

## 100128 Somalia-Alarm bells ring over arms transfers

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Amnesty International (AI) has expressed concerns about increased international supplies of weapons and financial assistance to the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG). These supplies increased during 2009, after the renewed military offensive by armed groups in south and central Somalia opposing the TFG, and the escalation of armed piracy off Somalia's coast.

*AI's new report* notes that unless effectively regulated and monitored, these arms may be used in human rights violations, worsen the humanitarian situation of Somali civilians and exacerbate the conflict. Last year, both the TFG and its opponents carried out indiscriminate and disproportionate bombardment in civilian areas of Mogadishu, causing numerous civilian deaths and the *displacement* of thousands of people from the capital.

Since May 2009, tons of guns, ammunition and mortars have been airlifted by the US from Uganda to Mogadishu. Since Somalia is under an arms embargo, the transfers required permission from the UN Sanctions Committee. The US also provided up to \$2 million in cash for the TFG to procure weapons and equipment locally. This risks fuelling the local arms markets which supply all sides of Somalia's violence.

The US has failed to provide the UN Sanctions Committee with sufficient information on the types and quantities of weapons supplied to allow international monitors to determine whether these weapons have been diverted. AI is calling for all countries to suspend arms transfers and financial assistance until adequate safeguards are in place to ensure the weapons will not be used by TFG forces to commit human right violations, or diverted to other armed groups and potentially used against civilians, African Union peacekeepers or TFG forces themselves.

Much of the international training being provided to the TFG by international donors lacks adequate human rights standards, vetting and accountability. Some is being provided without notifying the UN Sanctions Committee, thereby undermining the UN embargo on Somalia. In some cases, European donors are providing military and policing training through states such as Ethiopia - whose forces have themselves been accused of committing war crimes in Somalia.

Mike Lewis from Amnesty International said: "Arms embargoes intended to mitigate conflicts and protect civilians cannot work properly without international standards to assess the risk that any arms transfer, including those 'exempted' from the embargo, will be used in serious human rights violations, will facilitate armed crime, or will seriously undermine development. Such standards need to be enshrined universally, in an international Arms Trade Treaty."

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