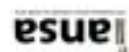


Stop violence against women, control arms



control arms



WOMEN UNDER FIRE

Women and girls pay a very heavy price for the lack of controls on today's billion-dollar global trade in arms. The vast majority of those who make, sell, buy, use or misuse weapons are men. What does this mean for the world's women and girls? Large numbers of women and girls suffer directly and indirectly from armed violence. Women are particularly at risk of certain crimes such as violence in the home and rape.

Women and girls face discrimination and violence in every country, culture and class; it is always psychological, usually committed with fists, and sometimes with weapons. To change this, we need to control the global spread of weapons and challenge attitudes which allow violence against women.

There are estimated to be nearly 650 million small arms in the world. Nearly 60 per cent of small arms are in private hands – most of them men. Between 1995, when Canada tightened its gun laws, and 2003 the gun homicide rate for women dropped by 40 per cent.

Women bear the brunt of weapons in the home

Most perpetrators and most victims of armed violence are men. Most people killed in the home, however, are women – murdered by men they know, often their partner or a male relative.

Although many firearms are bought by men to protect their families, research shows

that a man's access to firearms increases a woman's risk of being killed.

Men are rarely convicted in domestic violence cases. Survivors are often intimidated, or feel that nothing would happen if they went to the police and are unable to seek justice in court.



Fatima recovers in hospital. © AI

Fatima (not her real name) had run away from ill-treatment and beatings by her husband in front of his family and their neighbours in Iraq on 21 May 2003. Neither the family nor the hospital reported the case to the police and her husband was not arrested.

"He was very angry and he took his Kalashnikov... he didn't stop; he shot my legs, I could not feel them, they were numb." Fatima (not her real name)

Never let a man with a history of domestic violence have a gun

One solution would be to have stricter checks into the background of those who apply to have a gun. Female relatives need the power to anonymously veto a gun licence on safety grounds.

Police forces must work for women

Most police and other law enforcement officials who are armed or who have easy access to firearms and other weapons are men. Too often, women subjected to armed violence in the home do not receive the help they need from the police, or are actively discouraged from reporting violence due to discriminatory prejudices. In the worst cases, police officers can threaten, rape and kill women at gunpoint themselves.

Train police officers to take women's human rights seriously

A culture that tolerates men using violence against women and the fact that most police officers are men, make it difficult for women to approach the police for help. To make police forces work for women, changes in recruitment and training are required so that the gravity of crimes committed against women is understood.

"I was 14 years old then. One of the policemen came one night around 10pm, pointed a gun at me and ordered me to follow him... The Commander... pointed his gun at me and raped me. I suffered pain and bleeding."

A woman from the Solomon Islands



Camila Magalhães Lima was walking home from school in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, when she was hit by a bullet fired during a shoot-out between a gang of armed robbers and a private security firm. She lost the use of her legs. © Viva Rio

Having a gun does not make you a real man

Armed violence in urban and rural areas can expose whole communities to the danger of being killed, robbed and caught in crossfire. Most perpetrators and victims of gang violence are young men. Women may be robbed or targeted for breaking unwritten codes of behaviour, and be at risk of violent, often sexual, assault.

In South Africa, where armed gangs are well established, 14 per cent of sexual assaults are reportedly committed with firearms.

Stop rape as a weapon of war

War impacts on every part of women's lives – their bodies, their homes, their ability to provide for their families, the schools they teach or study in, the hospitals where they work or go for healthcare. Sometimes women are specifically targeted as peace activists, negotiators, human rights defenders and humanitarian aid workers.

In particular, women are at risk of rape – in recent years mass rape has been

committed against women in all regions of the world. When the social fabric breaks down during conflict, women's vulnerability increases.

Sometimes sexual violence is opportunistic; sometimes it is a deliberate military and political tactic – either way, the effects are devastating on the individual and her family. If she survives, the woman is usually left with long-term physical and psychological scars.

"Almost every night, the other soldiers raped me. They said that the more they raped me, the more they would be men, and the higher up the ranks they would rise."

Sange, a child soldier in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Troops should disobey orders to commit crimes against women

Even in situations of war, troops must abide by international humanitarian law ('the rules of war'). All civilians must be protected and women must not be targets. Combatants can be held accountable for their actions, and they must refuse to commit crimes against women.

Ensure women's voices are heard

When it comes to negotiating peace and rebuilding damaged communities, women are often left out, yet women are key to building and cementing peace. The needs of women and girl combatants' are usually ignored in programmes to rehabilitate ex-combatants. Women's voices must be heard.

Women must be equal partners in peace and disarmament

When the fighting is over, uncontrolled access to small arms and ammunition encourages further armed violence against women. When former combatants return home traumatised and brutalised some take out their fears and pain on their families, often using weapons left over from combat.

In countries with high levels of instability such as Afghanistan, women and girls face additional risks of sexual violence from the members of armed factions and former combatants.

In Sierra Leone, approximately 30 percent of the child soldiers in rebel forces were girls. Yet only eight percent of the children who were formally demobilised in the country were girls.

Get guns out of women's lives

Around the world women and men are organising to tackle armed violence against women, and the broader abuse of guns which destroys women's lives. Often in situations of great danger they are making their voices heard.

We are calling for an international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to regulate all international arms movements and for effective arms control at local, national and regional levels. All governments must support the principles of the ATT and incorporate them into national law as well as stopping the misuse of arms in their country. Action at community level is also vital to make communities safer.

Although violence against women is universal, it is not inevitable. It's in our hands to stop this human rights scandal. With action by governments, by communities and by individuals, and with your support, we can end violence against women.

Participants held up a Columbine poster at the Million Mom March, 14 May, 2000 in Washington DC, USA. © AP Photo/Kamrako Pajic



With your help, we can stop the spread of weapons and violence against women. Act Now!

Go to:
www.controlarms.org/actnow
to find out more about all the ways you can get involved.

How can your organisation get involved?

- Sign up your members using our 'action cards' and petitions from www.controlarms.org/actnow
- Get your organisation to endorse the campaigns and send its name and logo to add to the list of supporter organisations. Visit www.controlarms.org/actnow
- Get involved in the national coalition in your country; urge your government and political leaders to support an international Arms Trade Treaty and to stop violence against women

We welcome the support of organisations. By joining our campaigns, you can influence your community and your government.

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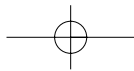
AI Index: ACT 30/006/2005

- Join our photo or self-portrait petition online now at www.controlarms.org/actnow
- Encourage your friends, family and colleagues to join the petition
- Put the poster on the back of this leaflet up in your workplace

ACT NOW!

We must put a stop to armed violence against women and the widespread suffering of women through gun violence. We need your help to combat these abuses. Sign the Million Faces petition today. The answer is in your hands.

It's in your hands to stop violence against women and control arms



STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN **CONTROL ARMS**



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**STOP
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AGAINST
WOMEN**



www.controlarms.org/actforwomen

