
AdvocacyNet
News Bulletin 152
June 6, 2008

WOMEN ON THE MARCH AS GLOBAL ACTION WEEK TARGETS GUN VIOLENCE



Port of Spain, Trinidad: At the Russell Latapy Secondary School in Trinidad, Principal Tarran Bhaggan estimates that 90 percent of students have seen or been touched by armed violence. In El Salvador, advocacy groups point out that 80 percent of murdered women are shot by their partners.

These are just two of the countries suffering from an epidemic of guns. Both are squarely in the sights of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), a global network of organizations that campaigns against gun-related violence.

This week, citizens in 70 countries around the world are exposing the human cost of guns and demanding stronger regulation of the global arms trade during IANSA's Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence, which runs through Sunday (June 8).

Worldwide, gun violence kills about a thousand people a day and injures three times as many, according to IANSA. But the crisis is not taken seriously enough. "If 1000 people a day were dying from a global epidemic of bird flu, the world would sit up and take notice," said Sarah Masters, IANSA's Women's Network Coordinator.

Teenagers at Russell Latapy have decided to fight back by establishing a violence-free "Peace Zone" at their school, with help from the Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD). WINAD, a partner of The Advocacy Project and member of IANSA's global network, organized a workshop at the school earlier this week.

Melissa Bruce, a 14-year-old student at the school who is working on the Peace Zone, worries that people will be so afraid to leave their homes because of the violence that they will end up “locked up like vampires.”

Ms Masters said IANSA members are being encouraged to make women’s issues part of their activism this year – especially the problems of guns in the home. Although men account for most gun casualties, a woman is twelve times more likely to die from domestic violence when a gun is kept in the home.

In countries at war, women become the primary breadwinners and take care of displaced families when male relatives are killed or disabled by gun violence.

In El Salvador, the women’s group Cemujer has launched a campaign - “No more arms, no more women homicides” – that seeks to close a legal loophole allowing anyone with a history of domestic violence to own a gun. Cemujer members hosted a press conference and marched through San Salvador Tuesday (June 3) carrying banners.

Last year’s Week of Action mobilized thousands of activists behind the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which seeks to prevent the transfer of weapons to states that violate human rights. Over a hundred governments called for the treaty to be strengthened.

This year IANSA is calling for a moratorium on the transfer of weapons to Zimbabwe, embroiled in political violence in advance of a June 27 presidential runoff election.

Jennifer Scott, an AP Peace Fellow, will help WINAD and the students of Russell Latapy to open the school’s new Peace Zone. Peace Fellow Crissie Ferrara will be volunteering in El Salvador with Cemujer this summer.

- Learn more about IANSA's **Global Week of Action**
<http://www.iansa.org/search/results/global%20week>

AdvocacyNet is a service of The Advocacy Project (AP) that is offered to advocates working for human rights and social justice at the community level. AP is based in Washington, DC. Phone +1 202 758 3328. For more information visit our [website](#) or [email](#) us.