

Arms Trade Treaty Campaign

Please be at Market Square next Saturday (June 16th) at 11:30 am to join Julian Huppert MP and various local NGO groups including Amnesty, World Development Movement, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Oxfam, Menelik Education and Stop the War Coalition in calling for a "bullet proof" Arms Trade Treaty.

This is an historic international treaty to be negotiated and signed by the United Nations in July, aimed at preventing arms being sold to regimes who would turn them on their own civilians. It has been seventeen years in the making and many world leaders are fully behind it (including government front-bench MPs and even British manufacturers — with one glaring exception: David Cameron, who remains tacitly on the fence). We have just one shot at it but, if certain negotiators get their way in watering down the language, it might become as toothless and ineffectual as, for example, recent UN attempts to halt the appalling atrocities in Syria (just one of many ugly regimes supplied with British and American made arms - see two linked news reports at bottom).

Only if David Cameron commits wholeheartedly, will British negotiators be able to use our clout to really hold firm on the legal agreements so that trade with brutal, or "rogue" regimes — directly and indirectly — finally ceases. And David Cameron does not seem to have got the message that his commitment MATTERS to Britons.

Please tell your friends and show up to help us hammer it home.

Some background:

In July 2012, world delegates will meet at a United Nations conference in New York to negotiate the terms of the first ever international Arms Trade Treaty. It is a chance to change — and make — history, and could be the most important negotiations to take place since the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

The concept of the treaty was the inspiration of a group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates back in 1995. Seventeen years of campaigning later, the treaty is nearing its final negotiations. Its essence is to expressly forbid any arms sales where there is substantial risk that they will lead to serious violations of human rights. Many countries are in support, but significant players — notably the world's major arms dealing nations — are proposing to dilute it, or trying to scupper it altogether.

The UK was one of the original seven co-author governments that introduced the initial resolution to the UN in 2006. It is still in support, in principle, but there has been talk of compromise. Although William Hague and Nick Clegg have spoken out strongly in its favour, David Cameron's silence is deafening.

Recently, he flew into Jakarta with some of the UK's leading defence manufacturers, to negotiate new deals with a country that both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are highly critical of in terms of its human rights record.

Is David Cameron's silence strategic? Could it mean that the FCO is willing to pay lip-service to a treaty based around human rights, whilst the Prime Minister continues to do deals with oppressive regimes? We feel it is very important to get David Cameron's word that he is fully on board with the treaty – and will not allow negotiators to water down the language of the treaty when it is finalised in July.

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10079&ArticleID=4073>

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=11624&ArticleID=3486>

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10094>

Amnesty International is part of the Control Arms Coalition, including global NGOs such as Oxfam, IANSA, Africa Peace Forum, Saferworld and the Forum for Environment and Development.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1373444/Libya-The-dirty-secret-UK-arms-sales-Gaddafi.html>

UK boycotts Israel, yet supplies arms to Syria

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/886480/posts>

"The British government, which operates an unofficial but extensive ban on military equipment to Israel, has supplied Syria with toxic acid that could be used to make chemical weapons and optical equipment that could provide troops with night-vision capability...."