

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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### **G8: Failing to stop the terror trade**

"The failure of governments from seven of the Group of Eight (G8) largest economies - the USA, the Russian Federation, France, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Italy and Canada - to regulate arms transfers is contributing to grave human rights abuses in developing countries and the destruction of millions of lives, particularly in Africa," Amnesty International said today.

In a new issue of *The Terror Trade Times*, the organization highlights recent cases of how nationals, companies and governments of the big powers have been assisting armed forces that commit serious human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The current US-led "war against terrorism" is being accompanied by massive transfers of military aid to governments that have shown little regard for human rights protection.

The US has maintained, or even increased, existing military aid to countries such as Israel (US\$2.04 billion), Egypt (US\$1.3 billion), Jordan, Tunisia and Colombia. Military sales to countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey have been maintained. In addition, the US Congress has been considering an emergency supplemental spending law allowing a further US\$1.3 billion. This would enable US arms purchases, military combat training, advisers and military bases for Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkey, Somalia, Yemen, Kenya, Indonesia and the Philippines - all countries where serious and systematic human rights violations have been committed.

The G8 governments have pledged to put Africa on their agenda when they meet in Canada in June 2002. But what does this mean?

According to reports, the Russian Federation has substantially increased its exports of Kalashnikov rifles to African countries since 1999 despite numerous armed conflicts where such weapons have been used to facilitate gross human rights violations. Recent Russian arms transfers have gone to conflict zones in the Horn of Africa and Central and Southern Africa, including Zimbabwe.

British pilots and air cargo companies have been allowed by the UK government to supply weapons to armed forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo who are responsible extrajudicial killings, torture and rape, in a conflict which has claimed as many as 2.5 million victims. Under UK law, as long as the weapons are collected and routed outside UK territory to a destination not embargoed by the UN, such arms trafficking is perfectly legal.

The traffickers have used links in other European Union (EU) countries or outside EU jurisdiction to circumvent the 1993 non-binding EU embargo on arms sales to the DRC. UK law also fails to prevent UK transport companies being used for arms trafficking abroad. The UK government has not honoured its general election manifesto commitment "to control the activities of arms brokers and traffickers wherever they are located".

The German government in 1999 and 2000 authorised the export of small arms and light weapons to countries in Africa including Egypt, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These included: revolvers, pistols, hunting guns, and ammunition. However, the government's Annual Report does not provide data on actual deliveries or indicate whether the weapons were actually sent to the police or armed forces in those countries. Moreover, German small arms were indirectly exported through "licensed production" agreements to manufacture German weapons in other countries that should not receive direct export licences from the German government and its European allies.

Successive French governments have provided military and other security equipment and training to most Francophone countries in Africa, often regardless of their human rights record. Among the recipients of weapons such as small calibre machine-guns, automatic rifles, light guns and shoulder-fired rockets in 1999 were Burkina Faso, identified by the UN as a conduit for arms to Liberia and to armed opposition forces in Sierra Leone, and to Cameroon where the security forces were reported to have unlawfully executed hundreds of people in 2000. Despite the recent "Angolagate" scandal involving French-brokered arms deals to Angola, a new French law to control French arms brokers does not cover "third country" deals conducted outside France.

In the first 10 months of 2001, more than 16 million euros-worth of Italian small arms arrived in Africa. Among the recipients were Nigeria (6 million euros) and Kenya (2.5 million euros), both countries where security forces have persistently carried out gun-related human rights violations.

Talisman Energy of Canada has highlighted its investments in social development projects in Sudan, including the building of a hospital and some roadworks. But Talisman Energy has also helped build an airstrip which has been used by military aircraft as a base to bomb civilian populations and property in raids on areas that the government claimed were rebel strongholds.

In July 2001, at the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, a UN Programme of Action was agreed containing recommendations to governments. Amnesty International welcomed this initiative, but the UN Programme was stripped of any meaningful human rights protection by countries including the USA, China and Russia, aided by key members of the Non-Aligned Movement. The UN Programme excludes any mention of "human rights violations", "war crimes" or "misuse of arms". It fails to elaborate binding measures to ensure human rights protection by national arms export authorities.

"All states have a fundamental legal obligation to assess whether the arms and security equipment and training they transfer are likely to be used by the recipients to commit human rights abuses. They must ensure that through such transfers they are not knowingly assisting in such abuses," Amnesty International said.

Arms transfers are not lawful just because the recipients are government agents or the transfers have been authorized by government officials. They can only be lawful if they are made in accordance with international standards.

To link to the Terror Trade Times: [http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/pages/ttt3\\_index](http://web.amnesty.org/web/web.nsf/pages/ttt3_index)

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