

FACT SHEET

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Small Arms and Light Weapons

What are small arms and light weapons (SALW)?

Small arms are hand-held, small calibre firearms. They include handguns, rifles and shotguns; manual, semi-automatic and full automatic firearms; and man-portable machine guns.

Light weapons are medium-calibre firearms and small explosive devices. They include man- and vehicle-portable rockets, missiles, grenade launchers, rocket launchers, landmines, anti-aircraft guns, mortars, hand grenades and rocket-propelled grenades.

What is the problem?

Death and Injury	300,000 people die each year as a result of SALW violence. One million people are injured each year as a result of SALW violence. 200,000 people die as a result of homicides involving SALW. 50,000 people commit suicide with a small arm each year.
Displacement	42 million people were forced to flee their homes due to conflict involving SALW (as of June 2009). 27.1 million* people became internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to conflict involving SALW (as of December 2009). 16 million* people became refugees and asylum seekers due to conflict involving SALW (as of June 2009). Among refugees and IDPs, injury caused by SALW is the most common cause of disability.
Poverty	Conflict involving SALW is the main cause of 35 per cent of food emergencies. 22 of the world's poorest countries are engaged in or emerging from conflict involving SALW.
Women	Violent partners are 12 times* more likely to kill their spouses when a small arm is available. Guns are used as a tool of intimidation to facilitate rape and other forms of violence against women.
Children	250,000* children are forced to use SALW in the context of war.

What has been done?

1. The United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) remains the central, international agreement on preventing and reducing the trafficking and proliferation of SALW. Though it is not a legally binding document, it was endorsed by consensus during the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (July 2001).
2. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is an international convention by which states commit themselves to a series of measures against transnational organized crime. Measures include the creation of domestic criminal offences, the adoption of new frameworks for extradition, mutual legal assistance and law enforcement co-operation and the promotion of training and technical assistance for building or upgrading the necessary capacity of national authorities.
3. The UN Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime is a protocol by which states commit themselves to series of crime-control measures:
 - criminal offences related to illegal manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms,
 - a system of government authorizations or licensing to ensure legitimate manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms and
 - the marking and tracing of firearms.
4. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a proposed international agreement. Members of the UN would commit themselves to an overarching standard by which the transfer of conventional arms and munitions would be prevented from violating international law or supporting the abuse of human rights.



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*Figures are approximate



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