



"Fountain of Bullets"
drawing by former child
soldier, Sierra Leone

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Seen through the eyes of a child or through the lens of a professional photographer, the impact of the arms trade on human rights is inescapable. The international arms and security trade fuels violent conflict, perpetuates poverty, undermines sustainable development and contributes to countless violations of human rights.

Governments that export arms and those that receive them have a fundamental moral and developing legal responsibility to ensure that the arms are not misused for human rights violations or breaches of international humanitarian law.

Yet this report demonstrates how EU Member States are permitting transfers of military, security and police equipment and services to those armed forces and security agencies who have already used such equipment or services to commit serious human rights abuses or war crimes with impunity.

Why is this happening? Because there are loopholes in the EU's arms control regime – loopholes that may be exploited even further now that ten new states, some of them significant arms producers and exporters, have joined the EU, unless all EU Member States tighten and close them.

Whether the exports are hi-tech electronic components from Ireland, surplus weapons from Slovakia, or conventional arms from France, Germany, Italy and the UK, the present export control system cannot guarantee that they will not contribute to the abuse of human rights.

The EU Code of Conduct for Arms Exports agreed in 1998 is to be reviewed this year. Now is the time to put human rights at the heart of the EU's foreign and trade policies by strengthening the Code of Conduct, closing the loopholes, and building a critical mass of support for a legally binding global Arms Trade Treaty.

This report has been produced by Amnesty International, primarily by the International Secretariat and AI Ireland, with research input from the Omega Foundation.

AI Index: ACT 30/003/2004
ISBN NUMBER: 0-86210-356-8



UNDERMINING GLOBAL SECURITY

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