

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **AK-47: world's worst regulated weapon according to new report**

### **General Kalashnikov joins calls for tougher arms controls**

***New report from Control Arms campaign: Amnesty International, Oxfam International, and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA)***

The Kalashnikov assault rifle will remain the most widely-used weapon in conflict zones for at least the next 20 years because it is so poorly regulated, according to a new report by the Control Arms campaign released at the start of the UN world conference on small arms and light weapons in New York today (26 June).

The Kalashnikov is manufactured in more countries and is being used to cause more widespread suffering today than at any time in its sixty-year history. Many thousands of people are killed every year by the weapon. This is because there is little international control on its production, sale and use, according to the report, *AK-47: The World's Favourite Killing Machine*.

The report estimates that there are up to 100 million AK-47s and variations of its design in the world today. They are found in the state arsenal of at least 82 countries and are produced in at least 14 countries. This is set to increase with Venezuela recently signing a deal for the local assembly of the weapons, the first of its kind in the Americas.

The large number of production facilities throughout the world, the widespread availability of surplus Kalashnikovs and the absence of global standards and laws to regulate their transfer make it easy for the weapons to fall into the hands of unscrupulous arms brokers, armed militia and criminals.

Even the weapon's inventor, Lieutenant-General Mikhail Kalashnikov, is calling for tougher controls and, in a statement released to the Control Arms campaign today, said:

*"Because of the lack of international control over arms sales, small arms easily find their way to anywhere in the world to be used not only for national defence, but by aggressors, terrorists and all kinds of criminals [...] When I watch TV and see small arms of the AK family in the hands of bandits, I keep asking myself: how did those people get hold of them?"*

Control Arms campaigners will today hand over the world's largest visual petition, the Million Faces Petition, to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in New York. The petition is calling for tougher arms controls and contains the images of one million people in over 160 countries. The number symbolises the one million people who have been killed by small arms since the Control Arms Campaign began in 2003.

*"Out of control and unregulated, AK-47s have been used to murder and maim, fuelling conflict and poverty in the world's poorest countries. One million people from around the world have signed the petition calling for tougher arms control. At this UN world conference, governments must agree global rules for small arms sales and help put an end to this suffering,"* said Jeremy Hobbs, Director, Oxfam International.

The widespread availability of the AK-47 and its variants is a legacy of the Cold War. Its production was originally promoted by the Russian government amongst its allies but there was little control on the production agreements and in some cases there was no production agreement at all. Millions of AK-47s were also supplied to various regimes during the period and these are still in circulation, now being traded by numerous firms and governments across the globe.

*"The AK-47 is a symbol of the way in which the arms trade has run amok, destroying lives and livelihoods. Only global rules to control who produces the weapons and to whom they are sold will ensure that they don't fall into the wrong hands,"* said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

*"The uncontrolled proliferation of the AK-47, like other guns and light weapons, has led to millions of deaths and massive suffering, particularly in some of the poorest parts of the world. It will be five years until the next global small arms meeting. If governments don't take this opportunity to prevent guns falling into the wrong hands, another 1.8 million people will die at gunpoint before there is another chance to take action,"* said Rebecca Peters, Director of IANSA.

## **Ends**

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### **Note to editors:**

Spokespeople from Oxfam, Amnesty and IANSA are available for interview. French, German, Spanish, Swahili and Arabic interviewees available.

Footage is available from Liberia, Uganda and India featuring weapons and their impact, interviews with survivors, the collection of the Million Faces Petition, a message from Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Amnesty Teleshop advert.

The Control Arms Campaign is a joint initiative by Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). It aims to reduce arms proliferation and misuse and to convince governments to introduce global principles to regulate the transfers of weapons and a binding Arms Trade Treaty.

### **Statistics**

- On current trends up to 12,000 people will be killed by small arms during the two weeks of the UN world conference on small arms and light weapons.
- An AK-47 can be bought for as little as US\$30 in parts of Africa.
- There are an estimated 100 million AK-47s in the world.
- It is estimated that 50 to 60 per cent of weapons used in the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo are AK-47s or its derivatives.
- AK-47s are found in the state arsenal of at least 82 countries.
- The AK outstrips its nearest rival, the M-16 assault rifle, by 10 to 1 in terms of numbers produced.
- The AK-47 can be fired at a rate of 600 bullets per minute.
- The Kalashnikov has been produced in at least 14 countries, across four continents.

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