

Report Summary

“Curbing the Demand for Small Arms: A Middle East Seminar” Amman, Jordan 8-9th July 2001

A workshop organized by the American Friends Service Committee and the Regional Human Security Center, at the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy

Problem

The demand for small arms in the Middle East and the active regional trade in these weapons are impediments to the achievement of community security in many parts of the region. Such weapons are widely available. Governments hold large numbers for military and policing purposes. Individuals and groups outside government hold many others. Some of these civilian-owned weapons are used for lawful or customary purposes. Others are held or used outside the law to enforce or extend particular political views, or to support criminal activity. In response, many other civilians obtain small arms to maintain their own security.

Only recently has the Middle East been included in the growing international focus on the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. The first, and so far only regional conference focused on these weapons was held in Amman just one year ago hosted by the Regional Human Security Center (RHSC). This event brought together representatives of governments and NGOs to explore the proliferation, use and control of small arms within the region.¹

The perceptions of small arms proliferation in the region are quite diverse. At the Amman conference some governments expressed satisfaction with their national controls on the availability of small arms. In contrast, several other representatives, both governmental and NGO, saw clear evidence that small arms were contributing to insecurity and instability in many parts of the region. They identified several factors that contributed to this trend: the history of armed conflicts in the region; the large numbers of weapons available; traditional use of weapons; long, vulnerable borders and coastlines; the movement of nomadic groups; a continuing cross-border trade in drugs and other contraband; and the existence in some countries of large armed militias outside the control of states. The uncontrolled possession and use of small arms has had negative effects both in countries at peace and those that are experiencing or recovering from war.

So far, all discussion of small arms issues in the Middle East has been focused on supply and transfer aspects. The potential for **reducing** the demand for small arms has not been explored. A seminar that would open the consideration of the demand topic and introduce regional actors to the potential for developing demand-focused programs would be an important first step in encouraging action on this topic.

Goal

The Middle East seminar took place from the 8-9 July 2002 in Amman, Jordan. Its aim was to strengthen the work of non-governmental groups and public agencies working at the community level within the Middle East to stem the demand for small arms.

¹ For more information on the workshop and its presentations please refer to: “Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Arab Region, National and Regional Measures”, edited by Dr. Ghali Oda Taelakh, Dr. Atef Odibat, Maha Al Shaer, published by the Regional Human Security Center at the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, Amman 2002.

Objectives

1. To contribute to a greater understanding in the Middle East about what drives people to possess and use small arms and to improve knowledge on practical ways to address small arms proliferation at a community level within the Middle East region. To exchange information about what factors must be addressed if the social, political and economic impact of weapons availability is to be reduced.
2. To share the expertise of those engaged with finding local solutions to this global crisis by utilizing the lessons learned at three previous regional workshops sponsored in part by American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and held in Durban, South Africa, Nairobi, Kenya and Phnom Penh, Cambodia. At least two of the seminar participants attended one or more of the previous regional workshops.
3. To enhance the capacity of and further regional cooperation between civil society groups and governmental agencies working on, or interested in small arms demand issues. The exchange of ideas at the seminar will encourage participants and identify ways to build a regional network, which will link to the international movement led by the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

The first two objectives were accomplished by means of extensive discussions in which participants informed each other about their projects, experience and methodologies. Examples from South Africa, N. Eastern Kenya, Sudan, Yemen, Lebanon and Jordan were discussed at length with lessons drawn and differences compared. The third objective was accomplished when participants agreed to form an informal regional network of interested partners in the Middle East region to curb the demand on small arms.

Description of the activity

AFSC staffs' earlier visits in the region indicated that there was little discussion of small arms issues in the region and that, in contrast to other regions, such as Africa, Latin America, or Southeast Asia, there were few NGOs engaged in security or disarmament issues. One possible answer to opening up the small arms topic for NGOs would be to organize a seminar with a topic that could reasonably attract a range of existing NGOs.

With the help of the RHSC a list of possible participants from around the region was identified. The seminar agenda was focused on the work of practical community projects that address a wide range of community issues, far beyond the usual limits of a typical gun control subject matter. The design of the program emphasized informal dialogue about specific, existing projects and then set these descriptions within a wider international context. Substantial agenda time was reserved for open consideration of further joint action in the region.

More specifically the seminar was a two-day event held at the Regional Human Security Center at the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, Amman Jordan, starting each day at 9.00 am and ending at 6.00 pm. It consisted of:

- two sessions in the morning with a break.
- lunch
- two sessions in the afternoon with a break
- presentations and case studies during both days including discussions and comments
- a site visit to the Department for Drugs Combating at Public Security Directorate. The Acting Director of the Department, Colonel Mohammed Zubi gave an overview of the Department's establishment, development, and scope of work; the briefing was further followed by a discussion. The participants also toured the "Drugs Exhibition" that displayed the various methods in which drugs and small arms are smuggled into Jordan

from neighboring countries. In addition, participants were hosted by the Public Security Directorate, Amman, Jordan and exchanged views with Director of the Public Security Directorate and high-ranking officers.

- a final plenary session focused on next steps in the Middle East.

The size of the group was limited to a small number of participants in order to allow for maximum communication. Participants included representatives of human rights and social movements interested in issues related to small arms demand within the region, agencies working on small arms control in Jordan and Yemen, two experienced small arms practitioners from Africa, and two small arms researchers from international NGOs. The participants shared reports on current program activities as well as ongoing discussions to elaborate emerging ideas and to identify ways to advance small arms demand work in the Middle East region.

The participants came from the following countries: Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon, Sudan, South Africa, Kenya, Switzerland and United Kingdom. (*A full list of participants is attached.*)

Summaries of Presentations

Mr. David Jackman, American Friends Service Committee Associate Representative, *Dealing with Small Arms Demand*

The effective control of the illicit trade in small arms should focus on efforts to shrink the demand for weapons, as well as their supply. Over the last four years NGOs involved in curbing weapons demand have participated in lessons-learned seminars in Durban, Nairobi, Toronto, and Phnom Penh. Over 40 such organizations from around the world have met to share experiences, test their assumptions and build stronger connections. These seminars have made it clear that there are practical and effective ways to lessen the demand for small arms in communities affected by gun violence. Often the programs are not focused on guns themselves but on the sense of insecurity that is the root cause for demand.

Lessons learned through this extensive consultation process include:

1. Many successful programs are forms of broader community development, rather than specialized criminal justice or arms control work.
2. The goal for lessening demand is not to remove all weapons from the community, but rather to render them unnecessary by changing the community's perception of its security.
3. All stakeholders should be included in a community dialogue on security. Testimonies from families of gun victims and also from ex-combatants may provide strong motivation for gun control and peace promotion.
4. Most of the successful community programs are directed by the residents themselves. The result is a greater community capacity to solve its own problems. Key to successful programs is activities, which emphasize "bottom-up" problem solving.
5. Traditional practices regarding the possession and use of weapons are part of the problem and part of the solution. These processes can be strengthened and used in cooperation with formal state security processes.
6. Police forces are crucial to setting the tone for violence or peace in a community.
7. Sustainable peace in post-war settings depends, in part, on successful demobilization. Ex-combatants, even those from opposing sides, can be the basis for reconciliation programs, and can become powerful peace promoters.
8. Continued networking among organizations can pay big dividends in curbing weapons demand.

In Discussion: Participants commented on the diversity of root causes that allow for small arms demand in the Middle East ranging from the current political situation and its history to the traditional role of the weapon in a home. 'Jordanian culture heralds the gun' so said one participant explaining that often the Bedouin does not view his gun as a weapon for offensive but rather for defensive use. One participant suggested the need for educating the masses and providing alternatives to communities holding weapons.

Case Study 1 South Africa, Mr. Joseph Dube, National Organizer, Gun Free South Africa- South Africa

South Africa has one of the highest firearms related death rates in the world and one of the highest rates of law enforcement officers killed. A very large number of weapons are lost or stolen annually and less than half of these were recovered. Meanwhile, the number of new firearms registered annually is increasing. It is clear that South Africa has a gun culture in which firearm violence and ownership has reached epidemic proportions, demanding gun control.

Gun Free South Africa, a local non-governmental organization represented at the workshop, recognized that the gun problem was a global issue but also that it affected local communities thus becoming a local issue. Their projects involve different approaches that include changing public practice and laws. These include:

- Focus on advocacy and public awareness – with government, in the media and in communities
- National Office in Johannesburg and a Western Cape Regional Office in Cape Town.

This work is challenged by:

- 4.5 million licensed firearms and an estimated 500,000 unlicensed firearms in South Africa posing a serious problem
- The threat is changing from political violence in 1994 to community and domestic violence today.
- Since 1994, steady rise in gun-related death rate – today, over 35 people are shot dead in South Africa every day, or over 12,000 every year.
- Similar steady rise in gun-related community and domestic violence
- Serious need for strong gun control measures
- Inherited a weak Arms and Ammunitions Act (1969) containing weak gun control measures which are not consistently implemented

In response, the Department of Safety and Security organized three ministerial commissions in 1997 that all pointed to the need to scrap the Arms and Ammunitions Act and replace it with a far more effective law. Later, NGOs created the Gun Control Alliance (GCA) in January 1999 to demonstrate widespread public support for the strongest possible gun control legislation.

Gun Free South Africa's role included: providing a secretariat for mobilizing and organizing; providing information resources; and empowering people to forward their views on the Firearms Control Bill.

In Discussion: It was brought forward that there have been very few studies concerning small arms demand. Community statistics and legislation do exist however no specific NGO intervention study has been conducted so far. The Gun Free South Africa experience is one that should be studied with some kind of evaluation done to assess the impact of its projects. It was also of interest to the participants how Gun Free South Africa would prepare a community to address small arms issues with the government. This process included:

- finding out whether the subject was an issue with the community and building relationship with the community
- carrying out a workshop explaining the law and the Arms Control Bill.

- teaching the participants on how to make a submission to the government. Helped the community understand the issue at hand
- Using the language of the community.
- When disagreements arose, encouraging each section of the community to add their own submission.

Case Study 2, Kenya, Ms. Rukia Subow, Programme Coordinator, Pastoralist Peace and Development Initiative (PPDI), Kenya

PPDI was formed as a result of the communal effort of elders, youth and women of the Garissa district in North Eastern Kenya at the height of clan conflicts mainly focused upon resource sharing. Representatives of the Government of Kenya were included in the effort to initiate activities that would enable peaceful co-existence between the clans whose clashes involved the use of a large number of weapons. The rising demand in the area for the weapons although primarily based upon the clashes was also enhanced due to other factors:

- Fights over inadequate resources such as water
- Protection of livestock from rustling
- Clan rivalry also caused by politicians with the aim of creating unrest between clans breaking up mass votes.
- Poverty and unemployment leading to increased crime conducted with the use of small arms
- Easy and cheap availability of weapons
- Somali border tensions

The PPDI in coordination with the Kenyan government carried out various efforts in order to ease clan tensions and violence in the area by:

- Supporting water resource management projects in an effort to reduce clan migration.
- Mediation efforts using clan elders to ease tensions.
- Creation of early warning mechanisms with the help of community elders.
- Blanket amnesty provided by the Kenyan government for surrender of arms.

In Discussion: Participants were curious as to how far there was support for the surrender of weapons for collection which otherwise seems to be a less relevant in political agendas. Also it was noted that judging the success of mediation projects and weapons collection programs has proved to be difficult especially without the registering of the weapons. Here help from international projects focused on weapons collection programs would be useful. Additionally, Ms. Subow recognized the lack of existence of rehabilitation projects necessary for those from whom arms had been collected such as youth and displaced communities.

**Lt. Col. Ghazi Thunaibat, Legal Department, Public Security Directorate
*Small Arms Phenomenon: The Real Case in Jordan***

Jordan has carried out several steps in curbing the demand on small arms in Jordan:

1. Legislation was developed to combat the misuse of small arms in Jordan. In 1952, a law was issued to organize the licensing, purchase, and trade of small arms. Also, adjustments in the law criminalized the small arms industry, import, trafficking, and illicit trade.
2. Security forces and customs are responsible for combating the trafficking and illicit trade of small arms. In this regard, six thousands pieces of small arms were seized during the last five years.
3. The legal purchase of small arms was limited by constraining the choice of small arms available for those applying for licenses. In this regard, 126,000 pieces of small arms were licensed up to the year 2001.

4. A small arms laboratory was developed in the Public Security Directorate to carry out technical research on the small arms that are used in crimes registered at the Public Security Directorate.

Recommendations to curb the demand on small arms in Jordan:

1. International cooperation and information exchange mechanisms to be developed in order to scrutinize weapons trafficking, gangs, and transfers. One way in which to do so would be to create databases of weapon purchase and specifications. A second option introduced included the automation of national information exchanges that would help to streamline data and action taken.
2. Raising awareness through the use of mass media on the dangers related to the use of small arms. The Public Security Directorate in cooperation with other national organizations has carried out campaigns to raise awareness on the issue in Jordan. As a result of this, the number of criminal suits filed has decreased from 37 in the year 2000 to 17 in 2001.
3. Developing departments within the Public Security Directorate whose focus would remain on the issue of small arms demand and control issues.
4. Implementation of related legislations.
5. Introduction of further schemes aimed at influencing public consideration of this phenomenon as a *real* problem threatening security.

In Discussion: Participants questioned the means of purchasing small arms in Jordan and mused over the possibility of smuggling arms into Palestine. They also stressed on the importance of cooperation between the Arab States regarding the smuggle and transfer of small arms in the region. Focus was also given to the issue of small arms transfer by state-actors to non-state actors. Participants had not expected a compilation of related statistics spanning over the years, and their availability at the Public Security Directorate and therefore were pleasantly surprised. Participants questioned the quoted figure of 80% unregistered arms in Jordan. The high estimated figure, it was explained was a result of the tendency in rural areas not to register arms due to the view that the possession of small arms was an investment later to be sold or exchanged.

**Mr. Derek Miller, Program Manager, International Alert, United Kingdom,
From Demand Assessments to Demand Policies for Small Arms Reduction:
A Discussion of Yemen**

It is widely estimated that there are some 50 million small arms in Yemen. However, in producing the paper Demand, Stockpiles and Social Controls for the Small Arms Survey, this figure was reduced that to a conservative estimate to 6-9 million weapons. The means by which this was done teaches a lot about demand factors in Yemen and helps us think about demand factors more broadly.

These factors are briefly summarized below:

- Yemen has what may be called a public weapons culture
- only men carry weapons, and also, that males over the age of about 15 will be allowed by their parents to own a weapon. Sometimes this age is as low as 10, and sometimes boys won't buy guns because they are too expensive. This meant that guns are connected to ideas about manhood.
- tribal customs, the so-called Qabalyi, are very specific on defence of the tribe, defence of land, water wells, women, qat, and tribal honour. As violence is often used to settle these conflicts -- or at least, the threat of violence -- all require the possession of weapons.
- security forces are often implicated in highly inconsistent practices in administering justice, and that tribes want weapons to defend themselves against the state.
- Weapons are often used as currency in conflict resolution and compensation situations.

Demand Reduction Strategies

The reports from previous demand conferences show there is a major gap between knowing the need for local solutions, and knowing how to create local solutions. There are two broad directions for possible directions.

1. Substitution Policies- These can be created by governments, international organizations, and NGOs working together and can be designed *to satisfy the reasons people want guns with something other than guns*. Possible actions include:

- The Government, in requesting aid from the UNDP could provide a weapons for development programme tailored to the uniqueness of the Yemeni experience.
- Encourage substitutions for blood payment rather than discourage blood payments.
- Isolate some of the most dangerous weapons in exchange for visible attachments or additions to existing small arms
- Encouraged the use of fireworks at weddings, rather than discharging firearms.

2. Impact Reduction Policies- Create policies that seek to reduce the negative impacts of gun use on the community -- like accidental death, injury, and or even embarrassment-- in ways that the *community* would appreciate and understands.

In Discussion: Participants enjoyed discussions following this presentation particularly in view of the fact that the workshop included representation of the Ministry of Interior in Yemen (who contested the high figure of existing arms) and a human rights training organization representative. The discussion included the following:

The presence of 50 million weapons in Yemen, as pointed out in the presentation, is very doubtful, as this number is three times the number of population of the country. Moreover, before the year 1994, there hadn't been an obsession with carrying weapons. Since then, people started to feel unsafe. Some of the substitutes for the use of firearms, presented in the paper might not help in solving the problem. For example, substituting firework for firearms in weddings. Fireworks are expensive and are also extremely dangerous. Rural areas are highly underdeveloped and tribal. Thus, in curbing the demand for weapons, developments aspects have to be taken into account. Weapons collection programs in Yemen have to be linked to control. However, it is extremely difficult to control the coastline. In the North of Yemen, the youth do not have much employment options; thus they either join the army or carry weapons and do not opt for vocational education.

Ms. Camilla Waszink Researcher, Small Arms Survey, Switzerland
An Overview of Small Arms Research and its Relevance to Demand Issues in the Middle East.

Small Arms Survey has several objectives:

- Be a key source of public information on all aspects of small arms
- Serve as a focal point for information sharing and the dissemination of best practices
- Serve as a resource center for policy-makers, researchers and activists
- Publish an annual publication covering all aspects of small arms

So far, much of the research has focused on the small arms themselves, emphasizing issues related to transfers, availability and misuse and on evaluation of measures designed to deal with the problem. In the small arms field generally, the work that has been done so far to examine demand issues has served to identify gaps in our knowledge about this issue, relevant research questions and put forward hypothesis about their answers. These questions include:

- what are the factors that fuel demand for weapons and what role does each of these factors play?
- what exactly is the relationship between these factors and small arms demand
- what is the relationship between these factors themselves?
- what kind of strategies can be developed to reduce people's desire to possess and use weapons?

This year's survey sub-titled "Counting the Human Cost", focusing particularly on the humanitarian dimensions of small arms. The book also includes a chapter concerned with the events leading up to the United Nations Conference on Small Arms in 2001, a description of the two weeks of the Conference itself, as well as an in-depth analysis of the Programme of Action—the political document that the conference produced. The survey report also focused on weapons collections programs whose success would require knowledge of demand issues also. Increasingly, collection programmes form part of a comprehensive, longer-term strategy, which, by promoting development and human security, address the root causes of violence and thus the demand for weapons. Another component that is increasingly incorporated into such programmes is public education, and it may be through their capacity to raise awareness about and change public attitudes towards the role of weapons in society that weapons collection programmes might be most effective.

There are broad elements would need to be present for any demand-reduction program to be successful:

- People need to be able to trust their security forces to provide for their protection.
- People would need to believe that the peaceful resolution of conflict is preferable to the violent resolution of conflict.
- People would need to have recourse to means of peaceful conflict resolution that provide a predictable and stable means of resolving disputes.
- People would have to find the costs of seeking to possess weapons—or the costs of owning them—to be higher than the benefits of having them.

In Discussion: Participants asked to obtain more information on the work of the Small Arms Survey and to know more about the work of non profit organisations interested in weapons collection programmes during ongoing conflict situations. Ms. Wazink realized that further focus in the Middle East region would require more detailed information concerning the subject. However, the next issue of the Small Arms Survey report would indeed include case studies from the Middle East in particular the Yemeni case.

International Connections: Groups Working on Small Arms Demand

The next part of the workshop was geared towards identifying international groups working on small arms issues that a MENA regional network would perhaps benefit linking up to in order to correlate its activities and research. Please find below a brief summary on the discussion that took place.

International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA): IANSA is an international network of over 340 organizations from 71 countries working to prevent the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. It was set up in 1998. The network helps co-ordinate activities and campaigning by bringing together a wide range of organizations such as human rights groups, relief and development agencies, gun control groups, religious and public health groups. IANSA also provides a framework within which organizations can support and learn from each other.

Small Arms Survey: The Small Arms Survey searches for partner organizations in the Middle East interested in conducting field research, to cooperate with and help in disseminating information.

UN Development Program (UNDP) provides assistance to national governments and organizations to tackle demand issues through specialized development programs.

Other international cooperation: It has also been noted that there is the possibility of getting international expertise, without UN involvement. An example is Argentina whereby the local government contacted an organization in Germany, and received basic information. Later, the government carried out an extensive public awareness campaign.

The UN conference of July 2001 did not address the demand side of small arms but the issue was brought up by non-state actors. Thus, organizations have to start working on areas of priority pertaining to small arms, so that these issues would be properly addressed in the next UN conference in 2006.

The Regional Human Security Centre in Jordan is keenly interested in the issue of small arms. In March 2001, a national workshop on small arms was organized. Then in May 2001, a regional workshop on small arms was carried out on a regional level. Moreover, an agreement of cooperation was signed between the Centre and the Small Arms Survey in Switzerland. Also, an agreement was signed between the Centre and the Human Rights Information and Training Centre in Yemen. Another workshop will be organized this August on the stop of the use of children as soldiers.

Next Steps in the Middle East

In discussion, participants recommended the following initiatives:

The Middle East civil society to be more geared towards focusing on the issue of small arms demand in the Middle East. The subject is not widely approached and does not normally take into account inter-state perspectives. Steps could include:

- Identifying national capacities for dealing with the issue and enhance them
- Networking as a practical first step
- Conducting national and regional studies on the
- Provision of support by international counterparts allowing for sustainability and use of capacity

Examination of legislative frameworks in the region necessary in deterring violators. This could also be useful in reducing the demand for small arms.

Using the media and other forms of sensitisation, when applicable, in helping to reduce demand for weapons.

Introduction of literacy programs and a more developmental approach to be taken to enhance the work of tackling small arms control

Establishment of a regional Middle East North Africa network initiated by the Regional Human Security Centre, Jordan in conjunction with the American Friends Service Committee. Its work would include as a primary step to build a cohesive databank of partner information, collection of research, and building of a shared regional agenda.

Follow-up

The seminar was intended to stimulate more activity on small arms in the region. There are several steps already being considered:

- AFSC Middle East staff will prepare a report on the seminar, including the papers presented, this will be posted on the web site of the Regional Human Security Center. A related pointer will be placed on the web sites of AFSC, QUNO and the International Action Network on Small Arms.
- AFSC's Associate Middle East Representative will share several updates and informative articles by email with seminar participants.
- AFSC's Associate Middle East Representative will conduct exploratory visits to Lebanon and Yemen at the invitation of seminar participants to identify other interested groups and relevant issues.
- The organizers of first seminar have agreed to host a second small arms event at a site within the region and focused on networking possibilities.
- The Regional Human Security Center will organize a full regional conference on small arms to be held in Amman, Jordan in early 2003. This event will be open to a wide range of NGOs and governmental participants and will focus on Middle East implementation of the UN Program of Action on Small Arms. All the seminar participants and contacts will be invited to this event.