



**July 9th
International
Gun Destruction Day**

Guns should be Destroyed – not Re-used

Worldwide, a thousand people die every day from gunshots, and three times as many are severely injured. Spinal cords severed, bones shattered, families destroyed, hearts broken.

If 1000 people a day were dying from a global epidemic of bird flu, the world would sit up and take notice. But the numbers are not being joined up; a high school massacre in the USA is seen as totally unrelated to a suicide in Finland, gang violence in Britain or armed rape in Sudan. However, there is a common denominator - the type of weapon involved.

Almost all guns are bought and sold, owned and used by men, and guns kill and injure more men than women. But women suffer heavy consequences from the presence of guns in their homes, communities and countries.

- Guns exacerbate the threat to women of male sexual violence in war and peace;
- A gun in the house increases the chance of domestic violence being lethal;
- In the US 600 women are killed in domestic violence related murders by guns every year;
- Guns do not have to be fired to cause harm, they can be used to threaten and intimidate;
- Women shoulder support and care when male relatives are killed or disabled by gun violence;
- Women suffer 'indirect' negative impacts from gun crime, eg: stress on social and public services;
- The failure to decommission guns after war impedes the transition to a secure everyday life;
- Widespread gun ownership by men and boys conditions society to mistakenly regard violence as a natural and necessary element of masculinity.

There are estimated to be more than one billion guns in the world today

- 85% of guns are in civilian hands;
- Of the estimated 1000 deaths by gunshot each day, around 250 occur in a war or armed conflict;
- Nine out of ten people shot dead are boys or young men.

Guns should be collected and destroyed – not re-used

Voluntary small arms and light weapons collection/destruction programs offer the opportunity to improve the security of a region while at the same time bolstering the confidence of those participating. For this reason they are an important tool in conflict prevention and have been applied successfully in many post-conflict situations. In conjunction with amnesties, they have been successful in reducing gun violence.

Weapon collection/destruction programs can be turned to creative use. They have been used ceremonially, for instance to mark the end of conflict. There are also examples of art being created from guns. In this way, the symbolism of death becomes the symbolism of new life and hope. (IANSA)

"The rule of the gun is the greatest obstacle to everlasting peace and security in our country."
Mr. Hamid Karzai, president of Afghanistan 2001-2014.

The UK has some of the world's toughest laws on gun ownership and gun crime, but in England and Wales, 2017-18, there were 9,419 offences involving firearms, resulting in 30 deaths and 1,635 injuries. (*Home Office*) **We need a high profile gun amnesty and a highly public destruction programme.**

The UK Government has said it is committed to tightening UK arms controls, but the UK is one of the world's largest arms exporters, and the majority are still being sent to oppressive regimes. **The UK should fund weapons destruction programmes in countries such as Colombia, DRC (Congo) and the Sudan, not export more guns. You are not powerless - Write to your MP. Support the campaigns listed below. Give this leaflet to a friend.**

More information from: *Gun Control Network*, www.gun-control-network.org; *Bonn International Centre for Conversion*, www.bicc.de/; *IANSA Women's Network*, www.iansa.org/women; *Mothers Against Guns*, www.mothersagainstguns.net; *Small Arms Survey*, www.smallarmssurvey.org; *Campaign Against the Arms Trade*, www.caat.org.uk; *Human Development Research Initiative*, <https://hdevri.com>

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Women in Black holds vigils every Wednesday between 6-7 pm at the Edith Cavell Statue, opposite the door of the National Portrait Gallery, St.Martin's Place, London WC2. The vigils are silent, women-only and if possible we wear black. Donations for leaflets always most welcome.