

## UK Working Group on Arms

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### *UK and EU Arms Used in East Timor as Review of Arms Exports Code Begins in Secret*

*As hundreds of East Timorese lie dead or wounded and over a hundred thousand flee, stories of European weapons -- such as British-made Hawk jets -- being used highlight the need to make the fledgling EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports effective. The East Timor crisis should concentrate the minds of EU officials meeting in Brussels on Tuesday (21<sup>st</sup> September) as they carry out their first-ever review of the EU Code.*

*The Code was adopted by the 15 EU Member States in June 1998 with the aim of "setting high common standards" over arms exports from the region. The Annual Review process is a vital opportunity to assess the impact of the Code on halting exports of arms to human rights abusers and regions of tension. But a lack of transparency will make it impossible to tell if this is the case.*

*There is a serious danger that the Code review process will not enable parliaments and the public to hold EU governments accountable for their arms export policy. Each Member State is required to circulate to its EU partners a report on its implementation of the Code, but this is to be done in secret. Officials then submit a joint assessment of the Code in a Consolidated Report to the Council of Ministers. It is vital that the EU Member States make public this Consolidated Report.*

*One year ago the UK Working Group on Arms <sup>1</sup>welcomed the EU Code as an important first step towards a more responsible approach to arms exports from the EU. The NGOs however called on EU governments to strengthen the Code by closing a number of 'loopholes' which undermine the Code's effectiveness. A year on, little substantive progress has been made.*

*As a matter of urgency, the Annual Review process should agree a clear timetable for collective action to close the following loopholes:*

- \_ Establishing a common system of monitoring the end-use of arms after export -- evidence of Hawk jets being used in East Timor shows the inadequacy of current arrangements;*
- \_ Regulating licensed production so that companies like FN Herstal of Belgium (who have transferred technology for the manufacture of assault rifles in Indonesia) would require clearance from their government before contracts are signed;*
- \_ Controlling the gun-runners -- the German government has tabled proposals for EU regulations on arms brokers, but as governments have dragged their feet, EU citizens can still arrange arms transfers into conflict and human rights crisis zones.*

*ENDS.../*

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For the purposes of this press release, the UK Working Group on Arms comprises of: Amnesty International, the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), Christian Aid, International Alert and Saferworld.

