

While these measures are aimed at crime prevention clearly they also have implications for preventing the flow of firearms to areas of conflict.

Embargoes

The domestic firearms controls have international parallels and implications. In the context of peacekeeping, there are embargoes which prohibit the sale of arms to particular countries. The international code of conduct on arms transfers, proposed by the Nobel Peace Laureates, states that countries will not sell or transfer arms if there is risk of them being used in grave violations of human rights in the country of final destination.⁵²

Regardless of any legal injunctions stemming from international arms embargoes, states have a moral responsibility not to provide arms or other forms of military assistance directly or indirectly to governments or insurgent forces that engage in a pattern of gross abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law. The international community has an obligation to enact strict controls on the flow of arms, ammunition using an array of policy options including the creation of voluntary arms registers and international arms embargoes under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In addition, individual governments should take unilateral action to prevent their territories from being used as a conduit for arms shipments and to stop their nationals from selling weapons or their military services in a conflict marked by serious abuses.⁵³

EU countries already commonly implement arms embargoes to countries with human rights violations such as Burma, China, Nigeria, and Sudan but a recognized code of conduct is needed.⁵⁴

Controls on Manufacture, Sales, and Transfers

Most countries control the manufacture of firearms, components and ammunition and most have some controls on their import and export. The effectiveness of controls on import and export varies significantly however and more is required. Stronger controls are also required over export licensing, monitoring, information exchange, review and enforcement. Marking all weapons at

⁵² Paul Eavis, Saferworld, International Efforts to Control Small Arms and Light Weapons: The EU Export Controls and Illicit Traffic, 1996.

⁵³ Kathi Austin and Joost Hiltermann, Stoking the Fires: Military Assistance And Arms Trafficking in Burundi, New York, 1997

⁵⁴ Owen Greene, Tackling light weapons proliferation: Issues and Priorities for the EU, April 1997 Saferworld Virginia Gamboa ISS <http://africa.cis.co.za>
International Red Cross, Arms Transfers and International Humanitarian Law, Geneva Sept 1997
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