



# INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV) AND SMALL ARMS

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE  
16 DÍAS DE ACTIVISMO CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO  
16 JOURS D'ACTIVISME CONTRE LA VIOLENCE DE GENRE  
25 NOV - 10 DEC <http://16dayscwgl.rutgers.edu>



The decision to obtain and use a gun is influenced by the civil, political, and social understandings of the role of and need for weapons, and what can be achieved by their ownership and use. It is closely connected to the notion that security or domination can be achieved through the use of violence. Small arms are often associated power and evidence of masculinity.

The reality is that small arms violence off the battlefield is among the greatest mortal risk factors facing women, men, and children. Often times it is women who are threatened, wounded, or killed in the home by men partners, former partners, or relatives.

 **The home and personal relationships are supposed to be safe spaces, but in situations of intimate partner violence where small arms are present, women are 3 times more likely to be killed in the home, and 14 times more likely to be killed if there is history of intimate partner violence.**

With more than 875 million small arms spread around in the world, roughly 75% (650 million) are in the hands of private individuals, most whom are men, and are stored in homes. The Small Arms Survey has confirmed that the combination of guns and intimate partner violence is often deadly, with 40 to 70% of woman murdered by their intimate partners or male relatives.

Small arms are widely available and continue to be part of the escalating insecurity, instability, and militarization of society, homes, and relationships. Small arms proliferation and lack of regulation of the flow, access, and use continues to be critically harmful to the safety and security of women, men and children. Whole communities are forced to contend with the aftermath of small arms violence, during both conflict and “peacetime”. Around the world, an average of at least 200,000 non-conflict-related firearms deaths occur each year. Gun violence particularly continues to manifest in horrific ways: in massacres by teenage gunmen bent on taking revenge on women and men for perceived slights against their masculinity; in

## Advocate

Disarm perpetrators of domestic violence. Demand implementation of the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty. Advocate for domestic violence laws that require the removal of guns. At a minimum, police should be required to consult the spouse or former spouse before approving a gun license application. Australia, Canada, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago are among the countries that have harmonized their legal frameworks on gun licensing and domestic violence. Such laws both shape and reflect values, specifically reinforcing values of nonviolence; they can also make a real difference. Canada tightened its gun laws in 1995 and by 2003 the gun murder rate dropped by 15% overall, and by 40% for women. Encourage law enforcement officials to address armed intimate partner and family violence: Local law enforcement officers are often the first to respond to, and intervene in, instances of domestic violence. Police should be trained to respond to such violence sensitively, effectively, and lawfully. Advocate for the requirement that all guns to be stored safely: Gun owners should be required to store guns securely and to keep the ammunition in a separate place.

For example, In Belarus, guns must be kept in locked boxes, disassembled and unloaded, with the ammunition stored separately.

domestic situations where women of every class, race or caste, religion and region are subjected to physical, psychological and sexual assault, threats, and other violence by intimate partners.

Oftentimes, when these situations of abuse and assault escalate greatly enough, the end result will be a woman dead. 1 in 3 of more than 66,000 femicides that occur annually will be committed with a firearm.<sup>1</sup>

 **More must be done to regulate access, flow, and use of small arms so they are no longer used in violent intimate partner situations, or in public spaces.**

Pressure from civil society and responsible government legislation can bring the change we need to see in small arms control. Furthermore, in order to adequately address small arms violence in intimate partner violence situations, legislators must take intimate partner violence cases more seriously. This means no longer allowing military expenditures to divert money from social development, including provision of nonviolent education, responsive health and police services in the event of intimate partner violence.

## Treat intimate partner and family violence as the serious crime it is and protect and support women who report it

Women often do not report intimate partner violence, either because they are too fearful or lack access to the police or the justice system. Governments must ensure that criminal justice systems encourage women to report violence in the home, provide support for them when they do, and penalize the perpetrators.

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of nonviolent education, responsive health and police services in the event of intimate partner violence. This also means improving the commitment of police and justice sectors to better respond, investigate, and prosecute IPV cases; it means public budgeting for services of prevention, protection, and redress for IPV survivors; and creating or strengthening policies that prohibit gun ownership by those with a history of IPV case history or conviction, those with mental illness, and other problems that can exacerbate a potential for gun violence.



The flow of illicit arms is among the most critical threats against human rights, safety, and security of women, children, and men in communities throughout the world.

Reduction and prevention of this flow is critical to addressing issues of violence before, during, and after conflict, and equally critical to addressing the ease of access to small arms by perpetrators of intimate partner violence.

States must go beyond paying lip-service in support of decreasing violence in the home and in public spaces: there must be worldwide ratification and implementation of the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty; de-escalation of arms proliferation through national regulation; and diligent response, investigation, and prosecution of perpetrators of intimate partner violence, with prohibition or confiscation of small arms. The disproportionate effect of small arms in cases of intimate partner violence must be addressed if States are to meet their obligations of due diligence in support of human rights to peace, safety, and security for all people.

<sup>1</sup> Small Arms Survey. (2012) "Femicide: A Global Problem." [http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research\\_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-14.pdf](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/H-Research_Notes/SAS-Research-Note-14.pdf)

## Resources

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