

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN)

AEFJN - A Bridge Linking Africa and Europe

AEFJN is a faith-based International Network present in Africa and in Europe, established in 1988.

AEFJN promotes economic justice between the European Union and sub-Saharan Africa so that the people of Africa may look forward to a better future.

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AEFJN works on food sovereignty (land grabbing), exploitation of natural resources, access to quality medicines, small arms control, trade agreements, and climate change.

AEFJN and the Control of Small Arms

To stop the transfer of weapons and its proliferation in Africa AEFJN works at three levels:

- ◇ At European level, by supporting the EU Common Position on the export of arms and its implementation by all member states.
- ◇ At the UN, by calling for a strong Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).
- ◇ In Africa, by supporting regional agreements on arms control.

Our Faith Calls Us to Act

During the 2nd African Synod, bishops encouraged national governments to support the on-going study and preparation of an Arms' Trade Treaty (ATT). They also called for a transfer of resources from arms design and production to education and agricultural development.

"They shall beat their swords into ploughshare and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more" (Is. 2:4).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- * Find information and pass it around to groups and parishes.
- * Form or join a group fighting the proliferation of small arms and give practical support to their activities.

AEFJN has a directory of NGOs working on small arms in Africa. Find it at: AEFJN website—Arms—Resources

KNOW MORE

<http://www.aefjn.org/arms>
<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/>
<http://www.iansa.org/campaign/arms-trade-treaty> Small arms survey
<http://www.controlarms.org/news.php>
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/campaigns/control-arms>



Small Arms in Africa, A Great Danger for Peace and Security

Small arms are one of the main causes of death in Africa. The increased availability of small arms through legal and illegal channels has contributed to an alarming rise in casualties in African conflicts and in daily life. The trafficking and easy availability of small arms and light weapons fuel instability and conflict and pose a threat to security and sustainable development in the affected countries. Insecurity and violence affect us all. To work for weapons control is to work for peace.

The Proliferation of Small Arms in Africa

Arms transfers to sub-Saharan Africa are small, representing only 1.5 % of global arms transfers. Yet they have a significant impact on peace and need to be controlled. The motives for arms transfers to Africa are diverse, including profits for the arms industry and the wish for political influence in order to gain access to natural resources.

In sub-Saharan Africa, several internal factors contribute to the proliferation. Firstly, there is a general lack of transparency around the arms trade. Most Sub-Saharan African states consider their arms policies to be secret, which makes them hard to assess. Similarly, arms dealers promote corruption by involving some African states in illegal activity. Insecurity in some regions also makes it also easy for small arms to enter illicit circulation through theft, leakage or resale.

Finally, African governments have facilitated significant illicit small arms transfers. UN investigators have documented weapons transfers by neighbouring governments to armed groups in Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan, all of which were under UN arms embargoes.



Corruption and Lack of Transparency stimulate Illicit Arms Transfers

- ◇ Prices of weapons tend to be lower in regions where governments are weak and corrupt and higher in regions with more stable governments.
- ◇ The lack of transparency in arms flows to sub-Saharan Africa obstructs any advancement on the proposed Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

Impact of the Proliferation of Arms

The accumulation of small arms does not necessarily lead to direct conflict but it creates a higher risk of armed violence. The supply of arms stimulates



violence instead of dialogue and has many undesirable effects. For example, high levels of armed violence hinder development. It also causes diversion of local resources, misuse of public money or imposition of «Might is Right».

- ◇ There are an estimated half a billion small arms around the world killing between 300.000 and 500.000 people each year, making weapons the major cause of civilian casualties in modern conflicts
- ◇ There are 100 million small arms in Africa, especially around the Horn, in Central Africa and many areas of West Africa.
- ◇ In Africa, AK-47s can be bought in some countries on the open market for as little as the price of a sack of flour.
- ◇ More than 80% of ammunition trade remains outside of reliable export data.

Hope for More Control

The ratification of a global treaty regulating the trade of small arms could be a great step forward. To be effective, that treaty must be legally binding and cover national control of production, transfer, holding and use of small arms and their ammunition. In July 2012, the signing of an Arms Trade Treaty should lead the way for better control.



Governments have a responsibility to provide security and development for their citizens. The arms trade could be targeted in several ways:

1. by tackling the roots causes of armed violence: under-development, insecurity, inequality and corruption.
2. by preventing arms transfers to regimes that violate UN arms embargoes and cause human rights violations.
3. with aid programmes that improve the security of arms storage facilities.

Towards Greater Control of Arms in Africa

Nearly all African regions have reached agreements on a regional basis to fight the proliferation of small arms. While such agreements require significant and sustained will and resources, they have facilitated trust-building and the collaboration of civil society with government, military and police.

The European Union and Small Arms Control

The European Union adopted a Common Position on arms exports defining eight legally binding criteria governing control of exports of military technology and equipment. They are based on respect for international obligations of EU member states and awareness of potential human rights violations and armed conflict in the country of final destination.