

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – THE ARMS TRADE TREATY**

### **How many people die in a year as a result of arms conflict?**

128 armed conflicts since 1989 have resulted in at least 250,000 deaths each year. In addition, there are an estimated 300,000 armed killings outside of conflict each year. Injuries are likely to be even more numerous than deaths in conflict and armed violence\*.

*\*Source = Killer Facts report 2010, Amnesty International (this report is being updated please check the website for new information).*

### **Why aren't there international rules about the Arms Trade Treaty?**

The world has never agreed to comprehensive, legally binding international rules governing the arms trade. As incredible as it may seem, there are international treaties to regulate the trade in dinosaur bones, bananas and postage stamps, but not the international arms trade!

### **If existing controls aren't working, how do we know this will?**

Most states have been inconsistent in implemented existing controls on the arms trade, or have failed to incorporate them into national law. Several arms-exporting countries have not signed up to these agreements at all. The result of this is that weapons frequently fall into the wrong hands, where they are used to fuel conflict, poverty and human rights. However, the arms trade is global and controlling it requires a global solution. An ATT would be international, ensuring all countries are working to the same standards. It would also be legally binding, and in line with international law.

### **How would an international Arms Trade Treaty work?**

An effective ATT would be based on a simple principle: no transfers of weapons likely to be used for violations of international law. It would establish common binding standards that must be applied to assess international weapons transfers. These standards would be based on existing international law including international human rights and humanitarian law. In practice, this should mean that a transfer of weapons will be stopped if there is evidence that the weapons are likely to be used for grave violations of international human rights, humanitarian law, or will adversely affect sustainable development.

### **But what about weapons currently in circulation?**

We can tackle the spread of arms by 'stopping the flow and draining the pool' – meaning we put in place stronger controls on the movement of arms, and take them out of communities already awash with weapons. Programmes of weapons collection and destruction have developed significantly in the last ten years. For instance in South Africa, schools, hospitals, public buildings and even towns have been designated as 'Gun Free Zones' – reducing fear and armed violence.

### **Why aren't you calling for an end to the arms trade, 'full stop'?**

We recognise that arms have a legitimate use in our society. States have the right to use them to protect the life, liberty, and physical integrity of their citizens against attack – or imminent attack during internal law-enforcement operations. Arms can also play a specific role in international peace-keeping operations.

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### **What are the key challenges for a strong Arms Trade Treaty?**

There are significant challenges in the road leading up to July 2012. There is a danger that seeking consensus drives the treaty to the lowest common denominator. This includes the risk that a narrow scope restricts the ability of the treaty to control all the equipment and transactions necessary to reduce armed violence. Some powerful states remain sceptical or are opposed and could block the process. Significant opponents are Egypt, Pakistan and Iran. Russia and China are problematic, and have significant power as Security Council members. The USA rejected the idea of an arms treaty three times, Obama changed that but still with conditions attached. Other concerns are that implementation measures will be weak and lack teeth and that states will take too long to ratify the treaty and this delays its entry into force.

### **In the current economic climate, won't the Arms Trade Treaty just be a threat to UK jobs?**

The ATT is currently supported by the UK defence industry. It has also received considerable support from the Trade Union movement, including all those representing workers in the defence industry. Whilst clearly recognising that no job should be dependent on the direct suffering of others, it is also to remember that the ATT is calling for greater regulations not the abolition of the arms trade. Whilst greater restrictions on the arms trade will clearly result in some job losses, at least short term, it is important not to overstate the true economic benefits of the arms trade. According the UK Ministry of Defence, whilst approximately 300,000 people are employed in the UK defence industry, only 65,000 jobs are dependent on arms sales overseas, the vast majority of jobs in the UK defence sector are in support of UK's own defence industry and armed forces and would be totally unaffected by an ATT. UK defence exports average about £7 billion per year, which equates to about 1.8% of total UK exports and only 0.49 % of the UK's GDP.

### **Is this campaign disrespectful to our armed troops, including those that have given their lives?**

No, absolutely not. Efforts to secure stronger controls on the arms trade are widely supported by members of the armed services, including former soldiers and generals with direct battle experience. If a strong, robust ATT is agreed at the July negotiations then our armed forces will be safer. Currently many of our armed forces and those of other countries are placed in direct peril due to the unregulated global arms trade. At the moment troops face the very real prospect of having weapons, including sometimes supplied originally by the UK, turned against them when they have been diverted or sold to human rights abuses around the world because of a lack of effective global regulations.

### **What happens after July negotiations?**

If the Arms Trade Treaty negotiations are successful then the ratification process will begin. The Treaty will only enter into force when a set amount of States (the number of which is to be agreed within the treaty) formally ratify by amending national laws to comply with the obligations within the treaty. If the negotiations are not successful then there is an option for discussions to return to the UN first committee in October where a new resolution can be voted upon to agree the treaty.

For more information visit our website [www.amnesty.org.uk/controlarms](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/controlarms)