

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release: Friday 15 September 2017

### **Silence on Yemen is deafening at the Arms Trade Treaty Conference**

The silence has been deafening on the crisis in Yemen among government delegates at the third annual Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, said the international Control Arms Coalition today as the conference draws to a close.

Delegates from the 92 States Parties and 41 Signatories of the Arms Trade Signatory all made statements at the Conference of States Parties this week; only Costa Rica mentioned Yemen by name.

“It’s an absolute disgrace that government delegations did not address this huge elephant in the room,” said Anna Macdonald, Director of the international Control Arms Coalition.

Radhya al-Mutawakel, of Mwatana Organization for Human Rights, Yemen spoke on behalf of Control Arms at the High Level segment on the opening day of the conference. She added:

“In Yemen, thousands and thousands of people are dying from cholera and malnutrition as a consequence of the conflict. A child dies every ten minutes. These deaths are in addition to the 10,000 who been killed directly in the conflict. My country is virtually on its knees due to the constant bombing and attacks. And there’s barely a mention from government delegations. Time is running out for the people of Yemen, but there is no sense of urgency or outrage from the governments here. On behalf of my fellow citizens that makes me extremely angry.”

Martin Butcher of Oxfam said: "Arms supplied by countries that have signed up to the Arms Trade Treaty have wrought havoc in Yemen. The devastating humanitarian situation in the country will only have a chance to improve when the arms stop flowing and aid flows freely."

On Thursday, the European Parliament reiterated its call for an embargo on Saudi Arabia in Strasbourg. “We welcome this positive move from the EU and call upon EU countries, such as the UK and France to follow suit,” said Frank Slijper, Arms Advisor, of Dutch NGO PAX.

The UK and France are among the biggest suppliers of weapons to Saudi Arabia despite overwhelming evidence of serious violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen. Since the beginning of the conflict in 2015, the UK has approved exports of licences worth over £3.9 billion to Saudi Arabia.

The UK Government’s statement to the Conference mentioned the importance of a 'globally well regulated, legal trade in arms in order to better identify, and then tackle, illicit flows to build a safer world’.

“How on earth can selling arms to Saudi Arabia to be used to kill and injure thousands of people in Yemen be 'building a safer world'?” said Anna Macdonald.

According to SIPRI data, France has supplied \$218 million worth of heavy weapons to Saudi Arabia since the start of the conflict in Yemen.

In its statement to the ATT Conference this week, France encouraged all states, civil society organisations and the private sector to multiply efforts to implement the treaty.

“Perhaps France should make a start by stopping exports of weapons that could be used in Yemen to Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners,” said James Lynch, head of Arms Control and Human Rights at Amnesty International.

Since the ATT entered into force three years ago, over one million people have died from armed violence, and many millions more have suffered injury, displacement, torture and abuse.

“It’s time for the ATT Conference to get some teeth,” said Anna Macdonald. “Too many people’s lives depend upon it.

“States Parties here this week had the power to take decisions that could transform the arms trade. And they tragically squandered it. And how many more lives will be lost as a result?”

## **ENDS**

For more information and/or interviews please contact Louise Orton on [media@controlarms.org](mailto:media@controlarms.org) or call 00 44 7939 141764

See links for photographs of campaign action and the conference:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/controlarms/albums/72157686614680873>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/controlarms/albums/72157688917942835>

The Control Arms Coalition is a global civil society movement of Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) campaigning for tough controls on the international arms trade. Control Arms represents organisations working in over 120 countries. It includes major international NGOs such as Oxfam, Amnesty International and Saferworld, as well as many regional and national level organisations.

For a complete list of ATT States Parties and Signatories click here:

<http://armstreaty.org/issue/tracking-the-universalisation-of-the-att/>