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G8 countries arm human rights violators

***"A Catalogue of Failures: G8 Arms Exports and Human Rights Violations"* published today by Amnesty International**

As the G8 heads of state prepare for their summit in Evian, Amnesty International reveals that despite assurances to the contrary, their governments are arming and supplying some of the world's worst abusers of human rights.

A new report published today shows how military and security technology from the world's most powerful nations continues to make its way past inadequate controls into the hands of abusive regimes.

At least two thirds of all global arms transfers between 1997 and 2001 came from five members of the G8 -- the US, Russia, France, the UK and Germany.

These countries, as well as the other members of the G8 -- Italy and Canada -- all have varying laws requiring that military exports be licensed. Japan officially prohibits military exports. Yet in each case, Amnesty International's report shows how these controls have been ineffective, or bypassed. For example:

During 2000 France supplied small arms ammunition to Senegal. Throughout the 1990s Amnesty International had documented human rights abuses with small arms in Senegal, including civilians shot by security forces. In January 2001 a student was shot dead in clashes between demonstrators and the police near the University of Dakar. The French government should have anticipated that such an arms transfer could facilitate the abuse of human rights in Senegal.

In July 2002 the UK authorised the transfer of Head-Up Display (HUD) units to the USA, where they were to be incorporated into F-16 fighter planes destined for Israel. HUDs enable pilots to see targeting and weapons information without having to look at separate instruments. That same month Israeli F16 jets were used to drop a one-ton bomb on Gaza city, killing 17 people and wounding 70. UK controls would not have allowed this equipment to go straight to Israel. But they still allow it to get there via an intermediate destination. Canadian computer parts have also been used in US-made F16s that have been transferred to Israel.

The US has provided military rifles and machine guns to the Colombian armed forces despite the fact that these arms are persistently used to facilitate human rights violations. During 2001 more than 4,000 Colombian civilians were killed for political motives, mostly by paramilitary groups acting with the

support of the armed forces.

The report also demonstrates:

- how arms brokers and traffickers based in most of the G8 countries can arm human rights abusers by simply plying their trade in "third countries" with weaker controls.
- how most G8 governments do not have in place laws to prevent the export of security equipment to foreign security forces that are known to abuse legitimate devices to inflict torture or ill-treatment, or to freeze the use of equipment like electro-shock weapons until their effects are fully known.
- how, using the excuse of "commercial confidentiality", the provision of meaningful and timely information to legislators, media and the general public about arms export decisions is lacking, thus undermining parliamentary scrutiny and public accountability of the arms trade.

Amnesty International is calling for an international Arms Trade Treaty, to strengthen and harmonise national controls and turn off the flow of arms to human rights abusers.

"If there is one lesson that the G8 must learn from the Iraq conflict it is that we cannot allow the international community to supply arms to those who commit gross human rights violations, emboldening them and rewarding them so that the abusers act with impunity," said Brian Wood, international coordinator of Amnesty International's arms control work.

In the light of the UN inspector's reports, Amnesty International is calling upon the German, US, UK, French, Russian and Chinese governments to release the list of companies which supplied technology to the Iraqi chemical, biological and other weapons programs.

Background

1. Amnesty International is opposed to the transfer of military, security and police equipment, technology and expertise that can reasonably be assumed will contribute to human rights violations in the receiving country, and has consistently appealed to the G8 governments to abide by this principle which they have long recognised but never fully implemented.

2. The Promises They Made:

Almost 10 years ago the USA, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the UK signed up, along with other participating states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to the *Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers*, which committed participating states to **"avoid transfers which would be likely to be used for the violation or suppression of human rights and fundamental freedoms."**

In 1998 France, Germany, Italy and the UK, as members of the European Union (EU), committed themselves to the *European Code of Conduct on Arms Transfers*. Canada and the USA and other states have declared their support for the Code. Although it leaves the final decision on exports to be made by governments, it says that **arms should not be exported to countries where there is a clear risk they might be used for internal repression or where serious violations of human rights have occurred.**

3. The G8 summit will take place at Evian-les-Bains, France on 1-3 June 2003.

Public Document

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