

SVAW newsletter 06

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Women under fire



Schoolgirls in Solomon Islands hold up the words "The time for guns is finished now"

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"He went to the kitchen, got his gun, loaded it, and then held the gun right to my head. He was threatening to blow my brains out."

Women in Hawaii

For millions of women around the world, this is the reality of guns in their lives. Far from providing protection from attackers, guns increase the risk of violence against women and, most especially, of fatal violence.

Women outnumber men as the victims of murder in the family. Most meet their death at the hands of a partner or male relative. Recent studies have shown that if he has access to a gun, the risk to the woman's life increases dramatically.

"Our research strongly supports the need for effective firearm control in South Africa as firearms are a very important weapon used to intimidate and injure women and facilitate rape."

South African Medical Research Council

Several countries which have reformed their domestic gun laws have shown the importance and effectiveness of greater gun control. In the five years after the gun laws in Australia were overhauled in 1996, the gun murder rate for women victims fell by 57 per cent.

In the context of armed conflict or gang violence, uncontrolled proliferation of arms increases the danger to women.

"I saw young people being kidnapped. I saw women being raped and girls being raped. There was a feeling in me that I have to do something to restore peace, and it was up to us to do it. No one else was going to do it."

Martha Horiwapu, trauma and torture counsellor, Women for Peace, Solomon Islands

Violence against women is a serious crime, but all too often it is not treated as such. Around the world women and men are organizing to end violence against women and to stop the proliferation and misuse of arms. Each of us can be part of this powerful movement determined to:

- Speak out for women facing armed violence
- Stop violence against women
- Stop arms proliferation and misuse

Join the Stop Violence Against Women and Control Arms campaigns and encourage others in your community to sign up as well.

Visit www.controlarms.org/actforwomen

Iraq: decades of suffering: now women deserve better

Iraqi women must have an active role in shaping the future of their country.

In war, women suffer on two counts

Gervasio Sánchez, professional journalist who has specialized in armed conflict, writes about his experiences of war and its effect on women.

India: Justice -- the victim in Gujarat

Nearly three years after violence erupted in the state of Gujarat in Western India those responsible continue to walk free.

Featured content

Archbishop Desmond Tutu supports our campaign.

Video

(English only - Real Player required)

Discrimination engenders violence.

Watch and download AI Spain's video message.

(Flash required, Spanish only)

AI Spain

Viet Nam: Prisoners of conscience released

Amnesty International warmly welcomes news of the release of several Vietnamese prisoners of conscience.