The widespread availability of weapons following a conflict often contributes to continued tension and violence and jeopardizes efforts to establish lasting peace. As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, the less strictly regulated small arms, civilians will pay the price in preventable death, injury and suffering. The ICRC witnesses the effects of this inadequate controls every day on the ground.

As an organization, the ICRC has consistently supported efforts to control the availability of small arms and light weapons. At the 2001 UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, States adopted a Programme of Action. While not a legally-binding document, it was a first step towards addressing this issue at the global level. The ICRC has welcomed this progress, and continues to encourage the international community to do more to reduce the availability and misuse of weapons.

Reducing the Human Cost of Unregulated Arms Availability

The ICRC promotes responsible arms transfer decisions on the part of governments and arms suppliers, especially through the development and implementation of arms transfer criteria based on respect for international humanitarian law. Spreading knowledge of humanitarian principles and promoting alternatives to violence, especially in communities affected by armed conflict, can also contribute to reducing the demand for and misuse of arms.

The entire International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has committed itself to providing medical care and support for the physical rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims of armed violence. The ICRC witnesses the effects of the misuse of weapons daily and is committed to supporting efforts to control the availability of arms.

When wars end, their residents must find peace in a world where access to small arms and ammunition is subject to few internationally accepted rules. As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, the less strictly regulated arms, civilians will pay the price in preventable death, injury and suffering. The ICRC witnesses the effects of this inadequate controls every day on the ground.

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Small arms – high costs

Every year, thousands of civilians are killed by small arms, and millions more suffer the effects of injuries, displacement and social disruption caused by these deadly weapons. Small arms and light weapons are weapons of war that continue to be used after the fighting has ended, often with the same devastating effects. They are easy to obtain and are easy to conceal, making them ideal for use by criminals, organized crime, terrorists and other non-state actors. Small arms and light weapons – are those most commonly used in today's armed conflicts. They are also those most frequently used to deliberately target civilians. These weapons are cheap and easy to procure and conceal, making them a perfect weapon for criminals and non-state actors. Small arms – high costs

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The widespread availability of weapons following a conflict often contributes to continued tension and violence and jeopardizes efforts to establish lasting peace. As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, the less strictly regulated they become, the more likely they are to be used randomly and with minimal training. Armed violence continues, fuelled by easy availability.

You may think that when wars end, their risks faced by civilians after the fighting stops are often similar to those they face in wartime. Access to small arms and ammunition.

Solving the crisis

The ICRC works with States to provide assistance for victims of armed violence. This assistance can also contribute to reducing the demand for and misuse of weapons.

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The widespread availability of weapons following a conflict often contributes to continued tension and violence and jeopardizes efforts to establish lasting peace. The human cost resulting from unregulated arms availability will continue to grow unless controls are introduced.

When wars end, their risks faced by civilians during the fighting continue, fuelled by small arms.

Reducing the human cost of unregulated arms availability

As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, the less strictly regulated they are, the higher the number of deaths and injuries. The ICRC helps the people of the world to enjoy positive futures.

You may think that civilians can resume their lives in “peace.”

But in thousands of communities around the world, the wars have not ended.

In many parts of the world, military weapons are so easy to obtain and armed violence so prevalent that civilians face many of the same threats in conflict situations, post-conflict situations and in peacetime. Surprisingly, the rates of death and injury due to small arms are among the highest in the world, but less strictly regulated than major weapons systems.

You may think that when wars end, life will return to normal. You may think that when wars end, children at risk will return to school, and ex-combatants will be able to resume their lives in “peace.”

The ICRC witnesses the effects of the unregulated availability of weapons, including small arms, which continue to claim victims day on the ground.

As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, the less strictly regulated they are, the higher the number of deaths and injuries. The ICRC helps the people of the world to enjoy positive futures.
The responsibility of governments

The fundamental rules of international humanitarian law – the law of armed conflict – impose a obligation on all participants and parties to the conflict to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law. All States have a responsibility to ensure that transfers of arms and ammunition do not fall into the hands of those who violate international humanitarian law.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has repeatedly urged States to adopt national and international arms transfer laws and policies that include criminalization and further steps for enhanced protection of civilians against misuse of weapons. States are required to ensure that transfers of weapons are conditional on the recipient's respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.

A comprehensive approach to the prevention of small-arms violence is likely to yield the long-term results. Targeting the weapons is necessary, but so is influencing the motivations and behaviour of weapons carriers and enhancing the protection of civilians. This challenge requires various approaches, including:

- Taking military, police, and security forces in the line of duty and in the prosecution of those who engage in such activities;
- Taking action in the framework of national and international arms transfer laws and the UN Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and establishing mechanisms to ensure accountability;
- Fostering awareness of society of international humanitarian law and human rights law in armed and non-armed contexts;
- Working to develop the relevant international standards on small arms, including the fight against illicit arms transfers.

Taking action

Goal of controls is to reduce the supply of arms and ammunition and to ensure a reduction in the availability of weapons to violators of international humanitarian law.

- Adopting national and international arms transfer laws and policies that include requirements to ensure accountability for arms sales and transfers;
- Making sure that controls are implemented properly, such as by regular checks and assessments of compliance;
- Establishing a national and international arms transfer licensing system or assess the recipients' likely respect for international humanitarian law.

Spreading weapons to violators of international humanitarian law and human rights law:

- Enhancing the security and protection of civilians, such as through the establishment of effective and accountable public security and criminal justice systems.
- Understanding and influencing the motivations and behaviour of weapons carriers and ensuring accountability.
- Fostering awareness of society of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

Ensuring respect

While most small arms and light weapons in the hands of criminals are not subject to international humanitarian law, taking military, police, and security forces in the line of duty and in the prosecution of those who engage in such activities will remain an urgent humanitarian problem. In view of the provision of the 1949 Geneva Conventions requiring States to “respect and ensure respect for” international humanitarian law, all States have a responsibility to ensure that transfers of arms and ammunition do not fall into the hands of those who violate international humanitarian law.

- Taking military, police, and security forces in the line of duty and in the prosecution of those who engage in such activities.
- Taking action in the framework of national and international arms transfer laws and the UN Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and establishing mechanisms to ensure accountability.
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The widespread availability of weapons hampers delivery of assistance to victims and contributes to undermining respect for the law.

- Inadequate controls on arms transfers, combined with the frequent use of weapons in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, contribute to undermining respect for the law.
- The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has called upon States to address the urgent humanitarian problem, which may require improving the security and protection of civilians, such as through the establishment of effective and accountable public security and criminal justice systems.
- The ICRC's assistance operations are regularly delayed or even suspended because of armed conflict and the availability of weapons to violators of international humanitarian law. These include:

- Criminalization of weapons transfers, including the UN Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the establishment of mechanisms to ensure accountability.
- Fostering awareness of society of international humanitarian law and human rights law in armed and non-armed contexts.
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Why do people acquire weapons and which factors determine how weapons are used? How can one ensure that weapons are distributed and used in a way that contributes to undermining respect for the law?

Compatibility aspects in the prevention of small arms violence will be played the most significant role in understanding and influencing the motivations and behaviour of weapons carriers and preventing the misuse of weapons. Therefore, States should focus on the following aspects:

- Taking military, police, and security forces in the line of duty and in the prosecution of those who engage in such activities.
- Taking action in the framework of national and international arms transfer laws and the UN Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and establishing mechanisms to ensure accountability.
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A study carried out by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) confirmed that unregulated availability of weapons contributes to civilian suffering during and after armed conflicts and can increase civilian casualties.

The responsibility of governments

The fundamental rules of international humanitarian law – the law of armed conflict – require that the protection of non-combatants and the prohibition of the targeting of civilians. However, the availability of weapons can contribute to ensure compliance with these basic rules. Inadequate controls on arms transfers, combined with the frequent use of weapons in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, contribute to undermining respect for the law.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has called upon States to address the critical humanitarian issue of arms. In 1997 and 1999, the 27th and 28th International Conferences of the Red Cross and Red Crescent reaffirmed the need to ensure that transfers of arms and ammunition do not end up in the hands of recipients who violate international humanitarian law.

The ICRC and the International Committee of the Red Crescent (ICRC) confirmed that unregulated availability of weapons facilitates violations of international humanitarian law.

The availability of weapons hampers delivery of assistance to victims and of the limits – set by international humanitarian law and local norms – on the use of weapons.

The widespread availability of weapons facilitates violations of international humanitarian law.

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Humanitarian operations also become much more costly as the security environment deteriorates.

Taking action

States should develop national and international regulations to control arms transfers. This includes:

1. Taking military, police, and security forces in the application of international humanitarian law and human rights, and ensuring their training and of the limits – set by international humanitarian law.

2. Taking action to strengthen the application of international humanitarian law and human rights, and ensuring respect for humanitarian principles.

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Ensuring respect

Most States have arms and ammunition in their territory and need to protect the public from the misuse of these weapons. However, the availability of weapons can contribute to ensure compliance with these basic rules. Inadequate controls on arms transfers, combined with the frequent use of weapons in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, contribute to undermining respect for the law.

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The responsibility of governments

The fundamental rules of international humanitarian law – the law of armed conflict – impose a duty on states to prevent violations. This is achieved through a political commitment, by adopting national and international arms transfer laws and policies that include a range of measures. The international community has recognized the importance of arms control and has developed guidelines to assist governments in this endeavor. These guidelines are reflected in the 1997 and 1999 United Nations Conventions on the Law of Armed Conflict. They define the basic rules of warfare and provide a framework for the protection of civilians.

Incorporating the relevant rules of humanitarian law into national legislation is an essential first step in ensuring compliance with the basic rules of warfare. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has highlighted the importance of national legislation in ensuring respect for international humanitarian law. The ICRC's assistance operations are regularly delayed or even suspended because of security threats. Disease, starvation and abuse increase when humanitarian agencies come under attack.

Why do people acquire weapons and which factors determine how weapons are used? How can one influence the motivations and behavior of weapons carriers and enhance the protection of civilians?

Taking action

Guidelines on the supply of arms and ammunition are essential to achieve a reduction in the availability of weapons to violators of international humanitarian law. These guidelines are based on the principle that arms and ammunition should be supplied only when there is a clear risk that the arms or ammunition will be used to commit serious violations.

Taking action is an urgent humanitarian problem. In view of the provision of the 1949 Geneva Conventions requiring the protection of non-combatants and prohibit the targeting of civilians. However, the availability of weapons to violators of international humanitarian law is a significant factor contributing to undermining respect for the law.

Inadequate controls on arms transfers, combined with the frequent use of weapons in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, contribute to undermining respect for the law. The International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has called on States to address this urgent humanitarian situation. In the case of the 1997 Conference on the Law of Armed Conflict, all States have a common interest in ensuring that arms transfers do not fall into the wrong hands and are used in violation of international humanitarian law.

This responsibility was acknowledged by States party to the Geneva Conventions at the 2003 International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 2003. The Seminar on Small Arms, underlines the need for international humanitarian law to be improved so that States can take practical steps to prevent the proliferation of civilians against misuse of weapons.

Ensuring respect for international humanitarian law requires a comprehensive approach to the prevention of small-arms violence. Taking military, police and security forces in the application of international humanitarian law, light on the use of weapons and ammunition, including the use of weapons such as those contained in International Humanitarian Law, the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, due to strong security concerns.

Making small arms of weapons (e.g. stockpiling or transferring them) to States that are not party to international humanitarian law and human rights treaties in a way that undermines the respect for international humanitarian law and human rights treaties in a way that undermines the respect for international humanitarian law and human rights treaties.

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The responsibility of governments

The fundamental aim of international humanitarian law — the law of armed conflict — is to protect non-combatants and prohibit the targeting of civilians. Moreover, the availability of weapons would be strictly controlled to ensure compliance with these basic laws. Inadequate controls on arm transfers, combined with the frequent use of weapons in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights, contribute to undermining respect for the law.

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Adopting national and international arms transfer laws and policies that include the UN Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UN Programme) as well as the recommendations of the International Study on Firearm Regulation, developing an international human rights law on weapons and ensuring that humanitarian agencies are not denied access to the civilian population in armed conflicts.

The responsibility of governments

The international community has a responsibility to adopt national and international arms transfer laws and policies that include the UN Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons (UN Programme) as well as the recommendations of the International Study on Firearm Regulation. This is crucial to prevent the misuse of weapons and to ensure that humanitarian agencies are not denied access to the civilian population in armed conflicts.

Inadequate controls on arms transfers and the frequent use of weapons in violation of humanitarian law can contribute to undermining respect for the law. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has called upon States to address this issue. In particular, States should:

1. Foster an international arms control and disarmament regime to ensure that the arms are not used to violate international humanitarian law.
2. Establish a mechanism to monitor the use of arms transferred.
3. Ensure that weapons are not used by groups that violate international humanitarian law.
4. Promote the use of weapons that are compatible with humanitarian law.
5. Establish a mechanism to address complaints from victims of violations of international humanitarian law.
6. Develop a mechanism to ensure that the provisions of international humanitarian law are respected.

The widespread availability of weapons facilitates violations of international humanitarian law. The same study, based on ICRC field experience in conflict situations around the world, confirms that unregulated arms transfers increase civilian casualties.

Inadequate controls on arms transfers and the frequent use of weapons in violation of humanitarian international law, human rights, and proper disposal of surplus weapons are key factors contributing to the motivation and behavior of weapons carriers and enhancing the protection of civilians?

Training military, police and security forces on the use of force and firearms is essential to achieve a reduction in the availability of weapons to civilians and international humanitarian law. This is particularly important in areas where there is a risk that the arms may be used for serious violations.

The use of weapons of all kinds, including small arms, must be controlled to ensure compliance with these basic rules. This responsibility was acknowledged by all States party to the Geneva Conventions at the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 1999.

For example, personal and other small arms and light weapons have become more easily available, and a wide range of weapons is in the hands of non-state actors, including criminal gangs, civilians, and children.

These groups often lack knowledge of international humanitarian law or show no respect for humanitarian principles. This trend has outpaced efforts to ensure that weapons are used in accordance with the basic rules of warfare contained in humanitarian law.

A comprehensive approach to the prevention of small-arms violence is likely to yield the most significant results, including the establishment of effective and accountable public security and criminal justice systems. Various approaches are required:

- Providing military, police and security forces with training in the use of force and firearms.
- Ensuring respect for international humanitarian law and local norms.
- Establishing mechanisms to address complaints from victims of violations of international humanitarian law.
- Establishing a mechanism to ensure that weapons are used in accordance with international humanitarian law.
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The widespread availability of weapons following a conflict often contributes to continued tension and violence and jeopardizes efforts to establish lasting peace. The human cost resulting from unregulated arms availability will continue to grow unless the need for effective controls is recognized and acted on. As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, access to small arms and ammunition will continue to support the physical rehabilitation and socio-economic reintegration of victims of armed violence.

Targeting the Weapons

Reducing the Human Cost of Unregulated Arms Availability

Small arms – high costs

Every year thousands of communities whose well-being is seriously affected by the presence of weapons are without adequate assistance. The activities of ex-combatants and child soldiers, or other armed groups, often continue to threaten the safety and security of the civilian population. In thousands of communities around the world, the risks faced by civilians after the fighting stops are often similar to those they face in wartime. Armed violence continues, fuelled by small arms – high costs.

Assault rifles, machine guns, grenades, mortar bombs – weapons falling into the category of small arms – high costs. They are often the most commonly used weapons in today’s armed conflicts. They are also those most frequently used to deliberately target civilians. These small arms are easy to obtain and use with minimal training. They are cheap, easy to transport and conceal, extremely durable, and simple to use. Their availability is subject to few internationally accepted rules.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose primary humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence and to provide them with assistance. It directs and coordinates the international relief activities conducted by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in situations of conflict. It also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening respect for international humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the movement and was the first to provide humanitarian protection for civilians during armed conflict.

The ICRC works through its own delegations, and in cooperation with the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, to provide and coordinate relief to people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence. It offers its services to the fullest extent possible and to all victims, without discrimination, in relation to their race, religion, political affiliation, or any other consideration. The ICRC’s activities are guided by respect for international humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles.

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When wars end, their impacts linger in “peace”.

The risks faced by civilians after the fighting

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The risks faced by civilians after the fighting

As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, but less strictly regulated than medicines, civilians will pay the price in preventable death, injury and suffering. The ICRC witnesses the effects of the current inadequate controls every day on the ground.

What needs to be done

The ICRC supports States in providing adequate training for armed forces, police and other bearers of weapons in international humanitarian law and human rights law. Training should enable personnel to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate targets, promote respect for international humanitarian law and facilitate post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction. The ICRC and many National Societies, constantly confronted with this phenomenon, are well placed to draw attention to its devastating effects.

The ICRC promotes the adherence to and implementation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Spreading knowledge of humanitarian principles and promoting alternatives to violence are urgent needs. The ICRC’s advocacy can also contribute to reducing the demand for and misuse of weapons.

The ICRC may think that civilians can resume their normal lives whenever armed conflict ends. But in thousands of communities around the world, stops are often similar to those they face in wartime. Access to small arms and ammunition.

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The widespread availability of weapons following a conflict often contributes to preventing the reconstruction of societies, the recovery of national economies and the protection of civilians. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) witnesses the effects of this phenomenon daily, whether in situations of conflict or in post-conflict situations throughout the world.

**TARGETING THE WEAPONS**

The role of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has long been at the forefront of efforts to reduce the human cost of the easy availability and misuse of weapons. This effort can take many forms:

- **PREVENTION**
  - Enhancing the capacity of armed forces to protect civilian populations in post-conflict situations by providing training in international humanitarian law and human rights.
  - Taking practical measures to decrease the threat of armed violence to civilians, for example, by ensuring that police and other bearers of weapons in international humanitarian law and human rights.
  - Spreading knowledge of humanitarian principles and promoting alternatives to violence. The ICRC and many National Societies, constantly confronted with this phenomenon, have made serious efforts in recent years to ensure that weapons are used in accordance with international humanitarian law and facilitate post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction.

- **AWARENESS-RAISING**
  - Encouraging responsible arms transfer decisions on the part of governments and arms suppliers, especially through the development and implementation of arms transfer criteria based on respect for international humanitarian law. The ICRC’s programme of action on arms transfer controls is a first step towards addressing this issue at the global level.
  - Establishing mechanisms to ensure responsibility and accountability among those who produce, transport, sell or use weapons are urgently needed because of the human cost resulting from unregulated arms availability will continue to grow unless the current efforts to limit the availability and misuse of weapons are stepped up for the millions of people who suffer the effects of armed violence to hope for a safer future.

- **ASSISTANCE FOR VICTIMS**
  - Supporting States in providing adequate training for armed forces and police and other bearers of weapons in international humanitarian law and human rights.
  - Providing medical care and support for the physical rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims of armed violence.
  - Continuing to document and raise awareness of the human cost of the easy availability and misuse of weapons. This effort can take many forms. The ICRC and many National Societies have provided medical care and support for the physical rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims of armed violence.

**Small arms - high costs**

Every year, thousands of civilians of all ages killed and wounded by small arms and轻武器 - weapons falling into the category of ‘small arms’ - are victims of conflict. They are also those most frequently used to deliberately target civilians. These weapons are known for their deadly power and destructive capabilities.

The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose mission is to provide assistance to victims of armed conflicts. The ICRC witnesses the effects of the misuse of weapons - to obtain than food in many parts of the world.

You may think that when wars end, their risks faced by civilians after the fighting Armed violence continues, fuelled by easy availability and misuse.

As long as weapons are easier to obtain than food in many parts of the world, the less strictly regulated than major weapons systems, these weapons are a cause for particular concern because, unlike major weapons systems, they are also those most frequently used to deliberately target civilians. These weapons are known for their deadly power and destructive capabilities.

**But in thousands of communities around the world, stops are often similar to those they face in wartime.**

**You may think that civilians can resume their lives in “peace”.**

Every year, thousands of civilians of all ages killed and wounded by small arms and light weapons - weapons falling into the category of ‘small arms’ - are victims of conflict. They are also those most frequently used to deliberately target civilians. These weapons are known for their deadly power and destructive capabilities.

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