insecurity. Doing so may also enable the identification of entry points for existing international efforts to combat armed violence and protect civilians.

Armed and dangerous

The widespread use of weapons in encounters between gangs, police, and vigilante groups has been on the rise in recent years, increasing the lethality of urban warfare. In Brazil, more than 100 people are killed by firearms every day, and the gun-related death rate in Rio de Janeiro is more than double the national average.[33] Almost 2000 children and youth were killed in violent street gangs in Honduras in the past four years, and throughout Central America thousands more are killed every year in gang-related turf wars or as police targets. In Colombia, firearm-related deaths among youth under 18 have increased by 284.7% in the past two decades.[34]

The ubiquity of weapons means that some gangs are better armed than police officers. Weapons are illegally bought, used, and sold. In Nigeria, children as young as seven belonging to the gang known as the Arewa Peoples Congress were found illegally selling petroleum products to buy arms.[35] Half of the roughly 17 million guns in Brazil are held illegally, some purchased from police for as little as $350 per pistol. In Rio's *favelas*, 53,526 revolvers were confiscated by the police between 1990 and 2001. Not only have these numbers increased 15-fold in the past four decades, but more lethal weapons such as assault rifles, machine guns, and sub-machine guns are becoming increasingly common. Rio police have also seized from Rio drug factions grenades, mortars, bazookas, and land mines, likely obtained illegally from the military.[36]

Cité Soleil in downtown Port-au-Prince illustrates how the failure of public security threatens not only public safety, but also the effectiveness of UN peace support operations. This densely-populated slum in Haiti's capital is run by armed gang members, many of whom are children and youth. There are an estimated 32 gangs in Cité Soleil, each one controlling areas of a few city blocks. A study in this slum reported that 51 people were killed and 84 went missing in just over three months in 2005 due to gang warfare.[37] Shoot-outs between rival gangs, in streets littered with mounds of garbage, render these neighbourhoods impenetrable by state police. As a result, pressures on

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[33] Viva Rio (2005).
[34] Dowdney (2003), p.127.
[35] Dowdney (2003), p.251.
[36] Amnesty International (2005), p.19.
[37] Cavallaro (2005), p.45.