

Small Arms

Another aspect which imperils the peace of the world as been the global arms trade, currently standing at over USD \$800 billion. Today most wars are fought within states, either between governments and non-state actors . In these conflicts, rebel groups, militias, and insurgents seriously threaten not just the national security of states, but also the human security of millions of people. Armed groups possess just a small proportion of the world's total small arms stockpile, although estimates are highly speculative. They obtain weapons through three primary channels: importation, domestic procurement, and local production. According to the available evidence, foreign state sponsorship is the most significant source for most armed non-state actors, while domestic procurement, for example from poorly guarded armouries and corrupt security forces, is important for groups with few resources and limited international connections. Indigenous production is widespread and in some cases quite sophisticated. However, while many groups service their own weapons and some produce homemade or 'craft' weapons, most active armed groups prefer modern, commercially manufactured firearms.

Although armed groups hold just a fraction of the world's total small arms, they are responsible for a disproportionate number of negative impacts. These include large numbers of deaths and injuries, and serious human rights abuses, including the murder of civilians, torture, rape and plunder. Internal armed conflict is also a driver of mass displacement, both within states and across national boundaries. According to one study, armed rebel groups accounted for more than half the world's new displacement during 2003. Groups increasingly use refugee camps as bases and sites for coerced recruitment, including the recruitment of child soldiers.

Armed groups also present serious challenges in post-conflict settings. Weapons collection, disarmament and demobilization efforts are all complicated by the loosely structured nature of many non-state armed groups. Command and control structures are often opaque, combatants are often not recognizable, not always wearing uniforms and weapons stocks are rarely centralized or recorded. These factors complicate DD&R processes, making it hard to identify combatants and creating logistical challenges for the collection of weapons. Much greater research about the holdings and use of small arms by armed groups is needed.

Confront unscrupulous brokers and arms dealers.

Brokers play a critical facilitating role in the supply of arms to non-state actors. Improving regulation of brokering could either be at the national level (for example through the adoption of extra-territorial legislation by states) or through the development of an international regime. Just as importantly, states must end the impunity with which many 'sanctions busters' operate and ensure that brokers who violate national laws and international embargoes are prosecuted and punished.

Enforce UN arms embargoes.

Recent reports of panels of experts on Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Angola reveal just how easy it has been to circumvent these measures. The international community needs to do more to police sanctions regimes and punish states and individuals who violate embargoes. It is also important to build the capacity within the UN to better monitor sanctions.

Outlaw arms transfers to non-state actors known to commit egregious human rights violations.

While there is no international consensus in support of a blanket ban on transfers to non-state actors, efforts should be made to develop criteria that prohibit transfers to actors who are known to commit humanitarian abuses.

Support efforts to inform armed groups of their obligations and responsibilities.

Most armed groups lack awareness of their obligations under international humanitarian law. Greater support should be provided to organizations such as the ICRC that engage armed groups before and during conflicts to disseminate information about their responsibilities under IHL.

Hold accountable the leaders of groups that target civilians and commit atrocities.

Armed groups have been responsible for many heinous crimes committed against civilians. While there can be tensions between seeking

However, we conclude that by offering some initial policy recommendations designed to address both supply-side and misuse of small arms by non-state armed groups.

Provide support for humanitarian actors that engage with armed groups.

Even though the UN Secretary-General has repeatedly called for measures to address “all parties” in armed conflicts, many states remain reluctant to place the general question of non-state actors on the UN’s agenda. The ‘war on terror’ has made engaging directly with armed groups even more difficult. If the international community is serious about protecting civilians in situations of conflict, it needs to ensure that agencies and organizations that engage with armed groups on a daily basis to provide aid, demobilize child soldiers and seek peaceful resolution of conflicts have the resources and political support they need to be effective.

peace and holding accountable leaders who commit war crimes, wherever possible, the worst violators of IHL and human rights norms should face justice.

Consider creating a mechanism through which armed groups can express their willingness to be bound by international law and humanitarian norms.

Currently, there is no international body or institution through which non-state actors can formally acknowledge international norms, including those on small arms and light weapons. The small arms community could build on the experience of groups seeking to extend the on ban landmine use, or promote principles regarding the treatment of IDPs among non-state actors.