

**Firearms Regulation: A Brief to the United Nations Crime Prevention  
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(The Friends World Committee on Consultation and the World Society on Victimology)

## **Executive Summary**

Firearms regulation is an essential part of any strategy to build safer communities. It is particularly important in countering domestic violence, in ensuring the safety of children, and in preventing youth crime. Firearms regulation is not firearms abolition. In Canada, as in other countries, firearms are used for many legitimate purposes but they are also misused. They figure prominently in criminal activities, in domestic violence, in suicide, and they threaten the safety of children.

The firearms which are misused come from several sources: legal firearms, firearms which are taken or stolen from their lawful owners, firearms which are bought legally and sold illegally, and firearms which are illegally imported. While those intent on criminal activities may find other sources of firearms, easy access to legal firearms plays a role in impulsive acts, domestic violence, suicide, accidents, and crimes, particularly those involving youth. Proper screening reduces the likelihood that firearms will be misused by their owners. Safe storage reduces accidents involving children, theft, and impulsive use. Effective tracking systems help reduce the trafficking of legal firearms and assist police in taking preventative action and enforcing the law.

Canada has recently introduced a new regulatory framework, which like many other countries, requires licensing firearms owners, systems to track firearms, safe storage of all firearms, and import/export controls. These elements closely parallel the regulatory approach to the civilian use of firearms outlined in the resolution of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The new Canadian law also regulates the sale of ammunition. Sales of military style weapons and some small handguns are prohibited because the risk they pose outweighs their utility. However, there are limits to how much a country can achieve by working on its own and international cooperation is essential to help stem the flow of illegal firearms.

In Canada, these measures are supported by more than 350 diverse community and non-governmental organizations. Non-governmental organizations with expertise in community safety, human rights, and violence prevention have played a critical role in developing and implementing firearms regulations around the world. All citizens of the world have a fundamental right to be safe from the threat of firearm violence. The UN