

WILPF STATEMENT TO THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO THE ARMS TRADE TREATY GENERAL DEBATE

August 24, 2016

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom welcomes the opportunity to address the [Second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty](#).

We participated in the negotiation of the Treaty as a feminist peace organisation advocating for a Treaty that would reduce human suffering and confront the global culture of violence, including the access and use of weapons by young men and the reinforcement of violent masculinities. Since then, we have maintained that this is the most important guiding principle for states' implementation efforts.

Thus we hope that this meeting provides states, international organisations, and civil society with the opportunity to address challenges in the Treaty's implementation, establish comprehensive and transparent reporting procedures for the arms trade, and above all challenge those that profit from war and violence instead of preventing humanitarian harm.

There is much work to be done at CSP2, and decisions around reporting are particularly critical. States parties must ensure transparency through comprehensive, public reporting. This is key to effective implementation of the ATT and to preventing arms transfers that might contribute to human suffering, inside or outside of armed conflict.

But beyond transparency and accountability, the core objective of the ATT is to protect human rights, prevent armed violence and armed conflict, and enhance peace and security. States parties should take the opportunity of being gathered together in Geneva to challenge and condemn arms transfers that violate and undermine the Treaty, especially those made by other states parties.

Arms transfers to Saudi Arabia are a good place to start. Such transfers have been condemned by the UN Secretary-General, the Committee of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and many human rights and disarmament or arms control groups because of Saudi Arabia's bombing and bombardment in populated areas in Yemen, which has led to the death, destruction, and displacement of thousands of Yemeni civilians and civilian infrastructure. A UN panel investigating the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen has uncovered "widespread and systematic" attacks on civilian targets

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in violation of international humanitarian law. When explosive weapons were used in populated areas in Yemen, civilians made up 95% of reported deaths and injuries.

A report by the civil society coalition Control Arms has found that states parties including Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, and signatories Turkey and the United States, all transferred weapons to Saudi Arabia in 2014. Several of these have continued to issue export licences to Saudi Arabia since their bombing raids on Yemen began.

This is only one example. There are many more. Acts of gender-based violence, from sexual violence in war to police abuses against LGBT people to domestic violence against women, is another critical challenge that must be addressed through effective implementation of the ATT.

ATT states parties, by acceding to the Treaty, have acknowledged their extraterritorial obligations to prevent human rights and IHL violations that occur with the weapons they transfer. They must stand up and meet the obligations they have accepted to prevent such violations. And they must challenge those that fail to do so.

We believe in the potential of international law to make a difference. Agreements like the ATT are important to confront the violence and conflict facilitated by the spread of weapons. We hope that states parties meeting this week shoulder their responsibilities, confront challenges that undermine the Treaty's objectives, and advance peace, security, and human rights through their commitments and their actions.