

# **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: POL 30/035/2003 (Public)  
News Service No: 278  
10 December 2003

## **The International Human Rights Day sees world support build for international Arms Trade Treaty**

Today, on the International Human Rights Day, an estimated 1300 people will be killed by conventional arms. Against this daily death toll, a growing number of governments are pledging their support for tough arms controls.

The political leaders of Brazil, Cambodia, Mali, Macedonia, Costa Rica, Finland and the Netherlands have pledged their support for an international Arms Trade Treaty. This landmark announcement comes just two months after the Control Arms campaign was launched by Amnesty International, Oxfam and the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

Since the launch of the Control Arms campaign on 9 October 2003, tens of thousands of people have added their faces to the Million Faces Petition, calling on governments to control the arms trade - over 55, 000 in Cambodia alone.

"The growing support for an arms trade treaty is a great inspiration. I hope it will encourage the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who are the largest producers of, and traders in weapons, to sign up to legally binding arms control as well. Without such a commitment their responsibility to uphold the Universal Declaration on Human Rights will only be hollow words", said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

"Today, fifty-five years after the declaration of human rights was signed, we're pleased to see a developing commitment to back up the declaration by controlling the weapons which are responsible for so many human rights violations. We are seeing the first vital steps towards bringing the arms trade under control," said Barbara Stocking, Director of Oxfam.

"This progress is fantastic news for people who live in fear of armed violence across the world. After decades of an explosion in arms proliferation, governments are beginning to listen to their citizens demands for change," said Sally Joss, IANSA Network Coordinator.

Brazil's President Lula confirmed his readiness to play a key role in pushing for an international treaty to control arms in a recent meeting with Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International. This reflects his concern about human rights abuses flowing from gun violence in Brazil and the proliferation of arms in Africa. He committed himself to: "...undertake all efforts to build a network and create a positive balance in favour of arms control."

Announcing Finland's support on Human Rights Day, Mr Erkki Tuomioja, Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs said, "Now is the time to proceed in creating international rules for the arms trade, Finland is ready to support the process towards an Arms Trade Treaty."

Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia said, "As a country that has been severely affected by weapons, Cambodia will support the international Arms Trade Treaty. The Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to controlling weapons... which have such a great impact on humanity, society, the economy and peace"

Atzo Nicolai, the Minister for European Affairs for the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister, said, "The government strives for the realization of legally binding international agreements on export controls...over small arms and light weapons."

Amadou Toumani Touré, President of Mali, a country that has been at the forefront of efforts to address the arms crises in west Africa, said, "Mali is honoured to launch the Control Arms campaign and we fully support it. Mali will play its role in pushing for tougher international arms controls... across the African continent."

### **Background:**

Conventional arms kill more than 500,000 people every year: one person every minute. 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. It is estimated that 80-90 per cent of all illegal small arms start in the state-sanctioned trade.

For more information, please contact:

Oxfam: Brendan Cox. +44 (0)1865 312498. Mobile: +44 (0)7957 120853. [bcox@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:bcox@oxfam.org.uk).

Amnesty International: Anikka Flensburg +44 (0) 207 413 58 10 [aflensburg@amnesty.org](mailto:aflensburg@amnesty.org)

IANSA: Emile Le Brun. +31 20 427 7754 (office). +31 6 4848 2004 (mobile). [emile@iansa.org](mailto:emile@iansa.org)!!

Public Document

\*\*\*\*\*

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

For latest human rights news view <http://news.amnesty.org>