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Statement by

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Madame coordinator

Tragically, throughout history, women's bodies have been considered part of the spoils of war. In armed conflicts around the world, we witnessed the deliberate use of sexual violence as a weapon. In response, women's organizations and human rights activists have fought globally for a long overdue change. Many of them supported the negotiations of the ATT and facilitated the inclusion of Article 7(4). Yet, inexplicably, most of these organizations chose to remain silent after October 7th, or worse – they took an active role in the attempt to “contextualize” the vile acts of gender-based violence committed on that day. Silence benefits only one group – those who perpetuate these crimes.

Israel unequivocally condemns all forms of gender- and sexual based violence, as a weapon of war, a tactic terrorism and elsewhere. There is no justification, no excuse, for such heinous acts. There is no “picking-and-choosing”. The international community must condemn all acts of sexual violence - loud and clear.

The Arms Trade Treaty was the first legally binding international instrument to acknowledge the link between gender-based violence and arms trade.

Article 7(4) of the ATT requires that State Parties, in making their export assessment, take into account the risk of conventional arms or items covered under the Treaty, from being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence.

The topic of gender based violence was given attention by the ATT in 2019, in the Fifth Conference of States Parties, and a number of decisions were made in this regard. In the previous Conference of States Parties, in 2023, the Conference encouraged Parties to keep the risk of conventional arms being



used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence - as an important topic of attention, and to initiate the discussion and exchange of information and good practices on this topic in its 10th conference.

Madame coordinator,

The diversion of arms is not a theoretical issue, especially in the Middle East.

On October 7th, Hamas brutally murdered over 1200 men, women and children, among them Jews, Arabs and foreign nationals. Innocent civilians were tortured, beheaded and mutilated. Hamas deliberately targeted civilians, booby-trapped corpses and systematically burned homes to the ground with entire families still holding on to one another inside. Hamas took over 240 hostages, including infants, older persons, Holocaust survivors, and persons with disabilities - some of whom have since been executed. Hostages are subjugated to tortured, sexually abuse and starved in captivity.

Evidence shows that on October 7th, Hamas used acts of gender-based violence as a weapon. There are widespread accounts of sexual and gender-based violence, including bodies that were found with clear signs of gender mutilation.

The extensive nature of the attacks, which were perpetrated simultaneously in different physical locations, within a confined timeframe and with similar patterns, as well as the numerous testimonies, point to the grave and heinous nature of the acts of sexual and gender-based violence, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Hamas terrorists celebrated these atrocities. They paraded captured women naked in the streets of Gaza as war trophies, while onlookers cheered.

Frightfully, the testimonies of women and girls released from Hamas captivity in Gaza also raise harrowing accounts of sexual violence in captivity.

We cannot remain silent to their horrific situation.



Following the October 7th massacre, large quantities of conventional arms were found in the possession of Hamas. These arms were illicitly transferred to Hamas and were used in the brutal terror attack that was perpetrated against the citizens of Israel.

Regrettably, conventional arms have been illicitly traded and proliferated throughout the Middle East in unprecedented quantities. These weapons find their way into the hands of terrorist organizations, such as Hamas.

According to Article 11 of the ATT, State Parties are required to take measures to prevent the diversion of conventional arms, including through risk assessment and mitigation measures. Furthermore, State Parties are required to address diversions that were detected, and are encouraged to share relevant information with one another on effective measures to address diversions.

The diversion of arms, especially to non-state actors, can have devastating consequences and is a critical issue in the field of international security. In some cases, diversion can be a key factor in the escalation of armed violence, and in the perpetuation of gender-based violence.

The acts of gender-based violence witnessed on October 7th, represent the horrific end result of what Article 7(4) and Article 11 aim to prevent – serious acts of gender-based violence committed and facilitated with arms that were illegally diverted to terrorist groups. They clearly demonstrate the immense damage and loss of life that the illicit trade of conventional arms can cause.

The diversion of conventional arms to the hands of Hamas and other terrorist groups is not only a growing challenge in the Middle East - it is a global threat. The international community must find a comprehensive strategy to combat this deadly trend.



We call for further action, including holding additional discussions on this issue as a matter of priority, in order to prevent the diversion of conventional arms to terrorist organizations, and to ensure that conventional weapons under this Treaty are not used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence.

We would like to take this opportunity to inform that we have submitted a working paper to the secretariat on this topic in hope for further discussion,