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Media Briefing

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Amnesty International, Oxfam, IANSA Control Arms Campaign Media Briefing: key facts and figures

The arms trade is out of control

Every day, millions of men, women, and children live in fear of armed violence. Every minute, one of them is killed. From the gangs of Rio de Janeiro and Los Angeles, to the civil wars and armed rebellions in Liberia and Indonesia, it is conventional arms that are used to do the killing. The global trade in arms that brings these weapons into the hands of killers is a big business. And it is out of control.

The value of global authorized arms exports is \$21 billion per year.

There are 639 million small arms in the world, or one for every ten people, produced by over 1,000 companies in at least 98 countries.

8 million more small arms are produced every year.

16 billion units of ammunition are produced each year - more than two new bullets for every man, woman and child on the planet.

Nearly 60 per cent of small arms are in civilian hands.

It is estimated that 80-90 per cent of all illegal small arms start in the state-sanctioned trade.

The human cost

The uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of arms by government forces and armed groups takes a massive human toll in lost lives.

More than 500,000 people on average are killed with conventional arms every year: one person every minute.

In World War One, 14 per cent of total casualties were civilian. In World War Two this grew to 67 per cent. In some of today's conflicts the figure is even higher.

There are 300,000 child soldiers involved in conflicts.

Torture and ill-treatment by state officials - mostly armed police - was persistent in over 70 countries between 1997 and 2000.

Women and girls are raped at gunpoint during armed conflict - for example, 15,700 in Rwanda and 25,000 in Croatia and Bosnia.

Arms proliferation and misuse destroy individuals' livelihoods and prevent countries from escaping from poverty.

One third of countries spend more on the military than they do on health-care services.

An average of US\$22 billion a year is spent on arms by countries in Africa, Asia, Middle East and

Latin America. Half of this amount would enable every girl and boy in those regions to go to primary school.

El Salvador's expenditure on its health services to deal with the effects of violence amounts to more than 4 per cent of its GDP.

Nearly half (42 per cent) of countries with the highest defence burden rank among the lowest in human development. For example, Eritrea spends over 20 per cent of its GDP on military.

In Africa, economic losses due to war are about \$15 billion per year.

Pakistan's total defence spending is one-third of its annual GDP, or half if arms-related debt repayments are included.

The role of the UN Security Council

The world's most powerful governments -- which are also the world's biggest arms suppliers -- have the greatest responsibility to control the global trade.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council - France, Russia, China, the UK, and the USA - together account for 88 per cent of the world's conventional arms exports; and these exports contribute regularly to gross abuses of human rights.

In the last four years the US, UK and France earned more income from arms exports to Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America than they provided in aid.

The Control Arms campaign

For these reasons Amnesty International, Oxfam and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) have come together for 'Control Arms', a major global campaign launched in over 50 countries around the world.

Governments are acting too slowly to control arms. Every day in work around the world, Oxfam, Amnesty International and IANSA witness the abuse of arms which fuels conflict, poverty and violations of human rights. The Control Arms campaign is calling for urgent and coordinated action, from the local to the international level, to prevent the proliferation and misuse of arms. The campaign is calling for:

International level: Governments to agree an Arms Trade Treaty to stop arms being exported to destinations where they are likely to be used to commit grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Regional level: Governments to develop and strengthen regional arms control agreements, to uphold human rights and international humanitarian law.

National level: Governments to improve state capacity and their own accountability to control arms transfers and protect citizens from armed violence, in accordance with international laws and standards.

Community level: Civil society and local government agencies to take effective action to improve safety at community level, by reducing the local availability and demand for arms.

There is little time to lose: in the same minute in which one person dies from armed violence, 15 new arms are manufactured for sale. Who will take responsibility for the men, women and children who will certainly die or suffer from armed violence in the months and years ahead? The arms trade is out of control. Urgent action must be taken now.

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Note: Please consult footnotes in *Shattered Lives: the case for tough international arms control* for

sources for data cited.

Public Document

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