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**Press Release 02, May 21, 2006**

## **INTERNATIONAL ACTION WEEK AGAINST SMALL ARMS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

### **Three youngsters killed, six more wounded**

***Three youngsters killed, six more wounded in dreadful armed attack at an internet café in Skopje, the capitol of Macedonia, three days before the start of the International Action Week Against Small Arms in Macedonia***

**T**hree youngsters between 14 and 20 years of age were killed and six others were injured (age 21-34) in a heavy firearms attack on an internet café in Skopje neighborhood (Gazi Baba), only a couple of kilometers away of the city centre on midnight between Thursday and Friday, May 19/20. Kalashnikovs and a hand gun were used in the dreadful attack, according to the preliminary police reports.

Engyn (14) and Enis (17) were two brothers, known in the neighborhood as nice and quiet kids and good students. All victims, killed or injured were random victims of what is speculated to be a revengeful attack in gang dispute. A handgun fire from an unknown visitor to the attacked venue was returned from the internet café, after which the attackers escaped, witnesses say.

This unspeakably tragic incident is one more in a long row of deadly attacks on people's life and security in Macedonia. Firearms are a daily experience in the life of Macedonian citizens, bringing death and injuries. In the last several years, the Macedonian society became violent and dangerous, a society where firearms are picked up and used easily. This brings irreversible damage and distortion, slowing down social, economic and human development.

The death and injury of almost ten young people in the Macedonian capitol falls only few days before the International Action Week Against Small Arms, one more horrific reminder on the necessity of decisive action against weapons in this country and elsewhere in the world.

Civil, supported by UNDP, and in partnership with South East European Network on Control of Arms (SEENCA), Saferworld (UK), and Caritas France

in Macedonia following the global initiative of the International Action Network on Small Arms, participates to the global efforts to put an end to armed violence and control of arms.

Once more, we express our condolences to the families of the deceased, and we promise that we will never get used to violence. To the contrary, our decisiveness and dedication becomes stronger by day. We will not give our action up, as long as weapons are circulating around in our society.

Our action was joined by a newly established citizen movement Zgjoju! (in Albanian language – Wake up!), as well as from the Mayor of Chair, Mr. Izet Mexhiti, where the latest incident took place, and the Mayor of city of Skopje, Mr. Trifun Kostovski, who expressed their unreserved support to our action against small arms. The list of supporters grows by the hour. The Business Association “Esnaf”, members of Civil administered Action Working Group on Safety and Security in the Skopje Old Town, NGO Support Centers network in 12 cities in Macedonia, and many more.

Starting Monday, May 22, Civil launches a poster and flyer campaign with two slogans and messages:

1. Speak up in time! Victims cannot call for help
2. We need more space to play

Both messages represent people’s voice against small arms possessors who undermine and exacerbate human rights, safety and security in the society. The first slogan “Speak up in time! Victims cannot call for help” appeals to all citizens to take common responsibility in the efforts to stop armed violence, respect of human rights, and strengthen cooperation with institutions and amongst themselves in the arms control processes.

The second slogan and the flyer “We need more space to play” are designed by two female students (17 years of age) at the workshop Arts Against Arms during the Peace Unlimited Festival 2005. This slogan appeals to respect of basic human rights, such as right to life, right to freedom of movement, and need for development in a peaceful and creative environment.

During the campaign, NGOs and citizen groups from 15 cities, towns and rural areas in Macedonia will engage in activities to support this action.

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