

CALL FOR STRICTER SMALL ARMS TRADE CONTROLS



Toronto Conference executive passed a resolution presented by the Peace and Justice Working Group in May, 2004 calling on individuals and congregations to encourage our government and the international community to impose stricter controls on small arms and trade, through:

- deepening our understanding of the impact of the proliferation and misuse of conventional arms on peoples around the world;
- meeting with elected representatives to call for parliamentary support for stricter Canadian export controls and an international arms trade treaty;
- supporting Project Ploughshares' programme work, particularly their work on controlling the arms trade, and draw on its expertise and resources;
- participating in the *Million Faces* photo petition of the international Control Arms campaign supported by Project Ploughshares, Oxfam and Amnesty International.

For the full text of the resolution, see www.torontconference.ca or call the Conference office 1800 446 4729.

DID YOU KNOW:

- Small arms and light weapons ('small arms') are designed for personal use; light weapons are designed for use by several people serving as a crew. Small arms include revolvers and self-loading pistols; rifles and carbines; sub-machine guns; assault rifles; and light machine guns. Light weapons include heavy machine guns; grenade launchers; portable anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns; recoilless rifles; portable launchers of anti-tank missiles, rocket systems, and anti-aircraft missile systems; mortars of calibers of less than 100mm; ammunition, shells, and missiles for all the above; grenades; landmines; and explosives. (UNDP 2002: 10)
- The arms trade is not subject to any international treaty.
- It is estimated that there are at least 600 million small arms in circulation – one for every 10 people on the planet.
- Each week 10,000 people die from small arms and light weapons – one death per minute.
- Canada is a major supplier of military goods, other than small arms. Canada ranked 13th in the world in 2002 in Global Suppliers of Major Conventional Weapons and the top supplier to the United States (source: Press for Conversion, #52, Oct 03). This industry is funded in part by the Canada Pension Plan and government grants.
- The United Nations Charter in Article 26 calls on all governments to commit to the pursuit of peace and security with the least possible resort to lethal military force.
- The World Council of Churches (www.wcc-coe.org) 1998 report *Small Arms, Big Impact* calls on churches to play a role in campaigns to control and reduce small arms.
- The 58th session of the UN General Assembly (2003) established a working group to negotiate an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons, and to convene a UN conference in mid 2006 to review progress five years after adoption of the Program of Action on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. (Disarmament Times Winter 2004)

- In post-conflict environments the proliferation and misuse of small arms among civilian populations pose many obstacles to post-conflict reconstruction. There are links between violence, insecurity, fear and poverty which fuel small arms misuse. Therefore voluntary weapons collection programs must incorporate security sector reform, sustainable development and the promotion of cultures of peace. (Moirra Goodfellow, 53rd Pugwash Conference).

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Participate in the international programme to end the unregulated transfer of arms. For information on the Control Arms campaign, including the *Million Faces* photo petition, see the campaign document *Shattered Lives: The Case for Tough International Arms Controls* and the Control Arms website (www.controlarms.org).
- Participate in Project Ploughshares programme work on controlling the arms trade – they have been involved since 1976 (www.ploughshares.ca).
- Link learnings from the *To Seek Justice and Resist Evil: Towards an Economy for All God's People* (www.united-church.ca) and Kairos' *Just Peace* campaign (www.kairoscanada.org) to the small arms trade.
- Focus on the Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace (www.torontoconference.ca and www.wcc-coe.org).
- Write the Ministry of National Defence urging the Government of Canada to uphold and strengthen its international arms control commitments and to work to bolster United Nations member states' commitment to the UN small arms process, including an international arms trade treaty.
- Meet with your MP to discuss the need to regulate the arms trade.

Sample Letter

The Hon. Bill Graham, MP, Minister of National Defence,
House of Commons, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Graham,

As a member of The United Church of Canada I am very concerned about the proliferation of small arms around the globe. Our members have recently passed a resolution addressing this issue. We hope that you in your position of Minister of Defence will act to reduce this growing problem. It is estimated half a million people die each year, 300,000 in armed conflict and 200,000 from homicides and suicides.

We note that the 58th United Nations General Assembly established an open-ended working group to negotiate an international instrument to enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons. There will be a UN conference in New York June-July 2006 to review the progress since the adoption of the Program of Action on Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. An international treaty is needed.

We would request your full cooperation in this effort and in the preparatory meetings set for January 2006. Since women and children are the main victims, and since Canada agreed to UN Resolution 1325 mandating a decisive role for women in peace negotiations, I suggest that women be included in Canada's representation to these meetings.

It is important that Canada come to the meetings with no involvement in the manufacture or trade, legal or illegal, in these weapons. We stopped making landmines, surely we can stop whatever role we have in this menace which is interfering with the delivery of humanitarian aid, violence reduction and alleviation of poverty.

We respectfully ask for a response to our concerns.

cc: your member of Parliament
Prime Minister Paul Martin