in Kinshasa and other towns. In January 1999, for example, Zimbabwean aircraft were reported to have indiscriminately bombed the city of Kisangani. In the light of such cases, Amnesty International has been concerned at Zimbabwean newspaper reports that Zimbabwe is re-equipping its air force, buying sophisticated F7 fighter planes from China and attack helicopters from the Russian Federation. Several media reports have also revealed how Zimbabwe had clinched a multi-million dollar deal with a Swiss company, Aerotech SA, for the supply of 65 UK-manufactured BL 755 cluster bombs. The Swiss government subsequently denied an export licence to the company, apparently out of fear that the bombs would be used in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Press reports also indicate that members of the Angolan and Zimbabwean armed forces have trained thousands of soldiers from the Congolese armed forces. Altogether, the Congolese government is reportedly planning to use Zimbabwean and Angolan assistance to train up to 25,000 men. These government forces have also been reinforced by Angolan and Zimbabwean troops.

Rebel forces

Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi have supplied troops and equipment to opposition forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and are continuing to do so. Local sources report that there have been almost daily movements of troops and equipment from the three countries by land and air.

- Uganda

In the light of these major arms transfers, subsequent reports that Uganda has acquired further arms are particularly worrying. Newspaper reports allege that in January 1999 a North Korean ship docked in Dar es Salaam port, Tanzania, with a huge military consignment bound for Uganda. The arms cache reportedly included "six pieces of armoured tanks, 5,000 anti-tank missiles, 5,000 anti-aircraft missiles, 5,000 automatic machine guns, 1,000 grenade launchers, 2,000 boxes of ammunition..."

In December 1998 there were media reports that Uganda had received 62 battletanks from Ukraine via Dar es Salaam. The deal was reportedly brokered by an Israeli arms dealer. Although Uganda is also fighting an internal conflict in its northern regions, some or all of the weapons may be destined for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In July 1999 a Ugandan newspaper, The New Vision, reported how thousands of rebel fighters in the Democratic Republic of Congo were being trained by Ugandan instructors. Prior to this transfer, there were numerous reports that US special forces trained Ugandan counterparts during 1997 as part of the US government's Africa Crisis Response Initiative.

- Rwanda

There are estimated to be at least 10,000 Rwandese soldiers now fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although many volunteered to join the Rwandese Patriotic Army, there have also been large scale round-ups of men and children who are forced to undergo military training and then fight in the conflict. Prisoners from Rwanda have also been made to fight in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In some cases, the training is carried out in Gabiro military training camp in eastern Rwanda. Military experts described by Rwandese sources as US nationals were reportedly among those carrying

out some of the training at the camp, although it is unclear whether these experts have links to the US government.

The USA does, however, remain a close political and military ally of the Rwandese government. US authorities supplied training to members of the Rwandese Patriotic Army between 1996 and 1998, during which time the Rwandese Patriotic Army committed grave human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Rwanda. The USA has rarely condemned the human rights record of the Rwandese Patriotic Army.

Following the outbreak of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo in August 1998, the US government claimed that it had withdrawn all its military personnel from Rwanda. However reports of the presence of US personnel in Rwanda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have continued to reach Amnesty International after this date.

- Bulgaria

Bulgaria has been a major supplier of arms and security equipment to human rights abusers in the Great Lakes region for many years. Many of the protagonists now fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been good customers:

- Bulgaria played a role in arming Burundi government forces during the regional arms embargo which ran from August 1996 to January 1999. According to a UN official and a Belgium-based pilot interviewed by Human Rights Watch in August 1996, weapons flights out of Bulgaria were supplying the Burundi government as well as Burundi Hutu rebels. In February 1998 a plane flying from Bulgaria to Bujumbura, Burundi, was grounded in Lagos, Nigeria, after weapons were discovered on board.

- The Bulgarian defence ministry reportedly arranged in 1998 to sell tanks to Uganda. A government spokesperson confirmed in December 1998 that Bulgaria's export licensing body had authorized the sale of "rather old types of tanks" to Uganda, as well as to Ethiopia.

- Arms to Rwandese forces allegedly responsible for genocide in 1994 were flown from Bulgaria to Goma airport in the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire) in early 1995. This was in direct breach of a UN arms embargo.

Bulgaria has been notorious as a haven for arms brokers, for its lax enforcement of arms export controls, and for the breaching of UN arms embargoes by Bulgarian nationals. There are real dangers that Bulgarian supplied arms and military equipment are now being used to commit human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Seven-year-olds used as soldiers

"I have no interest in going to school, I've fought and killed many people. I'm a soldier, it's all the experience I need." Musimbi, a soldier with President Kabila's forces since the age of 13 [reported by Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers / Reuters, 9 February 1999]

Government and rebel forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo, together with their allies from Burundi, Rwanda and reportedly Uganda, are using thousands of children as soldiers. President Kabila recruited thousands of child soldiers to support his military campaign against the previous Mobutu government. An official communiqué aired on national radio in August 1998 reportedly called for children and youths between 12 and 20 to enlist in the armed forces. Since then, recruitment of children has increased. Some "soldiers" are reportedly as young as seven years old. In July 1999 the Democratic Republic of Congo government informed Amnesty International it had stopped the recruitment of children, and had prevented those already in the armed forces from participating in combat roles. However, as of August 1999 Amnesty International has not been able to confirm this.

The rebel army reportedly re-enlisted around 600 former child soldiers during August 1998. The children were being held in transit centres as part of an experimental UNICEF rehabilitative program in which they learned technical skills and followed classes prior to their reunification with their families. Although the RCD leaders have said they would stop recruiting child soldiers, children

continue to participate in the conflict. Rwandese forces have also forcibly recruited children from Rwanda to fight in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

International human rights and humanitarian law prohibits the recruitment or participation in hostilities of any child under the age of 15. Amnesty International together with a host of other non-governmental organizations is pressing to raise this minimum age to 18 years through the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Amnesty International opposes the transfer of arms, military equipment, personnel or training to armed forces where it can be reasonably assumed to contribute to people under the age of 18 participating in hostilities.

ACT NOW

Flows of arms and military resources and personnel to the Democratic Republic of Congo have contributed to the deaths of thousands of civilians. The international community must take action now to stop the carnage.

Write to the USA:

Please write to Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State.

- 1 Explain Amnesty International's concerns in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 1 Call upon the US government to clarify the relationship between the support and training that the US military has provided to members of the Rwandese Patriotic Army since 1996 and the Ugandan army in 1997, and the operations of both forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 1 Ask the US government to clarify the exact role of US military personnel reportedly present in Rwanda in 1998.
- 1 Ask how the US government monitors and evaluates military, security and police training to ensure it does not lead to human rights abuses.
- 1 Ask the US government to comply with the Leahy amendment (Section 570 of the US Foreign Operations Authorisation Act), by ensuring that no US assistance is provided to security force units who have been shown to have committed gross human rights abuses.

+ Secretary of State Madeleine Albright,
State Department, 2201 C Street North West,
Washington DC 20520,
USA

Write to Bulgaria:

Please write a letter to Petar Stoyanov, President of Bulgaria.

- 1 Explain Amnesty International's human rights concerns in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 1 Raise Amnesty International's concerns regarding the past transfer of military, security and police equipment from Bulgaria to human rights abusers in the Great Lakes region.
- 1 Call upon the Bulgarian government to halt all military, security or police equipment likely to be used to commit human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ask how they will enforce this.

- + Petar Stoyanov, President of Bulgaria,
Dondukov 2, 1123 Sofia,
Bulgaria

Write to Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Uganda:

Please write a letter to the leaders of the governments below.

- 1 Explain Amnesty International's human rights concerns in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- 1 Ask the governments to issue public instructions that human rights violations by their combatants will not be tolerated.
- 1 Call upon them to investigate allegations of human rights violations by their own country's forces and those of their allies and bring those responsible to justice.
- 1 Ask them to instruct all combatants to abide by international human rights and humanitarian law, and to halt all supplies of arms and military expertise likely to be used by parties to the conflict or by their allies to commit human rights violations.

- + His Excellency, The Hon Robert Mugabe,
Office of the President,
Private Bag 7700, Causeway,
Harare,
Zimbabwe

- + Major General Paul Kagame,
Vice-President and Minister of Defence,
Ministry of Defence,
BP 23 Kigali,
Rwanda

- + President Yoweri K. Museveni,
Office of the President,
Parliament Buildings
PO Box 7168,
Kampala,
Uganda

PHOTO CAPS

Rebel soldiers wait to be deployed to patrol streets in Goma, October 1998

A 14-year-old rebel soldier holds hands with a fellow soldier in Kindu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo © AP/ Brennan Linsley

SO WHO'S FIGHTING WHO? AND WHO'S HELPING?

I) Forces allied with the Democratic Republic of Congo* government

Forces loyal to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) President Laurent Kabila include:

- Sections of the Congolese armed forces (FAC)
- Zimbabwean government troops (up to 10,000)
- Angolan government troops (around 2,000)
- Chadian, Namibian, and reportedly Sudanese government troops
- Armed opposition groups from Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda
- Various Congolese armed groups, including the mai mai

These troops are being helped by...

- Zimbabwean and/or Angolan aircraft, which have been used to bomb civilians
- Members of the Angolan and Zimbabwean armed forces who have reportedly trained thousands of soldiers loyal to Kabila
- 300 North Korean military experts reportedly arrived in the Democratic Republic of Congo in June 1999

II) Opposition / “Rebel” (RCD) forces

To fight government forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo, civilian and military government opponents formed a coalition known as the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD), Congolese Rally for Democracy. Opposition groups within or supporting the RCD include:

- Splinter sections of the Congolese armed forces (FAC)
- Burundi government troops, armed with the aid of the Bulgarian government
- Rwandese government troops (at least 10,000). Some Rwandese government troops have been trained by US military personnel
- Ugandan government troops (up to 10,000), who according to media reports received military equipment from Ukraine and Bulgaria
- Reportedly the Angolan armed opposition group UNITA

RCD soldiers are also being helped by...

- Training provided by the armed forces of Rwanda and reportedly Uganda

*formerly known as Zaire.

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Togo exposed

- French military aid funds repression of civilians.
- Security forces murder hundreds before and after June 1998 presidential elections.
- Togo government calls Amnesty International’s accusations ‘pack of lies’.
- Tortured Amnesty International member tells of his terrifying ordeal.

Togo: Time for accountability

The dead bodies were first seen by Beninese and Togolese fishermen.

One of the fishermen described to Amnesty International researchers how “eight kilometres from the beach at Ague [in Benin], hundreds of bodies were floating out at sea”. Another filled in the details, “When I was taking in my nets, I found a corpse among the fish; some corpses were handcuffed and others were wearing uniforms.”

Others gave similar testimony about how some bodies had bullet wounds or were handcuffed, one telling Amnesty International researchers that he saw an armband – the mark of the Togolese opposition – on one of the corpses.

Amnesty International’s findings have been reinforced by a July 1999 report by the Ligue Béninoise des Droits de L’Homme which stated that at least 100 bodies had been seen floating in the sea along the coast of Benin.

All those questioned by Amnesty International said that shortly before the bodies started appearing, there were unusual movements of planes and helicopters, sometimes flying at very low altitudes out to

sea. Former members of the Togolese paracommando regiment who had sought refuge in Benin recognized the characteristic sound of Canadian-built Buffalo aircraft.

In Togo, it is only the security forces that possess Buffalo planes and helicopters.

Put simply, the Togolese armed forces and paramilitary police are terrorizing the people they are meant to protect. This has become most brutally apparent in periods leading up to electoral rallies, when the authorities sense a will for change among the population. Hundreds of people were extrajudicially executed during the presidential elections of June 1998.

For years, murders and “disappearances” have been carried out by the security forces with total impunity. Arbitrary arrests followed by torture, ill-treatment and death are common. Scores of civilians and military personnel have been detained for months, even years, without charge or trial. The majority of those arrested over the past four years have been held solely on suspicion of being “rebels” or members of an opposition party.

The security forces have always made use of torture in Togo. But during the last decade, this torture has become routine. One former detainee, an opposition party member, told Amnesty International: “I was received at the gendarmerie headquarters by blows from cables, rifle butts and batons all over my body. They asked me questions about my party and accused me of being an arms trafficker... They struck me with batons and belt buckles... at a certain moment I fell down and had difficulty getting up again. No one helped me to get up; they continued to beat me to make me get up again on the table on my own... the next day at four o’clock in the morning the police served me a ‘strong coffee’ [slang for being woken by beatings with batons].”

For further information about the human rights situation in Togo, see Togo: Rule of terror (May 1999, AI Index: AFR 57/01/99)

French francs finance terror

Instead of protecting Togolose citizens, the Togolese security forces are behind a wave of terror which is undermining the fragile structure of Togolese society. Yet who is behind the security forces themselves?

Togo continues to benefit from significant military aid from France, the former colonial power. Under a defence agreement, France can be called into Togo at any time in response to external invasion. Although the details of the agreement have never been made public, it also reportedly allows for French intervention in the event of internal unrest in Togo.

The secrecy surrounding French military cooperation with Togo makes detailed analysis difficult. But information received by Amnesty International indicates that French military aid, in particular that relating to the supply of equipment and military training, has been used to repress the civilian population of Togo.

- In August 1998 the security forces launched attacks on the homes of Jean Pierre Fabre, Gnassingbé Amah and other opposition leaders using small arms and rockets. Some of the bullets recovered after these attacks were analysed and found to have been manufactured by a French company, Société Française de Munitions (SFM).
- France provides five million francs annually in direct aid for equipment maintenance. France has also repaired and refurbished the Togolese Airforce’s Canadian-built Buffalo aircraft, designed and used for aerial drops of paratroops and containers. These are the same aircraft which were reportedly used to jettison dead bodies along the coasts of Togo and Benin (see right).

- France provides a permanent presence of 28 military advisers, including instructors, a pilot and mechanics. France also trained members of the Togolese forces. It is unclear what, if any, procedures are in place for screening the human rights record of Togolese trainees or for monitoring their activities after they have finished their training programs.

- A high-ranking officer of the Togolese gendarmerie, who was accused by Togo's National Commission for Human Rights of ordering the torture of four people in August 1990, was awarded the decoration of the National Order of Merit by France in April 1998. Other officers, allegedly responsible for torture or ill-treatment, have been trained in France.

Mauritanian army officer accused of torture was trained by French

Ely Ould Dha, a Mauritanian army officer, was arrested in France in July 1999 for the alleged torture of two Mauritanian citizens in the early 1990s. At the time of the arrest, Ely Ould Dha was attending a course run by the French army at a military school in Montpellier.

This poses serious questions about the rigour of the French forces' human rights screening procedures for foreign military personnel.

Togolese government responds to Amnesty International report by censoring media and jailing human rights defenders

Amnesty International launched a report, *Togo: Rule of terror*, on 5 May 1999. The Togolese authorities reacted strongly to the report, calling it "a pack of lies" and announcing that they would sue Amnesty International. The government immediately banned local media from publishing excerpts of the report. On 21 May 1999 a high-level mission led by Amnesty International's Secretary General Pierre Sané was prevented from entering Togo.

In the resulting crack-down, four human rights defenders, including one member of Amnesty International's Togolese Section, Nadjombe Antoine Koffi, were arrested. All four were released on bail, but were charged with "attack on the credibility and security of the state, spreading false information and using forged documents". Other human rights defenders have been forced into hiding for fear of arrest. Amnesty International has called for an independent inquiry into the arrests.

A diary of torture

Ameen Ayodele is a member of the Nigerian Section of Amnesty International, where he coordinates a local group on Lagos Island, and sits as a member of the section's Refugee and Relief Work Committee.

On Wednesday 19 May 1999 Ameen was returning home from a trip to Accra in Ghana. His route took him through Togo. At the border post of Aflao, between Ghana and Togo, he presented his Amnesty International membership card to the guards as means of identification as all his other documents, including his passport, had been stolen. He was immediately arrested on suspicion of being "a spy" for Amnesty International.

"Two policemen came in and I was asked to follow them. They took me to a room, an interpreter later joined them. I was given a thorough beating and told to confess the name of my contact in Togo. After about 30 minutes, I was left alone for 10 minutes with the pains of my torture... I was asked to remove all my clothes, I was completely naked, and thrown into the cell."

Ameen was to spend the next nine days in a confined cell, naked and deprived of food. He was beaten and tortured every day, as the Togolese authorities interrogated him about his involvement with Amnesty International in Togo. But he wasn't a spy. He had no information to give them. He has given Amnesty International permission to reproduce some extracts from his diary.

Thursday 20th May 1999

I was woken up very early... around 3am. I was asked to go to the toilet for one minute, which I did. As I was coming back from the latrine I was attacked by two police officers and beaten. I was told that this is called the "morning tea". I was returned to my cell still naked. I am given no food nor water.

Friday 21st May 1999

I received the "morning tea" as usual, neither food nor drink as usual. In the evening, two men in plain clothes came to pick me up, I was taken to a room and they started another question session. I repeated what I told the Chief of Police. They then asked if I am in opposition in Nigeria and asked about the pamphlet I was distributing. I repeated I have no pamphlet for distribution. [One of the men] was annoyed and brought out his gun and put it in my mouth threatening to shoot if I did not give the name of the person I am in liaison with in Togo. I remained resolute and told him I know no one in Togo. He then told his second that they should just shoot me and go. The other one replied that it is better done at night. He then told me I have between now and night time to save my life and if I do not give a name he is very sure I will not see tomorrow. I was returned to my cell.

Saturday 22nd May 1999

Early in the morning before the "morning tea", they returned. With them was a police officer with a rifle. I was taken to the side of the beach (next to the border post). I was told to give them the name so that they could let me go. The alternative is for them to shoot me and throw me to the sea. I refuse to answer. I know my answer will not change their mind. At this point I have damned all consequences and remain bold and prayerful. I close my eyes and expect to hear the shot. But it never came. Instead it was the hands of the guards dragging me to my cell.

- At 3pm on Thursday 27 May Ameen was released. He was given an hour to get out of Togo.

Act Now

Shocked? We are. And we need you to do something about it. Please write three letters: one to the French government, one to the Togolese government, and the final one to the Société Française de Munitions, the French company that manufactured the bullets used by the Togolese security forces in an attack on the houses of opposition leaders in August 1998.

1. Letters to the French government:

Please write a letter similar to the sample below, voicing your concern over French military assistance to Togo, and send it to the Prime Minister of France. Post it today!

+ Monsieur Lionel Jospin
Premier Ministre
Hôtel Matignon
57, rue de Varenne
75007 Paris, France

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you to express my serious concerns about the provision of French military and security equipment, logistical support and training to Togo. President Eyadéma's government has been responsible for hundreds of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", arbitrary arrests and torture in detention. The information received by Amnesty

International indicates that French military and security equipment, logistical support and training have been used to facilitate such human rights violations. In particular, I am concerned that:

* According to witnesses, Buffalo aircraft, built in Canada and overhauled in France, have been used by the Togolese security forces to drop bodies along the coasts of Togo and Benin.

* Evidence indicates that bullets found in August 1998 after the army attacked the homes of opposition leaders were manufactured by the French company Société Française de Munitions.

* A high-ranking officer of the Togolese gendarmerie, who had been accused of ordering torture, was awarded the decoration of the National Order of Merit by France in April 1998. Other officers allegedly responsible for torture or ill-treatment have been trained in France.

I strongly urge you to denounce publicly human rights violations committed by the Togolese security forces and to order the suspension of all transfers to Togo of military, security and police equipment, logistical support and training likely to contribute to further human rights violations.

2. Letters to the Togolese government:

- Express serious concern about the human rights situation in Togo, and in particular highlight reports of the extrajudicial executions, “disappearances”, arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment, being carried out with total impunity by the security forces. Also draw attention to the arrests, persecution and torture of human rights defenders in Togo.
- Urge the Togolese government to immediately put an end to human rights violations.
- Call for the establishment of an independent, impartial and competent international commission to investigate human rights violations perpetrated in Togo.

+ Son Excellence
Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma
Président de la République
Palais Présidentiel
Avenue de la Marina
Lomé, Togo

3. Letters to the Société Française de Munitions (SFM):

- Express your concern about the extremely high levels of human rights violations carried out by Togolese security forces.
- State that evidence indicates that bullets found after an attack on opposition leaders’ homes in August 1998 were manufactured by Société Française de Munitions. Ask the company for details of all its transfers of ammunition to Togo since 1992, and whether it has any contracts pending. Call on the company to cease the transfer of all ammunition and military or security equipment to Togo that is likely to be used for further human rights violations.

+ Société Française de Munitions (SFM)
150 Avenue de Verdun
92130 Issy-les-Moulineaux
France

PHOTOCAPS

French President Jacques Chirac greets Togolese President General Gnassingbé Eyadéma in March 1998. Instead of publicly denouncing human rights violations in Togo, President Chirac stated during a

visit to Togo in July 1999 that “Amnesty International’s latest report was probably the result of a manipulation”.

According to witnesses, airplanes similar to this DHC-5 Buffalo transport aircraft were used to jettison bodies along the coasts of Togo and Benin

Amnesty International’s Secretary General, Pierre Sané, holds one of the bullets used during an attack by the Togolese army on the houses of opposition leaders in August 1998. The bullets were manufactured by the French company Société Française de Munitions. © AI

Ameen Ayodele, a member of the Nigerian Section of Amnesty International, who was arrested and tortured in Togo in May 1999 © AI

PAGE 6/7

Landmines – The hidden killers

- A quarter of a million people – mostly civilians – are living with injuries inflicted by landmines*.
- In 1997 a treaty banning landmines was signed by 122 countries. The major producers, including China, the Russian Federation and the USA, chose not to be among them.
- In Senegal and Angola, landmines are still being used in the fighting between government and opposition forces. As usual, civilians have been the principal victims.
- In this text the word ‘landmine’ is used to refer to anti-personnel landmines.(APMs)

When there is no such thing as peace

Landmines are blind weapons. They cannot distinguish between the footfall of a soldier and that of an old woman or child gathering firewood. They recognize no cease-fire and, long after the fighting has stopped, they continue to destroy the lives of the children and grandchildren of the soldiers who laid them.

Landmines are designed to maim, and maim horribly. People who survive the initial blast usually require amputations, long hospital stays, and extensive rehabilitative services.

Today there are at least a quarter of a million men, women and children who have lost limbs or have been otherwise disabled by landmines. And every year landmines claim thousands of new victims.

Around the world, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chechnya, Iraq and Nicaragua are among those regions devastated by landmines. In Africa, Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique, Senegal, Somalia and Sudan are just some of the countries suffering this deadly scourge. Worldwide there are upwards of 60 million landmines in the ground. The number is notoriously hard to estimate, as the majority were laid at random, without mapping, to terrorize and demoralize local people. Mines can be found anywhere; in fields, in city streets, along rivers, in wells, outside schools, in orchards, surrounding villages, on roads used by refugees.

Landmines can render large tracts of agricultural land unusable, wreaking environmental and economic devastation. In many regions, refugees returning to their war-ravaged countries face this obstacle to rebuilding their lives.

For most people living in mine-affected areas, the mere suspicion that an area is mined can render that area useless. In 1996 for example, the entire population of a Mozambican village – 10,000 people – abandoned their homes after fears that the area was infested with landmines. The de-mining organization Norwegian People's Aid was called in to clear the area. After three months of work, they found four mines. Just four mines had denied access to land and caused the migration of 10,000 people.

Even if no more mines are ever laid, those already in the ground will continue to maim and kill for years to come. These pages show their devastating effects.

International campaign says 'No More Mines'

In October 1992 a number of non-governmental organizations, sickened by the devastation wrought by mines and by government inaction, came together to form the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL).

Today this network represents over 1,300 non-governmental organizations in over 75 countries, who work locally, nationally, and internationally to ban landmines. In 1997 the ICBL and its coordinator, Jody Williams, received the Nobel Peace Prize.

An important aim of the ICBL, working together with a grouping of governments led by Canada, was to establish a treaty to ban the use, production, stockpiling, sale, transfer or export of landmines. The campaign was remarkably successful. In 1997 the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction ('Mine Ban Treaty') was signed by 122 countries, and it came into force on 1 March 1999. By 9 August 1999, 135 states had signed the Mine Ban Treaty and 84 of these had ratified, accessed or approved it. Amnesty International, as a supporter of the ICBL, is now calling on all the governments of the world to:

- Sign, ratify, implement and monitor the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty.
- Ban the use, production, stockpiling, sale, transfer or export of landmines.
- Provide resources for community-based de-mining and mine awareness programs, and to assist and help the victims of landmines.

Act Now

Write to your government:

- Highlight Amnesty International's concerns over the continued production, storage and use of anti-personnel landmines (APMs).
- If your government has not signed and ratified the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty, urge that it does so.
- If your government has ratified the Treaty, ask how it intends to ensure that the Treaty's provisions are implemented in full.
- Ask that it raises the issue of APMs with other governments at all relevant opportunities and that it encourages them to sign, ratify and fully implement the Treaty.
- Ask that it provides resources for demining programs and to help and heal victims of APMs.

USA: A case of hypocrisy in high places?

In the past, the USA was one of the biggest exporters of landmines. According to Human Rights Watch, between 1969 and 1992, the country was responsible for exporting at least 4.4 million landmines to 32 or more countries. US landmines have reportedly been used in Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia and Zambia.

In 1992, however, the US authorities put in place an export ban on landmines, and in 1994, President Clinton became one of the first world leaders to call for the “eventual elimination” of landmines. There were further positive signs in 1996 when President Clinton said the US would “lead a global effort” to ban landmines, and would “seek a worldwide agreement as soon as possible to end the use of all anti-personnel landmines”.

Yet in December 1997 the USA refused to help turn these fine principles into reality by signing the Mine Ban Treaty.

The US government has since added that it will not sign up to the Treaty until the year 2006, and only then if suitable alternatives to landmines have been developed. Furthermore, although the country’s export ban on landmines remains in place, it has refused to announce a moratorium or ban on landmine production.

Act Now

Write to President Bill Clinton appealing to the USA to sign and ratify the Mine Ban Treaty. Here’s one idea for a letter...

+ President Bill Clinton
The White House
Office of the President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500
United States of America

Dear President Clinton,

Three years ago, you gave your personal commitment that the USA would “lead a global effort” to ban anti-personnel landmines, and that you would “seek a worldwide agreement as soon as possible to end [their] use”.

In December 1997, 122 countries joined together to sign the Mine Ban Treaty, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production, sale and transfer of anti-personnel landmines.

Yet the USA was not among them.

Could you please explain to me how this matches with your worthy sentiments?

Please use your good offices to ensure that the USA signs, ratifies and fully implements the Mine Ban Treaty at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

xx

Angola: The Story of Fernanda Cuokine

The woman was calling for help from the middle of a vast minefield. They could hear her but not see her. As darkness fell, she was on the ground, injured, in bush over a metre high.

It was April 1998, and two members of the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) – a non-governmental organization which carries out humanitarian de-mining work throughout the world – had answered a call for help from Luena, Angola.

They arrived to find a group of people at the edge of a well-known, although badly marked minefield, which had been laid by the Cuban forces that assisted the Angolan government until the late 1980s. People were calling into the bush. One girl in particular was very distressed, shouting, “Mae? Mae?”. The MAG staff realized she was calling for her mother, whose name they found out was Fernanda. Fernanda’s accident had occurred that afternoon as she was collecting wood. She knew the dangers: a year before, she had been in the same place collecting wood with a friend who had stood on a mine and lost her leg. But, even though she was heavily pregnant, Fernanda simply had to go to the minefield. She needed the wood.

As the MAG clearance team entered the minefield they constantly talked to Fernanda to keep her conscious. In the dark it would have been impossible to locate her without her voice as a guide. On route to Fernanda the MAG staff found five landmines. They did not reach her until just before midnight, by which time Fernanda had been lying bleeding for eight hours. She had lost the lower part of her right leg.

The MAG team had to clear the ground around Fernanda before it was safe to put her on a stretcher, carry her from the minefield and take her to Luena central hospital. The extra blood produced to support the pregnancy probably saved her life over such a long period without medical assistance. Shortly after arriving at the hospital Fernanda suffered a miscarriage.

Six weeks after her accident, Fernanda’s husband, a soldier, left her to find another wife. A month later he was remarried but he continued to visit Fernanda in hospital. In November, he went into the same minefield near the airport, collecting wood as Fernanda had been. He stood on a mine, and died three days later.

Source: Mines Advisory Group Annual Report 1999

The continuing tragedy

Of the 34 countries that exported landmines in the past, all but one – Iraq – have at least made formal statements that they are no longer exporting landmines. And although it is possible that some of these countries are continuing to export landmines despite their public policy pronouncements, researchers have yet to identify a single significant shipment of landmines since the beginning of 1998.

Yet the world is still awash with landmines. In fact, for every landmine that has been laid, there is another one waiting to be used.

There are an estimated 250 million landmines stored in the arsenals of 108 countries. The largest stockpilers include China (110 million), Russian Federation (60-70 million), Belarus (tens of millions) and the USA (11 million) – all states which have refused to sign the Mine Ban Treaty. These mines must be destroyed before they have a chance to get into the ground.

No end of grieving in Senegal

If you shop around, you can buy a landmine in a Casamance market for as little as three US dollars.

That's cheap, considering the long journey that the mine would have taken to reach you – probably beginning its life in China, Bulgaria or Russia, and reaching Senegal via Guinea-Bissau or Gambia. If you wanted to buy the mine, you may have to compete with armed bandits and highwaymen, who lay mines to cover their flight or to frighten locals.

It might be best to enlist the help of a local, to whom landmines would be a familiar sight. Over the past years, scores, possibly hundreds of people have been killed in the Senegalese province of Casamance by landmines. Many more have been injured. Landmines have been laid by an armed opposition group, Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC), but many have also been laid by the army.

Civilians have been the principal victims. Official statistics show that during 1997, they accounted for 19 of the 29 people killed by landmines. (According to the the same statistics, landmines also injured 92 people that year, 87 of whom were mutilated or had limbs amputated).

A local human rights organization, Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme (RADDHO), reports that well over half of all landmine victims in Casamance are under the age of 18. RADDHO also claims that around 200 villages have effectively disappeared as a result of the effect of landmines, as people cannot farm their land or access rice fields any more.

Senegal's 15-year-old armed conflict escalated in August 1997 after 25 Senegalese soldiers died in an ambush. Along with the escalation of conflict came a corresponding increase in the number of landmines being laid. The army started a new offensive against the MFDC, at the same time committing gross human rights violations against the civilian population. In response, the MFDC increased its own attacks and laid more landmines, with no mapping. The MFDC continues to lay landmines, in particular along the Guinea-Bissau and Gambian borders.

Senegal has signed and ratified the Mine Ban Treaty. However, the Senegalese army still uses landmines, for example as "protection" around its military camps, although this is officially denied. Unofficially, both the army and the MFDC have admitted being responsible for laying landmines.

On the night of 27 February 1998, members of the MFDC attacked the town of Kaguitt. After the fighting, the rebel forces fell back, mining the territory surrounding the town as they retreated. The following day a young girl, Moussou Keba Djiba, was out walking. Without thinking, she stepped on a small mound in her path. The mine lying under the soil exploded, killing her with its blast. The same day, in the same place, a young boy called Sane lost one of his legs to a mine.

Act Now

Write to Senegalese President Abou Diouf:

- Highlight Amnesty International's concerns about the maiming and killing of people through anti-personnel landmines (APMs) in Senegal. Point out that the laying of APMs by the Senegalese army breaches Senegal's obligations under the Mine Ban Treaty.
- Call on the government to immediately end the laying of APMs; to destroy all stockpiles of APMs; to prevent the transfer and sale of APMs within and from Senegal; and to investigate killings and injuries caused by such landmines, holding those who have laid the mines responsible for their actions.

+ Son Excellence Monsieur Abdou Diouf
Président de la République
La Présidence
Avenue Roume, BP 168
Dakar, Sénégal

Write to the leader of the MFDC, Augustin Diamacoune:

- Highlight the fact that the majority of anti-personnel landmines (APMs) laid in Senegal are placed by MFDC forces.
- Call on the MFDC to immediately end the laying of APMs because of the dangers of mutilating and killing people; to destroy all current stockpiles of APMs; and to prevent the transfer and sale of such landmines within MFDC-held areas.
- + Monsieur l'Abbé Augustin Diamacoune Senghor
Secrétaire Général du MFDC
Diocèse de Ziguinchor
Ziguinchor
Sénégal

Landmines employed in renewed Angolan conflict

More than three decades of almost constant internal conflict have left Angola with one of the world's most serious landmine problems.

The conflict has progressed through the phases of anti-colonial struggle and cold war politics and is now increasingly linked with the war raging across central Africa. In the past, Portuguese, Cuban and South African forces were reported to have deployed landmines in Angola. Today, however, the overwhelming responsibility for mine-laying lies with the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) and the armed opposition, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Although the Angolan government signed the Mine Ban Treaty in December 1997, since then it has reportedly been responsible for systematically laying new mines and minefields. UNITA forces have also been reportedly engaged in laying fresh mines. In October 1998 the UN spoke out, reporting that humanitarian work was being hampered by "newly laid landmines".

On 2 December 1998, four non-governmental organizations working in Angola published an open letter to the Angolan government and UNITA, calling on both sides to stop using landmines and noting that 66 people had been maimed or killed by landmines in Moxico province alone since June 1998.

Later that month, the shaky peace process between the Angolan government and UNITA finally collapsed and Angola plunged back into a fourth war. In February 1999 the UN peace-keeping mission was not renewed. Landmines once again feature prominently in the renewed conflict. Even before war was renewed, there were an estimated six million mines still in the ground. Minefields were planted to destroy infrastructure and are concentrated around roads, railways, bridges, and public facilities such as schools, churches, water supply points, and health care facilities.

Angola has one of the highest rates of landmine injuries per capita in the world. Out of a population of about nine million there are between 70,000-100,000 amputees, the great majority victims of landmines.

Act Now

Write to Angolan President, José Eduardo dos Santos:

- Highlight Amnesty International's concerns about the maiming and killing of people by anti-personnel landmines (APMs) in Angola.
- Call on the government to immediately end the laying of APMs; to destroy all stockpiles of APMs; to prevent the transfer and sale of APMs within and from Angola; and to investigate killings and injuries caused by such landmines, holding those who have laid them responsible for their actions.
- + Sua Excelência José Eduardo dos Santos
Presidente da República
Gabinete da Presidência da República

Palácio do Povo, Luanda
Angola

Write to Isaac Wambambe, head of UNITA in Lisbon:

- Highlight the fact that there are reports of UNITA forces, as well as the Angolan army, laying mines in Angola.
- Call on UNITA to immediately end the laying of APMs because of the dangers of mutilating and killing people; to destroy all current stockpiles of APMs; and to prevent the transfer and sale of APMs within UNITA-held areas.

+ Exmo. Sr. Isaac Wambambe
Rua Rodrigo da Fonseca 82
- 2a esq
1200 Lisboa
Portugal

A date with death

The image above is taken from the November / December page of 'Pakistan Ordnance Factories' 1999 calendar. On the centre left is a landmine.

In March 1997 the Pakistan government stated that it would observe a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines. However, even in their December 1998 brochure, Pakistan Ordnance Factories were still advertising two landmines, one of which they describe as "an anti-personnel weapon in which a grenade is projected to a certain height and then detonated giving the desired fragmentation."

PHOTOS

Above photo: A variety of anti-personnel mines and other ordnance discovered by humanitarian de-miners.

Source: MAG 1999 Annual Report

A Mines Advisory Group deminer clearing soil from around a Romanian Mai-75 anti-personnel mine in Moxico Province, Angola © Sean Sutton/MAG

PAGE 8

The spread of electroshock weaponry

- There is evidence from a growing number of African countries of the use of electroshock weapons to control prisoners or ordinary citizens.
- These weapons inflict "excruciating pain" and can leave lifelong mental scars.
- 16 people died after electric batons were used to control a crowd in South Africa in 1996.
- US and South African electroshock weapons have been exported across the globe as well as supplied to their home countries.

'Stop the beating... electric batons don't leave scars'

"Roberto", a 50-year-old university professor, felt the hail of sticks subside as the Zairian officer commanded his men to stop the beating.

Not because the officer suddenly saw his men were out of control. And not because he had been overcome by a sudden wave of compassion. But because, in the officer's own words, "it will leave scars and we will get complaints from Amnesty International."

Instead, he ordered his men to use an electroshock baton.

"Roberto", in a later interview, picks up the story. "They worked on me... with the electric baton on the nape of the neck and in the genitals. It hurt so much that even now when I speak it is difficult to keep my head still as the back of my neck hurts very much.

"This type of weapon... I could really call it something really horrible – immoral – because those people who make it for torture, they don't test it on their own bodies and they don't know the pain it causes. They do it to make other people suffer quite simply to make money. It's very sad."

"Roberto" (we can't use his real name because it may put his life in danger) was arrested and tortured in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 1991. Yet at the other end of the 1990s, despite international treaties and conventions, countries like the USA – so proud to proclaim themselves as guardians of human rights – have not prevented the misuse of modern high-pulse and high-voltage electroshock weapons. Far from it: the USA has actually exported such weapons to countries where electroshock torture has occurred.

Electric shock torture is now being discovered in more countries than ever before. During the 1990s, it has been used in prisons, detention centres and police stations in over 60 countries. Many of these are in Africa, and include Chad, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Amnesty International knows for certain that hand-held electroshock weapons, specifically designed and marketed for use on human beings, have been used in at least 20 countries worldwide. However, the real number is probably higher, as the use of these weapons can be very difficult to detect.

Torturers often prefer using electric shock torture precisely because they believe it will not leave permanent marks as evidence on their victims' bodies, and thus make their crimes undetectable. The immediate effects of such electric shock torture vary, but include severe pain, loss of muscle control, nausea, convulsions, fainting, and involuntary defecation and urination. Muscle stiffness and long-term damage to teeth and hair have been documented as well as devastating mental scars which can lead to severe depression and impotence.

Amnesty International's research shows that during the 1990s, over 120 companies operating in 22 countries have manufactured, sold, marketed, advertised or sought to procure electroshock weapons.

As "Roberto" states, these "business people" are spreading the means of torture and ill-treatment across the globe "quite simply to make money".

As the stories on this page show, the effects of this unregulated trade are horrific.

Angola: Police call themselves 'instruments of repression'

Thirty members of Angola's paramilitary Rapid Intervention Police, wearing masks and carrying black electric batons, machine guns and tear gas, suddenly burst into the room where a group from the Comité dos Nacionais de Cabinda, Committee of Cabinda Nationalists – a political organization committed to non-violence – were meeting.

They arrested and handcuffed 27 of those present, and took them to the police headquarters in Cabinda City. The detainees were made to lie on the floor and were beaten. Some were given electric shocks from the batons, some had bayonets held to their throats.

The police commander reportedly told the victims that the police everywhere in the world were an “instrument of repression”. Using a football metaphor, he warned them they had been shown the yellow card, next time they would be shown the red.

This incident took place in January 1995. Electroshock torture in Angola has continued. In August 1998 for example, a Protestant cleric, Pastor Afonso Justino Waco, was arrested by police in Cabinda City shortly after giving a radio interview and beaten with electroshock batons.

South Africa: Sixteen dead after electroshock baton stampede

On 31 July 1996, 16 railway commuters died and 80 others were seriously injured during a mass stampede of people at Tembisa Station in Johannesburg, South Africa. A government-appointed committee investigated the tragedy and in August 1996 issued a report. It stated: “The direct and most immediate cause of the disaster at Tembisa Station on 31 July 1996 is the improper and persistent prodding and shocking of commuters with electric batons by private security guards... in a cruel and inhumane manner.”

The report went on to say that, “the private security guards used the electric shock batons for crowd control purposes when in fact the batons are patently inappropriate for that purpose.”

The committee called for such batons to be banned until reliable and independent medical research confirms that their use would not subject a person to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

On 31 October 1996, after the publication of the committee’s report, security guards at the University of the Western Cape were accused of using a hand-held electroshock stun baton on a crowd of students seeking to register for study. An eyewitness described how “a suspicious-looking charcoal coloured device [was] pointed at a female student. The device made a sound like an electrical short circuit and the student fell back into the crowd screaming... when the door opened again, the same tactics were used.”

An internal University inquiry found that the Campus Protection Services had previously requisitioned 10 “paralyser” stun batons from a local South African company. The batons were subsequently withdrawn from the University.

As well as being a land where electroshock torture and ill-treatment have been reported, South Africa can boast of being a supplier of electroshock instruments to other countries. To Amnesty International’s knowledge there is no prohibition in South Africa on the possession and transfer of electroshock weapons.

One South African company which was reported to have been a supplier of electroshock riot shields, stun guns and shock batons was Force Group. A promotional advert for the Force Group electroshock shield declares: “When pressing the switch, which is within easy reach of the user’s thumb, the front area of the shield between the aluminium bars becomes electrified with a voltage of up to 50,000 volts... With small bursts of up to 5 seconds, the unit is good for several thousand bursts.”

Act Now

The trade in electroshock weaponry must be strictly regulated. Stun belts must be banned. Here's how you can help.

1. Write to Stun Tech and NOVA Products

- Outline Amnesty International's concerns regarding the use of the electroshock belt.
- Urge Stun Tech and NOVA Products to immediately and permanently cease production and distribution of the remote control electroshock stun belt both within the USA and abroad.
- Ask for information about the past supply of their electroshock belts.

+ Chairperson
Stun Tech Inc, 23860 Miles Road
Suite C, Cleveland, Ohio 44128
USA

+ Chairperson
Nova Products Inc
4861 Old Sparta Road
Cookeville, Tennessee, 38506, USA

2. Write to South Africa

Please write a letter to the Clerk of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, based on the sample below.

+ The Committee Clerk
Portfolio Committee on Foreign Affairs
Parliament of South Africa
PO Box 15
Cape Town 8000, South Africa

Dear Sir or Madam,

Since 1990 Amnesty International has recorded the use of electroshock torture and ill-treatment in more than 60 countries around the world. In at least 20 of these countries handheld shock weapons specifically designed for use on humans have been used.

The immediate effects of such electric shock torture include severe pain, loss of muscle control, nausea, convulsions, fainting and involuntary defecation and urination.

Amnesty International's research shows that during the 1990s, over 120 companies operating in 22 countries have manufactured, sold, marketed, advertised or sought to procure electroshock weapons.

Among them have been South African firms such as Force Group, which was reported to have been a supplier of electroshock riot shields, stun guns and shock batons.

I therefore ask you to bring the above concerns to the attention of members of the committee and ask them to urge the South African government to:

* immediately prohibit the transfer of all electroshock weapons by South African companies to any country where such weapons are likely to contribute to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

* suspend the promotion and transfer of electroshock weapons to ALL law enforcement agencies by South African companies until there has been a rigorous independent and impartial inquiry into the use and effects of these weapons.

Yours Sincerely,

xxx

The psychology of the stun belt

“Electricity speaks every language known to man. No translation necessary. Everybody is afraid of electricity, and rightfully so.” Dennis Kaufman, President of Stun-Tech.

Electroshock weaponry comes in forms such as shields, batons, stun guns... even “tasers”, which fire fishhook darts connected to wires and allow users to shock people from a distance. One of the cruelest developments in this cruel trade has been the stun belt, which was originally developed in the USA.

A stun belt is a weapon that is worn by its victim. The prisoner is physically in contact with the stun belt the whole time it is used against them, which may be for hours on end. Amnesty International believes that the mental anguish caused by just wearing the belt and the fear of its activation is in itself cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. For this reason alone the belt should be banned immediately.

One US company, Stun-Tech, promotes its belt to law enforcement officers as providing “for total psychological supremacy... of potentially troublesome prisoners”, stating that: “After all, if you were wearing a contraption around your waist that by the mere push of a button in someone else’s hand, could make you defecate or urinate yourself, what would you do from the psychological standpoint?”

Stun-Tech and another US company, Nova Products, are two companies which have produced shock belts now widely used in the USA. Wendell Harrison, who received electric shocks from a stun belt during his trial in August 1996, described an “excruciating pain as if a long needle had been inserted up through [my] spine and into the base of [my] skull”. Two years later Wendell Harrison was still suffering from nightmares and sleep loss as a result of the incident.

The electric shock can be set off by a guard flicking a switch up to 300 feet away. On activation, the belt delivers eight-second, 50,000-volt shocks through the prisoner’s left kidney. The shock causes incapacitation in the first few seconds and severe pain rising during the eight seconds.

In 1997, evidence emerged that a US-supplied remote control electroshock belt was being tested in South Africa, a country with persistent problems of torture and ill-treatment of detainees held in police custody and in prison. Recent information from South African prison officials has confirmed that a belt has been used at CMAX maximum security prison in Pretoria during the transportation of some prisoners.

PHOTO

A UK arms dealer demonstrating an electroshock baton © Martyn Gregory Films

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Spotlight on arms brokers

- Arms brokers negotiate the transfer of military or security equipment from one country to another.
- In the UK alone, domestic arms brokers have been linked to conflicts in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Eritrea.
- Every government – but in particular those of the European Union, where brokering is most prevalent – must introduce comprehensive measures to control arms brokering.

Breaking the power of the brokers

The salesman leans forward. “We have several models. The most used one is no bigger than two packets of cigarettes and gives shocks of 150,000 volts. The problem with this type of weapon is that you have to stretch your arm to come into contact with the enemy. That’s why I advise the matraques [truncheons] with two electrodes at the end – ideal for riot police or presidential guards.

He continues. "Even last year, we supplied these to the Presidential Guard of a central African country. Well, Belgium is rather strict, but Africa and Latin America permit us to just export it to a middle man, and then we have it depart from there. That's the easiest way. You will fax us how many you want? Then I will make a nice price."

The conversation is so matter-of-fact it almost seems surreal but, according to the Flemish newspaper *De Morgen*, those are the actual words spoken by a salesman from the Brussels-based company Belgian Business International in 1996.

This is an example of third party "arms brokering" – the trading in weapons, security equipment, personnel or training, where a company or individual based in one country organizes the supply of these goods or services from a second country for delivery to a third country. In the vast majority of arms brokered deals, the goods will never enter the country where the deals are negotiated.

Although some states such as the USA, Sweden and Germany have regulations which control the activities of arms brokers, the vast majority do not, leaving the brokers free to ply their trade virtually as they please.

The price of such unregulated trade is often counted out in human lives.

During the past few years, for example, damning evidence has emerged that the Rwandese armed forces accused of participating in the 1994 genocide were supplied with weapons and ammunition from traders operating from the UK, France and Italy.

Military procurement documents discovered in 1996 in eastern Zaire show that in the midst of the genocide, arms which originated from Albania and Israel were secretly flown to Zaire in aircraft provided by Jetlease International (Bahamas) Ltd. From Zaire, it was a short and easy journey for the arms to reach Rwanda. Documents later found in the secret military archive of the exiled Rwandese government highlighted the central role played by the UK company Mil-Tec in brokering these deals. These traders contributed to the carnage but not one has faced prosecution.

After coming to power in May 1997, the UK Labour government promised to end arms transfers to states that would use them for "internal repression or external aggression". Although the government has made some important improvements, the UK still does not have adequate controls and practices to prevent UK businesspeople from arranging arms deals to whomever they wish. Instead there have been further scandals involving UK traders.

UK brokers have for example been linked with arms shipments to Eritrea, where civilians have become increasingly caught up in the escalating hostilities with Ethiopia.

In Autumn 1998, "tons" of army equipment and 40 ex-German army lorries were impounded at Antwerp docks in Belgium. A Belgian customs spokesman said that the equipment included replacement engines for 80 Russian T-54 and T-55 tanks, infra-red sights and thermal imaging equipment. The military equipment had reportedly been bought in Germany, brought together in the Netherlands and moved by rail to Antwerp for loading on to a ship. Customs officials became suspicious of the cargo, which was listed as building equipment and water pumps bound for Eritrea. The deal was reportedly arranged by a UK-based company called JM Charlesworth, trading as Global Services Ltd. On 10 February 1999 UN Security Council Resolution 1227 was adopted, calling on UN Member States to ban sales of arms and munitions to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Lack of regulation of UK arms brokers also emerged in the case of Sierra Leone. In May 1997 the elected government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was overthrown in a military coup which was condemned by the international community. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) which took power was joined by the armed opposition Revolutionary United Front (RUF). These rebel forces were overwhelmingly responsible for the gross human rights abuses against civilians which occurred

during Sierra Leone's internal armed conflict. In October 1997 the UN imposed an arms embargo on Sierra Leone.

The AFRC was removed from power in February 1998 by forces of the Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), deployed under a mandate endorsed by the international community, and the elected government was reinstated.

ECOMOG forces were reported in early 1998 to have received training, logistical and technical assistance from a UK-based company of military consultants, Sandline International. This assistance was reported to have included the brokering of a shipment of 30 tonnes of arms (mainly AK 47 guns) and ammunition from Bulgaria by another UK-based company, Sky Air Cargo Services.

While there was lack of clarity that the UN arms embargo applied not only to the AFRC but also to ECOMOG, allegations that UK government officials were aware of a possible breach of the UN arms embargo by Sandline International were subsequently the subject of a UK government inquiry. Sandline International's assistance in possible breach of a UN arms embargo, although to forces supporting the elected government, again demonstrated lack of effective controls on the activities of UK arms brokers and shipping agents.

These deals are probably just the tip of the iceberg. There were reported to be as many as 300 arms dealers and brokers active in London alone. And the UK is not unique in the paucity of its arms brokering controls. Several countries with lax controls, such as South Africa and Bulgaria, are known sites of brokering and trans-shipping activities.

So how many more deals are now being wrought in secret? How many more weapons will be placed into the hands of human rights abusers to fuel conflict throughout Africa?

ACT NOW

The UK government is considering changes to its export controls. However, while proposals have been made to prohibit brokering during UN and EU arms embargoes, and to prohibit all brokering of torture equipment, the vast majority of brokering deals will not be brought into the control system. A further problem is that no time frame has been given for enacting even these limited changes. The brokering loophole must be fully closed.

Write to Robin Cook MP, UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs:

- Raise your concerns that the UK government's stated policy not to allow arms transfers which will be used for human rights violations in the context of internal repression may be being undermined by the activities of UK-based arms brokers.
- Welcome the government's proposal to ban the brokering of torture equipment, but emphasize that all brokering deals must be subject to government control. Ask that such controls be implemented as soon as possible.
- Ask for a response to your letter.

+ Robin Cook MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Whitehall, London SW1A 2AH
United Kingdom

European dealers 'supplied weapons to Congo'

In early October 1997, fighting between political factions in the Republic of Congo reached catastrophic proportions with at least 5,000 civilians reportedly losing their lives and many more injured in deliberate attacks.

The aggressors' weaponry – some of which was reportedly supplied by a West European arms dealer – included everything from small arms to military helicopters.

Documents found in the offices of the ousted government reportedly showed that between June and September 1997 Rudolph Wollenhaupt, a German arms broker, supplied millions of dollars worth of military equipment to the forces of Republic of Congo President Pascal Lissouba. Wollenhaupt is said to have operated from South Africa where some of the equipment was obtained using several companies registered in a number of countries and using Belgian, French and UK bank accounts.

Although a tough and restrictive international control mechanism on brokers must be the ultimate goal, a major start can be made by controlling the activities of brokers in Europe. The continent, because of its excellent international financial and communications networks and its proximity to large stockpiles of cheap arms, ammunition and other military and security equipment, has become the centre of the international arms brokering trade. Effective regulation would do much to stem the flow of arms which is turning Africa into a human rights crisis zone.

ACT NOW

European governments are trying to tackle the scourge of arms brokers. Write to the government of Finland, currently President of the European Union (EU), and urge them to introduce comprehensive measures to control this deadly trade.

In your letters to Ms Tarja Halonen, Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, point out the uncontrolled activities of arms brokers in Europe. Welcome the EU's attempts to tackle the problem. Call on the Finnish government to press for inclusion of the following measures in EU wide brokerage controls:

- That EU controls should apply to all EU passport holders wherever they live, and to any company or individual resident or registered in the EU.
- That the buying, selling, and marketing of ALL military, security and police goods and services should be controlled by EU member states, as should the organization of such transfers. The brokering of torture and death penalty equipment, and anti-personnel landmines, should be banned.
- That all EU member states should compile a list of "registered" brokering agents and all those on this list should publish their audited accounts relating to arms trading. Agents who break laws regulating arms exports or deliberately supply misleading information should be prosecuted and banned from any further arms brokering.
- That each deal involving EU arms brokers should be subject to the same scrutiny as arms exports from the EU and should need an export licence.
- To ensure that arms brokers do not evade EU controls by moving abroad, the EU should seek to internationalise any control system.

+ Ms Tarja Halonen, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Merikasarmi, POB 176
00161 Helsinki, Finland

PHOTOCAPS

A letter from the UK company Mil-Tec confirming their dealings with the former Rwandese government

© Massimo Alberizzi / Corriere della Sera

In June 1997 a South African company reportedly brokered a deal for the supply of four Puma military helicopters, similar to those in this photo, to forces of Pascal Lissouba, then President of Congo © Alexander Joe / AFP

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Crowd control and “non-lethal” weapons

- The misuse of riot control equipment such as water-cannon, plastic and rubber bullets, and chemical agents such as pepper spray, CS or tear gas, is increasingly common.
- The source of many of these crowd control and “non-lethal” weapons can be traced back to Europe, where they have also been deployed.

Tear tracks:

The trail from Europe to Kenya

BOX:

Police and security units in Africa are increasingly deploying tear gas and other chemical irritants directly into buildings and other enclosed spaces where it is very difficult for people to leave, either for physical reasons – crowded or barricaded doors and windows – or because of the fear of beating, arrest or “disappearance” should they leave. When tear gas has been used in these type of circumstances a number of severe injuries and deaths have occurred.

END BOX

When Kenyan paramilitary police stormed All Saints Anglican Cathedral in Nairobi on 7 July 1997, first they threw tear gas canisters, then they moved in wielding truncheons. Several dozen peaceful pro-reform advocates sheltering inside were left bleeding and badly hurt; many more, including an elderly opposition member of parliament, were injured.

That same year, Amnesty International researchers retrieved some of the tear gas canisters and plastic bullets used against peaceful protesters in Kenya. The canisters were traced back to manufacturers Pains-Wessex in the UK; the plastic bullets to a second UK company, Haley & Weller. Both companies are subsidiaries of Chemring Plc.

Amnesty International members swung into action, putting pressure on the UK government and the companies concerned to stop their trade in equipment used in repression. Subsequently the UK government declared that it had rejected £1.5 million of licence applications for riot control equipment – including batons and tear gas – to Kenyan police because of human rights concerns.

However, human rights abuses by the Kenyan security forces have continued. Tear gas has been misused again.

On 10 June 1999, Amnesty International researchers witnessed around 2,000 peaceful protesters, led by human rights and church groups, demonstrate for peaceful democratic change in Kenya. One hundred yards from the Parliament, the head of the demonstration was stopped by a wall of police armed with riot shields and batons. The peaceful protesters sat on the ground and started to sing Christian songs.

After less than 10 minutes police on horseback emerged and rode into the crowd of protestors, followed by police on foot who beat the peaceful crowd with sticks. The crowd reacted angrily, and some threw stones at the police.

The police then started firing tear gas into the crowd and into the church grounds where some of the protesters had retreated. In the space of an hour, over 100 canisters were fired. A series of shots – claimed by many to have been live bullets fired by police – rang out, and at least two stun grenades were fired.

The police later moved in with two water-cannon tanks, which fired a mixture of water and tear gas – and reportedly an irritant and a dye – directly into crowds who had nowhere to run. By 9pm, the police had cleared the streets.

From the witness testimony and remains of canisters Amnesty International was once again able to put a name to the company manufacturing the tear gas – this time it was a French-based company, Nobel Sécurité. Press reports claimed that the water-cannon were shipped to Kenya from South Africa, and other reports also implicated Israel and France.

So, after the UK government cancelled licences for export of tear gas, it seems that the Kenyan authorities instead turned to a French company to supply the equipment necessary for such brutal acts of “crowd control”.

This is a particularly fitting demonstration of the fact that the arms and security trade, like nature, abhors a vacuum. Where one country halts security exports to human rights violators, another will not, and will blithely ignore the human rights violations which result.

Stringent national and international controls on the flow of military and security equipment are urgently required to ensure that countries which refuse to allow such equipment transfers to human rights violators are not undermined by countries that who do not care to whom they sell.

Act Now

Stop the Kenyan government being supplied with the means to repress its own people.

1. Supply of tear gas

Write to the chairperson of Nobel Sécurité :

- Highlight Amnesty International’s human rights concerns in Kenya, and in particular cite cases of the abuse of tear gas by the security forces.
- State that Amnesty International researchers have identified Nobel Sécurité as the manufacturers of tear gas canisters used against demonstrators in Kenya on 10 June 1999.
- Ask for details of the riot control equipment manufactured by Nobel Sécurité and for details of any sales of such equipment they may have made to Kenya.
- Urge that Nobel Sécurité do not export riot control equipment to Kenya until there are effective measures in place to prevent abusive use of such equipment.

+ Nobel Sécurité (Group SNPE)
12 Quai Henri IV
75181 Paris Cedex 4
France

2. Supply of water cannon

Amnesty International cannot yet verify who supplied water-cannon to Kenya. However it has been reported that French and Israeli companies were involved.

Please write to the French and Israeli governments:

- Highlight Amnesty International’s human rights concerns in Kenya, in particular citing the recent case of the abuse of water-cannon and tear gas by the security forces.

- Express concern over press reports alleging that French and Israeli companies have been involved in the supply of water-cannon to Kenya.
- Ask whether the government has granted licences for such equipment or whether the government has knowledge of the brokering or transfer of such equipment to Kenya.

+ Monsieur Lionel Jospin
Premier Ministre
Hôtel Matignon,
57, rue de Varenne
75007 Paris, France

+ Ehud Barak
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
3 Kaplan Street, Hakirya
Jerusalem 91007, Israel

‘In the confusion, when we are blinded by the gas, convulsing from the gas, the police move in to club and beat us. We do not feel that our system is justified in using tear gas. We believe we don’t deserve this treatment – people have a right to demonstrate peacefully.’ Janai Robert Orina, Kenyan student activist, 1997

Zambia

‘We’ll tear-gas them until they die’

In July 1997, Zambian police used tear gas to break up a peaceful protest march to Lusaka city centre. A large number of demonstrators – many of them women with small children – sought refuge in a building used by the United National Independence Party (UNIP).

Police laid siege to the building for about 12 hours. Then without any warning, they shot tear gas canisters into the building to force people onto the street, where police officers beat them viciously with batons.

Rabbison Chongo, a UNIP official, recalled:

“I’ve never seen so much tear gas... you couldn’t see down the hall five feet in front of you. So much that you can’t get air in the lungs, you can’t breathe.”

Another person in the building that day, Melania Chipungu, said she did not know what was worse, suffocation because of the tear gas inside or the beating by police outside:

“The smoke in this office was terrible. I tried to wash my face. I wanted to go upstairs to the first floor. I couldn’t see in front of me... I couldn’t see because it was like chilli in my eyes. I was following the wall to go out and up the stairs. Then someone was pulling me out. A hand was pulling me out. It was the police. They started beating me. Three police men, they hit me with batons, wooden batons: a club with a handle on the side. They tore my skirt and threw me in a van. What I saw when I looked out was guns. The police were going in with guns. They opened the door (to Freedom House) and would shoot tear gas, then they closed the door again.”

UNIP official Melian Sebente Akuffo telephoned the police authorities to plead with them to stop throwing tear gas into the building. She later told Amnesty International that the police had responded, “we’ll tear-gas them until they die – and those who come out of the building, we will break their necks”.

Act Now

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch found evidence that the tear gas canisters used by the Zambian police were manufactured by a UK firm, Pains-Wessex, a subsidiary of Chemring Plc.

Please write to the chairperson of Chemring:

- Highlight Amnesty International's concerns over the misuse of tear gas in confined spaces in Zambia.
- Ask for details of the riot control equipment that Pains-Wessex manufactures and sells, and for details of any sales of such equipment Pains-Wessex may have made to Zambia.
- Urge that they ensure that no tear gas is transferred by the company to Zambia while there is a reasonable danger that the tear gas will be used for human rights violations.

+ Chairperson
Chemring Ltd (Group Plc)
Alchem Works
Fratton Trading Estate
Portsmouth
Hampshire PO4 8SX
United Kingdom

Not even Michael Johnson can outrun Cochrane

New techniques for crowd control include a mechanism that unrolls razor wire sharp enough to slice through human flesh. French, South African and UK companies have marketed such razor wire. According to one of these companies, Cochrane (which operates in Birmingham, UK and in South Africa), a mobile barrier can dispense 200 metres of razor wire in 15 to 20 seconds, allowing the rapid "capture" of demonstrators.

Cochrane has admitted that it has in the past sold this system to Zaire, a country where police have used excessive force against unarmed and peaceful demonstrators. Cochrane has also advertised "electrocoil": razor wire with an electroshock element of up to 5-7,000 volts built in. Products such as these are being continually designed and marketed even though adequate guidelines to ensure that they are not used in human rights violations have not yet been enforced.

PHOTO CAPS

French-manufactured tear gas canisters which were used to break up a demonstration in Nairobi on 10 June 1999 © AI

A water-cannon used by Kenyan police to disperse demonstrators in Nairobi, Kenya, 10 June 1999 © AI

Kenyan police deploy tear gas and beat peaceful demonstrators in Nairobi Anglican Cathedral, July 1997 © Alexander Joe/AFP

This UK-manufactured tear gas grenade was found in the building of an opposition party in Lusaka city centre, Zambia, on 29 July 1997. The police teargassed the building to force peaceful demonstrators into the street where they were then beaten. © AI

Michael Johnson is one of the fastest men alive. He can run 200 metres in 19.32 seconds, but he can't outrun Cochrane's mobile barrier.

© Reuters / Jacques Munch

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...QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS...

Why is Amnesty International campaigning on the arms and security trade?

The mission of Amnesty International is to take action against some of the gravest human rights abuses in the world such as torture, “disappearance”, indiscriminate killings and extrajudicial killings.

There is clear evidence that certain transfers of military, security and police goods or services to countries where human rights are abused can aid or exacerbate such abuse. This is why strict controls are needed on the arms and security trade to ensure that such transfers do not occur. Amnesty International takes no position on the arms trade per se, nor on arms embargoes, boycotts and other sanctions.

What should I do when writing letters?

When you're writing letters to anyone mentioned in this newspaper, please remember:

1. Always be polite
2. Always stick closely to the letter-writing recommendations contained in the articles. Never make broad accusations about a company's activities or accuse them of direct complicity in human rights violations.
3. If you receive a response to any of your letters from companies or governments please send a copy to Amnesty International at the address on the back cover. This will allow us to develop our future campaigning and lobbying strategies.

CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE? (The UK government won't)

Reports by governments about which arms they have licenced for export are often less than transparent. In the UK, for example, members of parliament who ask for details of arms sales to human rights violating states are given only a list of the arms category for which a licence was granted. These categories are so broad that you cannot tell whether a licence has been granted for a box of 1000 tear gas canisters or for a single bullet proof tyre.

How can I contact Amnesty International in Africa?

Amnesty International has a growing and active membership throughout Africa. If you would like to get involved, please contact your local Amnesty International office.

BENIN

AI Benin, BP 01 3536, Cotonou, Republique du Benin

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

AI Cote d'Ivoire, 04 BP 895, Abidjan 04, Cote d'Ivoire

GAMBIA

AI Gambia, PO Box 1935, Banjul, The Gambia

GHANA

AI Ghana, Private Mail Bag, Kokomlemle, Accra - North, Ghana

MALI

AI Mali, BP E 3885 Bamako, Mali

NIGERIA

AI Nigeria, PMB 3061, Suru Lere, Lagos, Nigeria

SENEGAL

AI Senegal, BP 21910, Dakar, Senegal

SIERRA LEONE

AI Sierra Leone, PMB 1021, Freetown, Sierra Leone

SOUTH AFRICA

AI South Africa, PO Box 29083 Sunnyside 0132, Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa

TANZANIA

AI Tanzania, PO Box 4331, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

ZAMBIA

AI Zambian Groups National Secretariat,
Private Bag 3, Kitwe Main PO, Kitwe, Zambia

IF YOUR COUNTRY IS NOT LISTED ABOVE, THEN CONTACT...

For West & Central Africa:

Development Field Office, c/o AI Senegal, BP 21910 35A Boulevard du General de Gaulle, Allee du Centenaire, Dakar, Senegal

For East & Southern Africa:

PO Box 29083, Sunnyside 0132, Gauteng,
South Africa

Tackling the scourge of small arms

The world is estimated to contain around half a billion small arms and light weapons, such as pistols, submachine guns, landmines and grenades. They are used to fight the vast majority of conflicts, and it is overwhelmingly civilians who pay the price. Ninety per cent of those killed in conflicts since 1990 have been non-combatants. Throughout this newspaper we have documented the appalling effects such weapons have wrought in Africa, and have sought your help to combat the devastation.

On 11 May 1999, Amnesty International joined with over 200 human rights organizations, development agencies, arms control watchdogs, church groups, grassroots women's organizations and medical associations to launch the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). The network seeks to combat the global scourge of unregulated proliferation and misuse of small arms by tackling the problem from both the supply side – lobbying for stringent arms export controls in arms producing states – and from the demand side, using human rights education initiatives, arms destruction operations and ex-combatant demobilization schemes.

If you would like more information about IANSA's work and how you can become involved, please go to the IANSA web site on: <http://www.IANSA.org>

Amnesty International's Key Recommendations for Strengthening Arms Export Controls

All export control legislation, at both national and international levels, should:

1. Prohibit the transfer of military, security and police weaponry, equipment, personnel or training UNLESS such transfers will not contribute to human rights abuses.
2. Provide parliament and the public with clear, detailed, regular and comprehensive information about all prospective and completed transfers by both private companies and government agencies.
3. Ensure that adequate resources are provided to monitor the use of military and security equipment once a transfer has taken place. All arms contracts should require customers to pledge never to use the goods for human rights abuses. If they do then the contracts should be rendered null and void and further equipment, spare parts, training and repair services halted.
4. Prohibit the manufacture, export and use of equipment solely used for executions or for carrying out torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Such equipment includes electroshock belts, leg-irons and shackles, and weapons banned under international law such as anti-personnel landmines.
5. Strictly regulate the activities of arms brokers and shipping agents. All brokers must be "registered" and their activities stringently controlled, with all arms brokering deals being subject to the licensed approval of the government.
6. Control licensed production, the system where one company enables a company in another country to manufacture its products under licence. Such agreements are increasingly taking the place of direct exports, and in many cases are inadequately controlled or not controlled at all. Licensed production agreements must be government-approved.

Ensure your country is not trading in repression

States and companies that manufacture weapons and security equipment, or provide military personnel or training, must ensure that such goods and services never fall into the hands of security forces or armed opposition groups that will use them for human rights abuses. Your government has a duty to enforce the strictest of controls on such exports.

Write to your own government today:

- Raise Amnesty International's concerns regarding the uncontrolled transfer of military, security and police equipment to human rights abusers throughout Africa. Cite examples from this newspaper.
- Ask for assurances that your government will never allow the transfer of such goods and services to countries where they are likely to facilitate human rights abuse.
- Ask for details of your government's export control legislation and regulations.
- Ask that such controls incorporate Amnesty International's recommendations, as detailed left.

Urge the Commonwealth to enact strict arms controls

In June 1998 the leaders of the European Union agreed upon a Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. Under this code all member states have pledged to observe eight common criteria – including human rights – when determining whether arms export licences should be granted or refused.

The code requires EU countries, for the first time, to inform each other when they refuse export licences and to explain why. Furthermore, if one EU country denies an arms deal, any state that wants to take up the same deal within the next three years is required to consult it. The Code is an important first step in regional control, but needs strengthening.

Amnesty International is now trying to close loopholes which exist in the EU Code and to press for strong Codes of Conduct or control mechanisms in other fora.

One such forum is the Commonwealth, a grouping of nations in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East with a total population of 1.7 billion, tied together by common use of the English language and a shared colonial past.

The Commonwealth nations include several arms manufacturers and exporters, such as the UK, Canada and South Africa, together with a number of African states that have imported military and security equipment for use in human rights abuses, including Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and recent Commonwealth applicant Rwanda.

On 19 November 1999 the heads of government of all the Commonwealth countries will meet in Durban, South Africa to plan their joint activities for the next two years. One issue that Amnesty International and a number of other human rights organizations and development agencies are pressing to be addressed is the regulation of military, security and police weaponry, equipment, training and personnel transfers.

Whether or not you are from a member Commonwealth country (although if you are, state which one), write to Emeka Anyaoku, Secretary General of the Commonwealth:

- Call on him to use his good offices to promote tough controls amongst Commonwealth countries which ensure weapons, security equipment and training never fall into the hands of military, security or police forces, or armed opposition groups that will use them for human rights abuses.
- Call on the Commonwealth to issue a declaration in the Communique of the Summit pledging all member states to develop and enforce stringent and comprehensive export control legislation and practices incorporating Amnesty International's recommendations as detailed left.

+ Emeka Anyaoku, Commonwealth Secretary-General
The Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX, United Kingdom

The Nobel Laureates' code

When the UK cancelled sales of tear gas to Kenya on human rights grounds, a French company apparently took over the supply (see page 10).

This is just one example of the fact that although tough national controls on the arms trade are absolutely vital, the fight to regulate the arms and security industry can never be won at the national level alone. The positive initiatives of certain states to halt the flow of arms and security equipment to human rights abusers must not be undermined by the actions of other nations who are content to sell to anyone.

Which is why international arms controls are so desperately needed. Controls which will prevent states from exporting military and security goods and services to countries which use them to commit torture, "disappearances", murder or other grave human rights violations. Amnesty International is currently working with governments, human rights and development organizations to develop such controls.

In particular, Amnesty International, as a Nobel Laureate, has joined forces with Dr Oscar Arias, José Ramos Horta, Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama and other Nobel Peace Prize recipients to develop and promote a globally effective Nobel Laureates' Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers.

“Local, regional and world leaders must accept the fact that we cannot let the free market rule the international arms trade. We must not enrich ourselves through the commerce of death. Rather, we must realise that the arms trade is most often a friend of dictators and an enemy of the people. The time has come to choose human lives over arms.” Dr Oscar Arias, Nobel Laureate.

How can I find out more?

After reading this newspaper and taking part in the actions, we hope that you will become further involved in this new and powerful area of Amnesty International's work. If so here are two concrete ways:

1. Join one of our activist networks

Amnesty International is developing a network of its local groups and structures throughout the world which will take part in campaigning and lobbying actions on issues relating to the arms and security trade. If you belong to a local group or structure of Amnesty International, and are interested in becoming part of our 'Thematic Action Network' on the arms and security trade, please contact Amnesty International at the address above left.

2. Develop campaigning structures within your own country

At present 20 Amnesty International Sections have coordinators or campaign groups undertaking research, campaigning and lobbying activities on their own country's arms and security transfers. Find out if your section has such a group. If it does not, then you may like to start one. For more information, also contact the address above left.

PHOTO

The Commission of Nobel Peace Laureates announce the launch of an International Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers, 29 May 1997. Those present included the Dalai Lama (seated).