



EMBARGOED UNTIL:

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**NEW REPORT ON THE GLOBAL GUN CRISIS
CALLS FOR UN ACTION**

The global proliferation of small arms and light weapons (guns) represents an epidemic which should be addressed as urgently as avian flu, according to a new report released today by the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

The report *2006: Bringing the Global Gun Crisis Under Control* sets out the scale of the small arms threat which affects every country in the world and results in the deaths of 1000 people a day.

With 640 million guns already in the world and eight million new ones produced each year, there are enough weapons to equip one in every ten people on the planet. Of these, the majority are in the hands of civilians (59%), outnumbering those held by the armed forces and governments (38%). 10-14 billion rounds of ammunition are produced annually, sufficient to shoot every person in the world twice.

Rebecca Peters, Director of IANSA said, “Guns kill, wound and disable around a million people a year. If 1000 people a day were dying of avian flu you can be certain something would be done about it. This is an epidemic which demands immediate international action.”

The source of the illicit market is the legal trade, often in a different country from the one where the weapons are used in violence. The vast majority of small arms and light weapons – ranging from revolvers and machine guns to anti-aircraft missiles and rocket propelled grenade launchers – are manufactured, traded and initially owned legally; many later fall into illegal ownership. Unlike heavy weaponry such as tanks, small arms are easy to use, transport and carry across borders and are hard for governments to monitor.

It is clear that this problem must be regulated in a manner that is comprehensive, coordinated and global. Despite this, there are:

- no global standards for governments deciding whether to authorise an arms export or transfer
- no international guidelines to assist states in regulating gun ownership among their own citizens
- no global treaties to control the activities of arms brokers
- no legal requirement for governments to maintain records linking guns to their location (whether military stockpile, police depot or civilian home).

Although the gun epidemic continues unabated, the international community has failed to address it as a crisis. The United Nations held its first major meeting on the issue just five years ago, and the second one will be this June. Whilst urgent action is clearly indicated, there are fears that the meeting will simply re-run its previous, five year old discussions and miss the opportunity to move forward.

Rebecca Peters: “Around the world many governments are now reforming their own domestic legislation to deal with the scourge of guns. When those governments turn up at the UN in June, they must stand up for

what they know to be right at the global level: the international arms trade must be brought under control. No excuses – not national security, not local culture or custom, not economics will justify a failure to act decisively. Waiting a further five years means consigning a further 1.8 million people to violent death and millions more to serious injury.

The IANSA report indicates four key areas for action:

- Global standards to regulate the international transfer of weapons
- Regulation of guns in civilian hands
- Incorporation of armed violence prevention into development projects and funding
- The provision of assistance to survivors of armed violence.

Guns are spread across the entire world with an estimated:

- 84 million firearms in Europe
- 45 million - 80 million in Latin America
- 58 million - 107 million in the Middle East (with an estimated 13 million - 17 million in the hands of the police and the remaining 45 million - 90 million in the hands of civilians)
- 22 million - 42 million in North East Asia (police and military)
- 30 million in Sub-Saharan Africa
- 248 million - 286 million in the US.

No region of the world can claim to be exempt from this problem and only a genuinely global response to it will address the crisis.

Gun violence is a preventable problem, far more so than many diseases, but requires a globally coordinated response and political will. If the UN fails to take such action this year, it will be at least another five years before they meet to discuss it again.

ENDS

Notes:

The IANSA report draws on the best available data for gun ownership and spread to demonstrate the global extent of the crisis, but low reporting and registration mean that these are patchy and in some cases out of date. The true extent of gun proliferation is unknown and the very paucity of the figures underlines the need for effective and consistent monitoring. .

- Media Briefing notes and a copy of the report available on request.
- Video and Audio B roll available on request.

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IANSA is a global network of more than 700 civil society organisations including human rights activists, democracy campaigners, development organisations, public health and humanitarian agencies, and victim support groups. Its members work for controls on the international arms trade and for laws to make people safer from gun violence.

www.iansa.org

