



## Humanium Metal Position Paper on Human Security and Gun Violence

### A Human Security Approach to Gun Violence:

Physical security and full access to human rights are inextricably linked. IM's experience has shown that gun violence threatens human security of our right-holders, impeding all human rights work. That is why we have started to work on tackling the root causes of gun violence, including poverty, lack of good governance and cultures of violence. *Approaches to ending gun violence which only focus on security are insufficient and frequently do not respect the human rights of those targeted.*

### The Effect of Gun Violence on Societal Change:

Gun violence takes the lives of approximately 200,000 people each year in non-conflict settings.<sup>1</sup> These figures don't even account for the two to seven million people living with lifelong disabilities as a result of gun violence.<sup>2</sup> This immense human toll demands action, but gun violence also poses significant challenges to efforts to improve access to human rights around the world.

***Economic Inclusion: Gun violence and poverty are mutually reinforcing, forming a vicious cycle which has additive impacts on the most marginalized within societies.*** Gun violence affects the economic wellbeing of communities and countries in a variety of ways, it: impedes investment, undermines public institutions, facilitates corruption, feeds organized crime and illicit economies, places economic burdens on survivors and their caretakers—often women—, limits access to education—particularly for women—, incurs immense rebuilding costs as well as healthcare costs, and contributes to systemic inequalities.<sup>3</sup> Consequential economic declines disproportionately affect the most impoverished community members who have limited or no savings and limited mobility. This serves to make them more vulnerable to further gun violence by forcing them to remain in violence affected areas and making them reliant on gangs for protection. Estimates of the cost of gun violence vary dramatically. Some studies place the global impact of armed violence at \$400 billion USD annually, and the impact of armed violence in non-conflict settings at \$163.3 billion USD annually.<sup>4</sup> However, a recent study from the United States suggests the impact of gun violence in the U.S. alone is \$229 billion USD annually.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-BP-Violent-Deaths-Scenarios.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/gun-violence/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/armed-violence/social-and-economic-costs/economic-impact-of-armed-violence.html>  
<http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/armed-violence/social-and-economic-costs/impact-on-development.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/armed-violence/social-and-economic-costs/economic-impact-of-armed-violence.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/resources/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/>

***Social Inclusion: Gun violence results in the exclusion of marginalized community members by fostering cultures of fear and insecurity which are breeding grounds for discrimination and exclusion of those members.*** In addition to facing disproportionate levels of gun violence due to systemic and structural racism; racial and ethnic minorities face added violence, discrimination and exclusion as a result of that gun violence. ***Gun violence also exacerbates power asymmetries, reducing the capacity of marginalized community members to claim their rights.*** For example, the presence of guns in households often amplifies domestic abuse even when the gun is never fired.

***Civic Space:*** Gun violence affects civic space in three primary ways. ***First,*** it is used by organized crime networks and governments to target human rights defenders and civil society organizations. ***Second,*** the presence of gun violence is used as pretext for governments to impose security measures which shrink civic space. ***Third,*** it limits the civic participation (such as right to vote) of people living in highly impacted areas, since their movement is restricted by the armed group in power.

***Comprehensive Resilience: Gun violence reduces the resilience of communities, which limits their capacity to respond to future and predictable shocks—including, among others, climate change.*** IM believes it is critical to incorporate a systems analysis when evaluating the resilience of communities. As discussed above, the effects of gun violence reverberate through political, economic, social and communal systems of change. These reverberations undermine the core principles of resilience. They reduce diversity, participation and poly-centric governance by excluding groups and communities from decision making apparatuses and denying rights of marginalized community members—including women and people with disabilities. It leads to the erosion of the social fabric and solidarity, leaving communities unprepared to respond to major crises and external shocks.

### **What Is Missing From Current Responses to Gun Violence:**

- Responses to gun violence are often ***security centric***; relying heavily on police and armed forces with little resources devoted to the crises of structural racism, toxic masculinities, economic inequalities, and mental health deficiencies that undergird gun violence.
- There is a ***significant lack of representation*** from women, LGBT\* people, youth, less-developed countries, and racial and ethnic minorities at national and international decision-making bodies which are responsible for addressing gun violence.<sup>6</sup>
- ***International and national development forums*** rarely discuss gun violence in coordination with broader development strategy.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.article36.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/A36-Disarm-Dev-Marginalisation.pdf>  
<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/data2documents/minor-disarmament-development-and-marginalisation-2016.pdf>

## What Does IM Propose:

- Towards SDG16, and in order to prevent diversion of weapons, IM calls on all countries to increase **timely destructions** of illegal seized SALW.
- Towards SDG 16, IM calls on all countries to **fully implement treaties** governing the transfer and use of small arms and light weapons. Human rights cannot be compromised at any costs. All exports to countries in which human rights abuses (including GBV) and diversion of SALW are evident need to be halted.
- Towards SDG16, IM calls on all countries to ensure that their ***national gun control and licensing systems are protective of all people's rights to life and to security of person***. Systems should reduce the risk of diversion so that it is at the lowest possible level, including substantial efforts to reduce the risk of diversion across borders.
- Towards SDG16 and SDG1, IM calls on all countries to address the crisis of gun violence with interventions which holistically address the **nexus between violence and poverty**.
- Towards SDG 16, SDG10 and SDG5 IM calls on all delegations to represent the complete diverse spectrum of their population and to especially ensure **full and equal access to participation at international and national forums on disarmament** for traditionally under-represented communities. Women, youth, survivors, LGBTQ+ people, people of colour, ethnic and religious minorities and low-income countries need to have the opportunity to shape the international discourse and legislative framework.
- Towards SDG16 and SDG5, IM calls on all countries to **disaggregate their data on gun violence by gender** in order to more completely understand the different gendered impacts of gun violence. Furthermore, arms exports to countries with systematic oppression of women and/or with high risk of arms related GBV need to be halted.
- Towards SDG10 and SDG1, IM calls on all countries to actively support the ***social, political and economic inclusion of survivors of gun violence*** by ensuring they have the resources and support necessary to claim their rights.
- Towards SDG17, IM is convinced that ***multi-stakeholder partnerships uniting various sectors are the future to sustainable development***. IM calls on governments, civil society, commercial actors and academia to unite and tangibly contribute to end gun violence.