

**INTERFAITH DECLARATION AND APPEAL TO WORLD LEADERS  
IN SUPPORT OF AN ARMS TRADE TREATY  
(By School and University-College students and teachers of various religious affiliations)**

Every year, communities are divided or destroyed and millions of people are killed, injured, raped, and forced to flee from their homes as a result of war and armed violence. The poorly regulated global trade in conventional arms and ammunition fuels conflict, poverty, gender-based violence and human rights abuses. Such injustices are an affront to human dignity and the sacredness of life. As the world's governments convene to negotiate a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), we, as members of religious communities, faith groups and faith-based organizations urge them to negotiate in good faith an effective ATT that will stop the human suffering caused by weapons.

While existing national, sub-regional, and regional regulations are important, they are not enough to stop irresponsible transfers of arms and ammunition between countries. That is why a global treaty for arms trade that sets binding standards for arms transfers is needed. A strong ATT will clarify and set obligations under international law and thereby reduce the human cost associated with the proliferation of all conventional arms. Furthermore, an ATT will make it easier to distinguish between legal and illegal trade and elucidate when an arms transfers should be prohibited. A comprehensive agreement will also help close existing loopholes that make diversion of arms possible.

In 2009, a UN General Assembly resolution (In December 2009, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution A/Res/64/48 "The arms trade treaty" by a overwhelming majority of 151 yes votes.) established a process for elaborating an ATT with preparatory committee meetings in 2010 and 2011 and a four-week UN Conference in 2012 that seeks to produce a "legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms."

The summer 2012 conference is rapidly approaching and the world's leaders have a moral responsibility to ensure that a robust treaty is negotiated. At a minimum, the ATT should establish that no international transfers of arms and ammunition will take place if there is a substantial risk that the transfer will be used in serious violations of international human rights law & humanitarian law or impair poverty reduction or socio-economic development.

As interreligious individuals and groups we strongly welcome these steps toward a negotiated ATT. We call upon the member states of the United Nations to negotiate and deliver a strong and effective ATT that has real impact on people's lives. We raise our collective voice to call on all governments to work together to save lives and end the human suffering caused by irresponsible transfers of conventional arms. Furthermore, we urge governments to remain mindful of the humanitarian imperative that drives this process and find a solution that moves all nations further along the path to peace and development. This is a chance for all involved to make history, to uphold human dignity, and to save lives.

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