

**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Statement to the Second Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty
Treaty Implementation, 24 August 2016**

As peace talks over the conflict in Yemen collapsed, Saudi Arabia unleashed a new wave of shocking and unacceptable bombing raids in populated areas in Yemen, destroying hospitals, schools, markets, and homes. This has been going on for a year and a half. Several UN bodies have described the bombing as in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Médecins Sans Frontières and the International Committee of Red Cross have had to start a campaign, Not A Target, to explain that hospitals must not be attacked during war.

Yet several ATT states parties and signatories continue to transfer arms to Saudi Arabia. By April 2016 the UK government had issued 122 licences for military exports to Saudi Arabia since it began its military intervention in Yemen, signing off on £3.3 billion of arms exports in the first year of the war. In June 2015, after the intervention began, France signed deals with Saudi Arabia worth \$12 billion, and in October 2015, it signed a military, trade, and economic cooperation deal with Saudi Arabia worth \$11.4 billion. The United States, an ATT signatory, made recent deals explicitly to “replenish” weapon supplies that “are becoming depleted due to the high operational tempo”.

This is not the only example of ATT states parties and signatories violating the ATT. It is one of the most blatant, however, because there is no doubt that these governments have all the information they need to understand the gravity of the situation and its relationship to their legal obligations on arms exports.

What can other ATT states parties do? One important thing is to hold more focused discussions on Treaty implementation and considering responses to Treaty violations. Such discussions must be open to all states parties as well as international organisations and civil society, which can provide essential information and scrutiny.

The UK has suggested in working paper OP.1 to establish a working group of technical experts on ATT implementation. The group, according to the UK's proposal, should decide itself when it would be public or private. Experts, particularly from industry, may be invited to private meetings. This proposal seems to seek to remove the opportunity to discuss Treaty violations from the public view and take such discussions into closed-door meetings that will likely exclude civil society other than arms manufacturers and dealers.

Focused discussions on implementation are necessary. But such deliberations must be public and informed by a wide range of interests, not just those profiting from arms sales.

One clear reason for open discussions is the need to make sure all obligations are considered—for example, the provision on preventing gender-based violence (GBV). In a series of interviews with export licence officials, WILPF found that none include GBV as a specific criterion in their risk assessment processes. Many transfers have been made even in instances where the risk of the weapons being used to facilitate GBV should have been well known. Examples can be found in the full version of this statement online.

States parties must implement the ATT with a view to enhancing peace, justice, and human rights, not profits and political manipulation. Export officials and governments must respect the prohibitions against transfers in article 6. They must also, under article 7, refuse transfers where there is a risk, among other things, of human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law. The CSPs should provide an opportunity to assess implementation, but ATT implementation is crucial all year round. We call on states parties and signatories to use the Treaty to advance peace, security, and human rights through their commitments *and* their actions.