



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE 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>

16  
DAYS

By IANSA Women's Network and Center for Women's Global Leadership

**The Proliferation of Small Arms and their Role in Domestic Violence:** Of the nearly 900 million small arms in the world today, more than 75% are in the hands of private individuals - most of them men - and stored in homes. According to the 2013 Small Arms Survey, between 2004 and 2009 only 10 percent of an average 526,000 people who died violently each year by machine gun fire, mortars and other lethal weapons have done so in conflicts such as Syria, Mali, and Afghanistan. 90% of those who meet a violent death due to the presence and use of small arms do so far from the battlefield.

It's becoming ever clearer that the greatest risk of gun violence to women around the world is not on the streets or the battlefield, but in their own homes. All over the world, in every class, race and caste, in every religion and region, there are men who subject their intimate partners to either physical or psychological violence, or in many cases, both.

Indeed, family killings are the only category of homicides where women outnumber men as victims. When a woman is killed in the home, it is her partner or male relative who is most likely to be the murderer, often with a prior record of domestic abuse. Gun violence can be part of the cycle of intimidation and aggression that many women experience from an intimate partner. For every woman killed or physically injured by firearms, many more are threatened.

Anna Alvazzi del Frate, Research Director of the Survey, confirms that guns and domestic violence are a lethal combination. The report cites studies from a number of countries that show between 40 and 70% of female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner. Women are three times more likely to die violently if there is a gun in the house. For example, in France and South Africa, one in three women killed by their husbands is shot; in the USA this rises to two in three.

The home is traditionally considered to be a safe place, but when a gun is present, the risk of death is multiplied. When considering violent crime, it's natural to focus on the role of illegal small arms. However, most firearms used in domestic homicides are legal. It is also important to consider the misuse of guns by the security sector, including police officers and soldiers, when off-duty. The wife of a US soldier told researchers, "He would say, 'You will do this, or ...,' and he would go to the gun cabinet."

The 16 Days Campaign continues to focus on a serious aspect of small arms proliferation: the deaths and injuries caused by guns in the home. Momentum is gathering to ensure that this aspect of gun violence is acknowledged and addressed around the world.

**Gun confiscation in Turkey:** "In April 2013, Family and Social Policy Minister Fatma Şahin announced that the weapons of 15,000 men found to have been involved in violence against women have been confiscated as a protective measure since the Law on the Prevention of Violence against Women came into effect in March 2012. [...] Şahin stated that security officers have confiscated the weapons of not only the people who have inflicted violence against women, but also the men who have the potential to commit violence. [...] According to Şahin, "We are sending a clear message with this article: If you cannot control your anger, you cannot continue using your gun. This is a very clear stance."

Excerpt from "Şahin: Guns of 15,000 abusive men seized under domestic violence law" *Today's Zaman* <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-312614-sahin-guns-of-15000-abusive-men-seized-under-domestic-violence-law.html>

**In Some States, Gun Rights Trump Orders of Protection, USA:** "The judge's order prohibited Mr. Holten from going within two blocks of his former wife's home and imposed a number of other restrictions. What it did not require him to do was surrender his guns. [...] About 12 hours after he was served with the order, Mr. Holten was lying in wait when his former wife returned home from a date with their two children in tow. (Continued)

## Suggested Actions

**The ‘Disarm Domestic Violence’ Campaign (IANSA Women’s Network):** This is the first international campaign to address one of the most serious, but least-known, aspects of violence against women – deaths and injuries caused by guns in the home. Learn more at [http://www.iansa-women.org/disarm\\_dv](http://www.iansa-women.org/disarm_dv)

**Advocate:** Disarm perpetrators of domestic violence. 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.

**Treat intimate partner and family violence as a serious crime 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.

**Train 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.

**Require all guns to be stored safely:** Gun owners should be required to store guns securely and to keep the ammunition in a separate place. In Belarus, guns must be kept in locked boxes, disassembled and unloaded, with the ammunition stored separately.

(Continued) Armed with a small semiautomatic rifle bought several months before, he stepped out of his car and thrust the muzzle into her chest. He directed her inside the house, yelling that he was going to kill her. [...] “I remember thinking, ‘Cops, [meaning police] I need the cops,’” she later wrote in a statement to the police. “He’s going to kill me in my own house. I’m going to die!”

Ms. Holten, however, managed to dial 911 on her cellphone and slip it under a blanket on the couch. The dispatcher heard Ms. Holten begging for her life and quickly directed officers to the scene. As they mounted the stairs with their guns drawn, Mr. Holten surrendered. They found Ms. Holten cowering, hysterical, on the floor.”

Excerpt from Luo, Michael. “In Some States, Gun Rights Trump Orders of Protection” *The New York Times*. March 17, 2013. [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/18/us/facing-protective-orders-and-allowed-to-keep-guns.html?ref=michaelluo&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/18/us/facing-protective-orders-and-allowed-to-keep-guns.html?ref=michaelluo&_r=0)

## Resources

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