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Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Violence: Estimating its Scale and Forms



(Dec. 21, 2021) Illicit weapons seized from a stateless fishing vessel in the North Arabian Sea are arranged for inventory aboard guided-missile destroyer USS O'Kane's (DDG 77) flight deck, Dec. 21.
(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Elisha Smith)



**UNITED AGAINST
GUN VIOLENCE**

Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation and Violence: Estimating its Scale and Forms

This paper outlines the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and describes the scale of SALW violence by providing a detailed analysis of significant statistics. The paper concludes with some recommendations to governments that would improve the collection and reporting of relevant data that will help curb the proliferation and violent use of SALW by different actors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are widely available and easy to use, so they are the most prominent tools in contemporary armed conflicts as well as in armed criminal and interpersonal violence in non-conflict settings.¹ To grasp the global scale of SALW proliferation and the patterns of violence committed with SALW², this briefing paper summarizes the available data which is considered reliable from credible sources.

1.1 What is Small Arms Violence?

There are many possible ways to define violence. The term “armed violence” can be defined broadly as the intentional use of weapons, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in physical harm (injury, or death), psychological harm, sexual harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.³ An act of violence is not the same as the lawful use of armed force by designated law enforcement officials unless they use excessive force, arbitrary or abusive force. UN standards state that such officials, in carrying out their duty, shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means, and resort to the use of force and firearms only if other means remain ineffective and then only to the minimum extent necessary in self-defence or the defence of others against an imminent threat of death or serious injury.⁴ Lawful force must minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life. Law enforcement officials also must ensure that assistance and medical aid are rendered to any injured or affected persons at the earliest possible moment.⁵ In other words, the lawful use of force and firearms is bound by the principles of necessity, proportionality and precaution.⁶

SALW violence can take many forms, such as armed conflict, violent crime, self-harm, legal intervention injuries and the ultimate consequence can be violent death. SALW violence is influenced by whole series of factors, which include poverty; corruption; ethnic conflict; lack of political freedom; grievances; a culture of violence; human rights violations; demographic youth bulges, especially of young males in areas with limited

1 United Nations (undated): [Small Arms: Armed Violence](#).

2 For the definition of small arms and light weapons see Modular Small-Arms-control Implementation Compendium (MOSAIC) Module 01.20: Glossary of terms, definitions and abbreviations (Version 1.5).

3 The WHO defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. [E.G. Krug et al. (eds.) (2002): World report on violence and health, World Health Organization, p.5.]

4 United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, Cuba, 27 August to 7 September 1990. One of the Basic Principles is that: “Governments shall ensure that arbitrary or abusive use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials is punished as a criminal offence under their law.”

5 [Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials](#), *ibid*, Principle 5. (b) and (c).

6 UNODC, E4J University Module Series: Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Module 4: Use of Force and Firearms, [Topic three – The general principle of use of force in law enforcement](#).

education and employment opportunities; impunity in the judicial system; economic deprivation; exclusion; and transnational organised crime.⁷

Armed violence has far-reaching consequences: It causes severe injuries and death, facilitates human rights abuses, hinders access to education, health and social services, reduces social and human capital by sowing fear and insecurity, and results in high economic costs owing to years of lost productivity. Armed violence can also cause large-scale displacement, reduce investment and access to credit and trade, restrict mobility, and contribute to the growth of illicit markets and power structures. It can also undermine governance and state stability.⁸

1.2 Gender-based armed violence

Gender-based armed violence is often presumed to be inflicted only or primarily on women and girls, but this understanding fails to take into account the full scope of the issue. For example, the gendered impact of small arms proliferation and misuse, which includes sexual violence and slavery, also affects LGBTQI+2 people, who are frequently omitted from definitions of women and girls. In addition, men and boys account for the vast majority of violent deaths, including from gun homicides and in direct armed conflict, and these often result from enforced recruitment of boys and young men and from them being targeted by soldiers, police, armed groups, or criminal gangs on the basis of their gender. Likewise, security forces or criminal gangs commit extrajudicial executions of transgender and non-binary people, gay men, and sex workers because they do not conform to the predominant gender roles in society. Incidents and patterns of gender-based armed violence therefore include but are not limited to armed violence against women and girls. Gender-based armed violence includes violence that is directed at people based on discriminating norms and practices relating to their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and/or gender roles in society. Recent studies have shown that sexual violence against men and boys during conflict is more common than previously thought.⁹

1.3 What is SALW proliferation?

SALW proliferation is the excessive accumulation and uncontrolled circulation of SALW by a State and/or by civilians and corporate entities that occurs inside a country and between countries.

The term “excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms and light weapons” was described in paragraphs 34–37 of the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (A/52/298, annex). The experts pointed out that the terms “excessive” and “destabilizing” need to be analysed in a specific context to understand their relationship to violence: “large numbers of weapons that are under the strict and effective control of a responsible State do not necessarily lead to violence. Conversely, a small number of weapons can be destabilizing under certain conditions”.¹⁰

7 M. Werbick et al. (2021): “[Firearm violence: a neglected 'global health' issue](#)”. *Globalization and Health* (2021) vol. 17:120; UNODC (2019): *Global study on homicide: Homicide trends, patterns and criminal justice response*; OECD (2011): *Reducing the involvement of youth in armed violence*; OECD (2009): *Armed violence reduction: enabling development*.

8 OECD (2009): *Conflict and Fragility: Armed Violence Reduction – Enabling Development*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: p. 28.

9 P. Schulz (2020): *Male Survivors of Wartime Sexual Violence*, University of California Press; War Child UK, [The hidden victims of sexual violence in war](#), 19 June 2019; Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (2018): UN Security Council, S/2018/250; ISS (2016): “[Male victims of sexual violence: war's silent sufferers](#),” ISS Today, 10 June 2016; The Observer (2011): “[The rape of men: the darkest secret of war](#),” 17 July 2011; L. Stemple (2009): “Male Rape and Human Rights,” *Hastings Law Journal*, Vol. 60, Issue 3.

10 Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (1997), United Nations General Assembly, A/52/298: para 36.

Regarding the main forms of excessive and destabilizing accumulations of SALW, the Governmental Experts identified the following: (a) When a State, whether a supplier or recipient, does not exercise restraint in the production, transfer and acquisition of such weapons beyond those needed for legitimate national and collective defence and internal security; (b) When a State, whether a supplier or recipient, cannot exercise effective control to prevent the illegitimate acquisition, transfer, transit or circulation of such weapons; (c) or When the use of such weapons manifests itself in armed conflict, in crime, such as arms and drug trafficking, or other actions contrary to the norms of national or international law.¹¹

SALW proliferation can also take the form of diversions from the licit market to the illicit market. Diversion, for the purposes of the Arms Trade Treaty, is the rerouting and/or the appropriation of conventional arms or related items contrary to relevant national and/or international law leading to a potential change in the effective control or ownership of the arms and items.

1. Such diversion can occur through the transfer of the items into the illicit market, or to an unauthorized or unlawful end user or for an unauthorized or unlawful end use;
2. The re-routing and misappropriation of the items can take place at any point in the supply chain, including the export, import, transit, trans-shipment, storage, re-activation or re-transfer of the items;
3. The transaction chain can involve various forms of exchange, whether directly negotiated or brokered: grant, credit, lease, barter, and cash, at any time during the life cycle of the items.¹²

For example, diversion can happen through theft from private (and manufacturer) holdings or government stockpiles. This can be due to negligence, poor stockpile management, corruption, regime collapse... Governments could also decide to arm armed groups (para-military, resistance, liberation... groups) or foreign armed forces overtly or covertly.

¹¹ Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms (1997), United Nations General Assembly, A/52/298: para 37.

¹² This definition of diversion was developed by Peter Danssaert and Brian Wood. See P. Danssaert (2019): *Anti-diversion measures. Real-time locating systems*. International Peace Information Service vzw: p. 7, and Brian Wood (2020): *The Arms Trade Treaty: Obligations to Prevent the Diversion of Conventional Arms*, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, p.33.



TOPEKA, Kansas, March 2021 – 258 arrests were made in 10 days as part of Operation Frontier Justice. The U.S. Marshals and Topeka Police, working with multiple federal, state and local law enforcement partners, conducted the operation aimed at reducing violent crime and drug activity in and around Topeka. In addition to the 258 arrests, 16 of which were gang members, the operation resulted in the seizure of 24 firearms, nearly 19 kilograms of narcotics to include marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin and \$25,000 in U.S. currency.
Source Shane T. McCoy / US Marshals

2. ESTIMATING THE PROLIFERATION OF SALW

To obtain a picture of the general spread of SALW across the globe, its rate of growth and the numbers held by different actors and in different regions, one must use the limited number of estimates considered reliable.

2.1 Global Firearms Holdings

Not all countries maintain a comprehensive civilian firearms registry or have reliable data on SALW held in law enforcement or military stockpiles. Nor do all countries conduct surveys to calculate the number of illicitly held SALW by civilians or non-state armed groups and criminal gangs. Therefore, we have to rely on what are usually rough estimates.

The estimates of firearms holdings most often used are those produced by the Small Arms Survey (SAS).¹³ Considering that civilian firearms holdings data is based on data from national registries in 133 countries and territories out of 230 countries and territories in the world, and also that there is poor record keeping in many countries, the aggregate of this 'registry' data is still largely a rough estimate. Besides national registries, other

13 Small Arms Survey (2018): [Global Firearms Holdings](#).

sources used to estimate the number of civilian firearms holdings calculated by the SAS are surveys but those show a tendency to under-estimate the totals, and also expert estimates which have a tendency to over-estimate totals. The computation method widely used by statisticians to estimate the illicitly held firearms is the expert estimate. At the time of writing, the most recent data is that for the year 2017.

Based on this methodology, the SAS estimates that, of the one billion firearms in global circulation as of 2017, 857 million (85 per cent) are in civilian hands (includes gangs, non-state armed groups and private security companies), 133 million (13 per cent) are in military arsenals, and 23 million (2 per cent) are owned by law enforcement agencies. The SAS assumes an annual growth of the civilian firearms holdings of 1 per cent. They further estimate that “the global stockpile” has increased over the past decade, largely due to civilian holdings, which allegedly grew from 650 million in 2006 to 857 million in 2017. According to SAS estimates, 46 per cent of all civilian-held firearms are to be found in the United States.¹⁴

Firearms holdings by region and sector¹⁵

Civilian-held	Americas (55%), Asia (29%), Europe (11%), Africa (5%)
Military-held	Asia (52%), Europe (34%), Americas (9%), Africa (5%)
Law Enforcement held	Asia (40%), Europe (26%), Americas (18%), Africa (16%)

Estimated total legal & illicit civilian-held firearms, top-25 States 2017

United States	393,300,000	Turkey	13,200,000	Saudi Arabia	5,500,000
India	71,100,000	France	12,700,000	South Africa	5,400,000
China	49,700,000	Canada	12,700,000	Colombia	5,000,000
Pakistan	43,900,000	Thailand	10,300,000	Ukraine	4,400,000
Russia	17,600,000	Italy	8,600,000	Afghanistan	4,300,000
Brazil	17,500,000	Iraq	7,600,000	Egypt	3,900,000
Mexico	16,800,000	Nigeria	6,200,000	Philippines	3,800,000
Germany	15,800,000	Venezuela	5,900,000		
Yemen	14,900,000	Iran	5,900,000		

2.2 Estimating SALW Manufacture

No reliable figures exist on how many SALW are manufactured globally on a yearly basis. The Omega Research Foundation estimates that today 1,500 companies from some 100 countries produce small arms, light weapons, and their ammunition.¹⁶ But Omega researchers remarked that the estimate should be treated with caution: “lack of reliable information makes it difficult to ascertain whether any small arms and/or ammunition are currently being produced and, if so, whether regularly or only on an ad hoc basis. Some countries are involved only in the production of components rather than final products, while in others small arms production involves relatively marginal activities, such as loading or filling ammunition cartridges... In

¹⁴ Small Arms Survey (2018): Ibidem.

¹⁵ Small Arms Survey, [Infographic Global Firearms Holdings](#). (Last accessed 20 May 2022)

¹⁶ Email conversation with Omega Research Foundation, 1 June 2022.

addition, companies go out of business or change their names... Thus, the total number of end producers is likely to be much lower than the total number of producers, including intermediate producers.”¹⁷

Trade data for the year 2017 shows that 38 countries exported at least USD 10 million worth of small arms and light weapons, including their parts, accessories, and ammunition. The top 5 exporters had export values of between USD 1 billion and 500 million. (See below.)

The Small Arms Survey estimates that the global civilian held firearms holdings alone grow each year by one per cent which would correspond to an annual global production of at least 8.5 million firearms for the civilian market.

To put this in perspective, in 2020, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Annual Firearms Manufacturing and Export Report (AFMER), some 9.8 million firearms (handguns, rifles and shotguns)¹⁸ were manufactured in the United States alone for the national and international civilian and law enforcement market.¹⁹

SALW are also manufactured in Africa, Americas, Asia and Europe as shown in the non-exhaustive tables below. These tables do not indicate the scale or output of commercial manufacturing, nor do they include local craft workshop production of small arms which takes place in some countries.

SALW Manufacturing States (Non-exhaustive)

Americas	Argentina; Brazil; Canada; Chile; Colombia; Cuba; Venezuela; United States
Europe	Austria; Belarus; Belgium; Bosnia-Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Czech Rep.; Denmark; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Norway; Poland; Romania; Russia; Serbia; Slovakia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; United Kingdom
Asia	Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; China; India; Indonesia; Iran; Israel; Japan; Myanmar; Pakistan; Philippines; Singapore; South Korea; Taiwan; Turkey; UAE
Africa	Algeria; Egypt; Ethiopia; Ghana; Kenya; Nigeria; South Africa; Sudan

Note that SALW and ammunition manufacturers are privately and/or state-owned.

2.2 Trade in SALW (including their parts, accessories and ammunition)

The most reliable source for data on the international trade in SALW is the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database, or Comtrade for short. But this database has its shortcomings. First of all, Comtrade only reports commercial transfers between countries, including to governments but does not include government-to-government transfers. Secondly, several countries do not provide data to the UN on some or much of their transfers of SALW which for example is the case with China, and some countries provide no data at all (for example, North Korea, Eritrea, Syria). Thus, the actual value of the global SALW trade is higher than the trade in SALW reported by states to the UN, and the following figures need to be seen as reflecting a minimum value.

¹⁷ Small Arms Survey (2014): Producers of small arms, light weapons, and their ammunition. *Small Arms Survey Research Note 43*, July 2014.

¹⁸ ATF (2021): 2020 Annual Firearms Manufacturing and Export Report.

¹⁹ The ATF data includes firearms sold for export and law enforcement, but not military sales.

Here the focus is on the UN trade data for the year 2017. This is because, first of all, the need to be consistent with the holdings data for that year; secondly, because aggregated data was already collected by the Small Arms Survey from the Comtrade database; and thirdly because countries have had ample time to submit and revise their respective submissions of trade data to UN Comtrade. In 2017 UN Comtrade reported that the international SALW trade (including their parts, accessories, and ammunition)²⁰ was worth at least USD 6.5 billion of which the small arms ammunition trade was worth USD 2.7 billion.²¹ In other words, ammunition accounted for about 41% of the reported global SALW trade. Other parts of the global SALW trade in 2017 included sporting and hunting shotguns and rifles (USD 1.05 billion) and pistols and revolvers (USD 1.03 billion). These two sub-categories together accounted for 32 per cent of all reported small arms exports.²²

Financial value of global small arms exports, 2015–17²³

Ammunition	USD 8,043 million	41%
Pistols & revolvers	USD 3,212 million	16%
Sporting/hunting firearms	USD 3,168 million	16%
Parts & components	USD 2,524 million	13%
Military Firearms	USD 1,848 million	9%
Light weapons	USD 898 million	5%
Total	USD 19,693 million	100%

2017 Exporting Countries by World Region that reported to Comtrade²⁴

1. A total of 38 States exported at least USD 10 million worth of small arms and light weapons, including their parts, accessories, and ammunition.²⁵ The top 5 exporters were: United States (USD 1.1 billion), Italy (USD 583 million), Brazil (USD 544 million), Germany (USD 514 million) and Austria (USD 475 million).²⁶
2. Major exporters of sporting and hunting shotguns and rifles were Italy (USD 258 million), Turkey (USD 121 million) and the United States (USD 116 million).²⁷
3. Austria accounted for 33 per cent of global exports of pistols and revolvers in 2017.²⁸
4. Major exporters of small arms ammunition in 2017 were United States (15% of global small arms ammunition exports), Brazil (14%), South Korea (14%), Germany (8%), Italy (6%).²⁹
5. The largest exporter of SALW by world region in 2017 was Europe, followed by the Americas, Asia and then Africa which was much smaller.

Europe: USD 4,505 million

Value Export ≥ USD 500 million	Italy, Germany
Value Export USD 100–499 million	Austria, Czech Rep., Spain, Norway, Russia, Croatia, Belgium

20 Transfers of some light weapons, light weapons ammunition, and accessories for small arms and light weapons are not discernible from transfers of other items recorded in the same categories, and therefore are excluded by the Small Arms Survey from the analysis.

21 N. Florquin et al. (2020): Trade Update 2020. An Eye on Ammunition Transfers to Africa. Small Arms Survey: p. 11.

22 Ibidem: p. 23.

23 Ibidem: p. 24.

24 Ibidem: Annex A1.

25 Ibidem: p. 18.

26 Ibidem: p. 21-22.

27 Ibidem: p. 23.

28 Ibidem: p. 23.

29 Ibidem: p. 23.

Value Export USD 50–99 million	Bosnia–Herzegovina, Finland, UK, Switzerland, Serbia, France, Slovakia, Sweden
Value Export USD 10–49 million	Portugal, Hungary, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland, Denmark

Americas USD 1,847 million

Value Export ≥ USD 500 million	United States, Brazil
Value Export USD 100–499 million	Canada
Value Export USD 10–49 million	Mexico

Asia: USD 1,252 million

Value Export USD 100–499 million	South Korea, China, Turkey, Israel, Japan
Value Export USD 10–49 million	India, Taiwan, Australia, Philippines, Singapore

Africa: USD 35 million

Value Export USD 10–49 million	South Africa
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2017 Importing Countries by World Region that reported to Comtrade³⁰

1. The largest importer in 2017 of SALW and ammunition was the United States with USD 2.1 billion, which accounted for 32% of the global SALW imports. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Oman, Kuwait and Qatar together accounted for 20% of global SALW imports.³¹
2. Thirteen States accounted for 68% of the global SALW imports: United States, Saudi Arabia, Canada, UAE, Germany, Turkey, Oman, Australia, Kuwait, France, UK, Thailand and Qatar.³²
3. The main importing countries of small arms ammunition in 2017 were the United States (20%), Saudi Arabia (15%), Turkey (7%), Germany (5%), and Canada (4%).³³
4. In 2020, according to the ATF's Firearms Commerce in the United States Annual Statistical Update 2021, the United States imported 6.8 million firearms. The biggest firearms exporters to U.S. are Turkey, Austria and Brazil.³⁴
5. The Americas was the biggest region for SALW imports (USD 2.5 billion) largely due to the United States (USD 2.1 billion). That region was closely followed by Asia with USD 2.3 billion in imports.

Americas: USD 2.5 billion

Value Imports ≥ USD 500 million	United States
Value Imports USD 10–49 million	Mexico, Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, Honduras, Chile, Guatemala, Peru

Asia: USD 2.3 billion

Value Imports USD 100–499 million	Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Oman, Australia, Kuwait, Thailand, Qatar
Value Imports USD 50–99 million	Indonesia, Philippines, Israel, Jordan, Iraq

³⁰ Ibidem: p. 28-31.

³¹ Ibidem: p. 11.

³² Ibidem: p. 28.

³³ Ibidem: p. 23.

³⁴ See also P. Mosendz et al. (2018): "[How foreign guns invaded the U.S.](#)," Bloomberg, 27 November 2018.

Value Imports USD 10-49 million	Pakistan, Afghanistan, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Lebanon, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, India, China
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Europe: USD 1.5 billion

Value Imports USD 100-499 million	Germany, France, UK
Value Imports USD 50-99 million	Belgium, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Italy
Value Imports USD 10-49 million	Norway, Czech Rep., Slovakia, Denmark, Portugal, Russia, Estonia, Croatia, Finland, Ukraine, Serbia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Luxembourg

Africa: 230 million

Value Imports USD 10-49 million	South Africa, Morocco, Kenya, Angola, Sudan, Tunisia, Ghana, Senegal, Egypt
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(May 8, 2021) Thousands of illicit weapons interdicted by guided-missile cruiser USS Monterey (CG 61) from a stateless dhow in international waters of the North Arabian Sea on May 6-7. Maritime security operations, as conducted by the U.S. Fifth Fleet, entail routine patrols to determine pattern of life in the maritime as well as to enhance mariner-to-mariner relations. These operations reassure allies and partners and preserve freedom of navigation and free flow of commerce. (U.S. Navy Photo)

SOURCE: US NAVY

3. DESCRIBING THE SCALE OF SALW VIOLENCE

To measure the level of violence in a country one useable indicator is “violent deaths”, which is an important indicator of the most serious and irreversible harm. However, the number of “violent deaths” is not the same as the number of deaths resulting from armed violence or gun violence and from the other misuses of SALW by different types of actors. For instance, there are other serious violations of human rights such as torture, rape, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and enforced displacements that need to be considered when considering the number of violent acts, some of which result from state repression contrary to human rights law and also from terrorist attacks and organised and other violent crime. But in many instances reliable comprehensive international statistical data is lacking.³⁵

For example, reliable data on the global scale of firearms injuries is not available. Yet country studies indicate that for every one person killed with a firearm, there might be many more people who suffer gunshot injuries, many of which are life changing. A 2020 U.S. study found that in the United States between 2009 and 2017 an average of 34,538 deaths per year were caused with firearms, while each year an average of 85,694 nonfatal firearm injuries were estimated.³⁶ The study estimated there were 94 fatal injuries with firearms per day compared to 234 nonfatal injuries with firearms per day.

3.1 Estimating Global Violent Deaths

At international level, data on intentional homicides are routinely collected and disseminated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Health Organization. Several regional organizations collect and disseminate homicide data, especially in the Americas (OAS and IDB) and in Europe (Eurostat). The [Global Violent Deaths database](#) is maintained by the Small Arms Survey (SAS). Data is retrieved from amongst others the [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#) (UCPD) and the [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project](#) (ACLED) as well as UN databases. Global violent deaths include intentional homicides, conflict-related deaths, unintentional homicides and legal interventions.³⁷ The latest data covers the year 2018.

A new initiative is the [Global Registry of Violent Deaths](#) (GReVD) which is described to become a “database of every violent death coded by time and location”. The plan is that it will be maintained by a consortium of global experts and recognises the need for “new coding standards, innovations in human and machine coding and increased precision of coding”.³⁸

There is no common definition of “violent deaths”. While most agree that the notion covers (intentional) homicides,³⁹ there are many other forms of violent deaths that should be taken into account to generate meaningful statistics.⁴⁰ This briefing uses “death” as an indicator of the most serious and irreversible harm. However, the focus on “death” as an indicator accounts for the less comprehensive availability of data and statistics of these other forms of harm. As mentioned above and for the understanding of the data discussed

35 See also M. Kisielewski et al. (2010): *Statistical Approaches to Developing Indicators of Armed Violence*. Geneva: Technical paper prepared by StatAid for Small Arms Survey.

36 E.J. Kaufman et al. (2020): “[Epidemiologic Trends in Fatal and Nonfatal Firearm Injuries in the US, 2009-2017](#),” *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 181 (2021) 2: 237-244.

37 G. Hideg, et al. (2021): [Still not there. Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30](#), Small Arms Survey.

38 GReVD, [A Global Registry of Violent Deaths](#).

39 Cf. e.g. Global Registry of Violent Deaths (GReVD) (2020): [What are Violent Deaths?](#), GReVD Brief #2, February 2020; Geneva Declaration (2008): [Global Burden of Armed Violence](#), p. 68.

40 For a discussion of the need to incorporate other forms of violent deaths (battle-related deaths, one-sided violence, legal intervention deaths) in the statistics among other problems with the data on violent deaths, see: Rachel Kleinfeld (2017): *Reducing All Violent Deaths, Everywhere: Why the Data Must Improve*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

below, it is important to note that one cannot equate the total “violent deaths” with the total number of deaths resulting from armed violence and gun violence, or from other misuses of SALW.

The SAS estimated that in 2018 a total of 596,000 people died a violent death which was a lower violent death rate per 100,000 population than any of the years in the period 2012–2017.⁴¹ In 2018 about 223,000 of those violent deaths were attributable to firearm-induced injuries. The global rate of firearm killings was 2.93 per 100,000 population which was according to SAS the lowest rate since 2011. The rate of firearms killings varies greatly across the world’s regions. It is estimated that every four in ten violent deaths (38 per cent) were inflicted by firearms globally, most frequently in the Americas.⁴²

Estimating Homicides with Firearms

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) a valuable source for intentional homicides are police records. To enhance cross-country data comparability the UNODC has developed the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes framework. Unfortunately, “many countries are in the early stages of adopting the framework, and police data in many countries continue to reflect differing legal provisions, making it difficult to aggregate and compare data across countries.”⁴³ Additional homicide data is retrieved by UNODC from the WHO Mortality Database. The latest estimates of the UNODC Global Study on Homicide 2019 only cover the year 2017.

According to the UNODC data estimates for 2017, 54% of the global total of intentional homicides were committed with firearms. In the Americas firearms were involved in roughly three quarters of those homicides in 2017, while in Europe firearms are involved in just 20% of all homicides. However, data estimates for Asia is poor, and for many African countries either poor or non-existent.⁴⁴ In the latter case UNODC speaks of “low coverage of actual data in Africa”, “under-coverage are likely to occur in jurisdictions with poor recording systems, as is the case in some countries in Western, Eastern and Middle Africa”, and “Data of low quality ... predominantly come from African and Asian countries where larger discrepancies in homicide counts between criminal justice and public health data were found (sometimes higher than 30 per cent), while lower discrepancies (often below 5 per cent) were found in most countries in the Americas and Europe”.⁴⁵

Thus, statements as these “(I)n absolute terms firearm homicides in the Americas alone accounted for roughly a quarter of all homicides worldwide, while homicides in Africa perpetrated using firearms constituted approximately one seventh of the global total” need to be approached cautiously.⁴⁶

According to the Small Arms Survey’s Global Violent Deaths (GVD) database some 409,000 people were the victims of intentional homicides in 2018.⁴⁷ This estimated total gives on average a global intentional homicide rate of 5.36 per 100,000 population.⁴⁸ However, the GVD database does not provide data on how many intentional homicides were committed by using a firearm.

UNODC identifies three factors which appear to explain the global variability in the rate of homicide perpetrated using firearms: income inequality, the proportion of youth among the general population, and

41 G. Hideg, et al. (2021): Still not there. Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30. Small Arms Survey: p. 4.

42 G. Hideg, et al. (2021): Still not there. Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30. Small Arms Survey: p. 9.

43 L. Dahlberg, et al. (2022): “[Firearm Injuries and Public Health](#),” Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Global Public Health.

44 UNODC (2019): Global Study on Homicide 2019 – booklet 2.

45 UNODC (2019): Methodological Annex to The Global Study on Homicide 2019.

46 UNODC (2019): Global Study on Homicide 2019 – booklet 3.

47 The category of “intentional homicides” excludes killings related to armed conflict and war, self-inflicted death (suicide), killings due to legal interventions and justifiable homicide (such as self-defence), and from deaths caused by reckless or negligent actions, which were not intended to take a human life (non-intentional homicide).

48 G. Hideg, et al. (2021): Still not there. Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30. Small Arms Survey: p. 4.

the rate of civilian-held firearms per person. UNODC argues that income inequality influences the rate of homicide perpetrated using firearms more than the rate of civilian-held firearms per person because UNODC finds that in developed countries, a 1 per cent increase in the rate of possession of firearms is accompanied by a 0.74 per cent increase in the rate of firearm homicides, while in developing countries that 1 per cent increase in the rate of possession of firearms is accompanied by a 1.13 per cent increase in the rate of firearm homicides.⁴⁹

Similarly, the UNODC has found that age can strongly influence homicide trends. However, “effect of age is only observable in the absence of other important factors that raise homicide levels. It is estimated that each increase of 1 per cent in the proportion of the population aged 15 to 29 years translates, on average, into a 4.6 per cent increase in the homicide rate (if macro-level socioeconomic factors, such as economic development, inequality and urbanization are taken into consideration)”.⁵⁰

A 2021 U.S. study found that guns make violent situations more lethal. They also found that guns used in violent crime have become deadlier over time due to use of higher-capacity, large-calibre semiautomatic pistols.⁵¹

A 2013 U.S. study found a correlation “between the legislative strength of a state’s firearm laws—as measured by a higher number of laws—and a lower rate of firearm fatalities”, but “we could not determine if the greater number of laws were the reason for the reduced fatality rates. The association could have been confounded by firearm ownership rates or other unaccounted factors”.⁵²

Estimating Gender-based Violent Deaths

The diverse nature of gender violence has been discussed above. The data collected on different types of gender-based violent deaths is still limited. According to the SAS Global Violent Deaths database, men are more likely to become victims of lethal violence. Their estimates are that of the 596,000 people violently killed globally 84% of all victims were boys and men in 2018, while 16% of the total were girls and women. Of the global total of 223,200 people estimated to have been killed with a firearm in 2018, 92% were males. The rate for female victims in 2018 was 2.48 per 100,000 women which was the second-lowest registered since 2004. Globally 17,200 women were killed with a firearm in 2018.⁵³

Due to a lack of data the UNODC Global Study on Homicide does not address homicides involving firearms by situational context on a global scale. Data estimates from the UNODC Global Study on Homicide shows that 90% of all homicides recorded worldwide were committed by male perpetrators. In Asia and Europe, 60 to 80% of homicide perpetrators were under the age of 30 years, while in the Americas nearly all homicide perpetrators were below that age. While at the global level males aged 15–29 are at the highest risk of homicide, the higher the overall homicide rate within a country, the higher the proportion of male victims out of all recorded homicide victims. In certain high-homicide countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, male victims outnumber female victims by a factor of 10:1 or more.⁵⁴

The UNODC Global Study on Homicide estimated that for the year 2017 87,000 women that were intentionally killed, and 58% (50,000) of those women were killed by intimate partners or other family members. However, the data does not record the proportion of these killings carried out with firearms. The UNODC data also

49 UNODC (2019): Global Study on Homicide 2019 - booklet 3.

50 UNODC (2019): Global Study on Homicide 2019 - booklet 3.

51 A.A. Braga et al. (2021): “[Firearm Instrumentality: Do Guns Make Violent Situations More Lethal?](#)” Annual Review of Criminology (2021) 4:1, 147-164.

52 E.W. Fleegler et al. (2013): “[Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Fatalities in the United States](#),” JAMA Internal Medicine, 173 (2013) 9:732–740.

53 G. Hideg, et al. (2021): Still not there. Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30. Small Arms Survey: p. 3.

54 UNODC (2019): Global Study on Homicide 2019 - booklet 2.

indicates that at the global level only one out of every five homicides are perpetrated by an intimate partner or other family member, not counting firearms-related killings. Asia accounted for the largest number of all women killed worldwide by intimate partners or other family members in 2017, with an estimated 20,000 victims. Nevertheless, statistically women in Africa run a greater risk of being killed by an intimate partner or other family member than women in Asia, because of Africa's smaller population. The risk is lowest in Europe (0.7 per 100,000 female population).⁵⁵

Estimating Intentional self-harm with firearms

"Vital registration systems", which are civil registration and vital statistics databases registering births and deaths, are recognized by WHO as providing the most accurate counts of death. "Vital registration data provided to the WHO by its member states are collated in the WHO Mortality Database. However, as of March 2018, only 116 countries had submitted any vital registration data from 1998 to 2015, and of these countries, only 68 countries had data with enough completeness to be considered high quality."⁵⁶

Such incomplete estimates by the WHO indicate that across the globe approximately 68,000 persons died each year of suicide involving the use of a firearm. In the United States and Greenland more people died from suicide involving a firearm than from the number of people who died from homicide involving a firearm.⁵⁷ According to FBI data in 2018, 16,214 homicides were committed in the United States⁵⁸, while 24,432 suicides by firearm had been committed in the United States.⁵⁹

Estimating "Legal Intervention Deaths"

The Small Arms Survey researchers also try to estimate what they call "legal intervention deaths" which are defined as the 'killing of civilians by law enforcement officials, or killings of law enforcement officials on duty'⁶⁰ The Small Arms Survey reports a very uneven reporting of legal intervention deaths which leads to under-estimation. Also "the boundaries between legal intervention fatalities and extrajudicial killings by security forces are also blurred, further complicating these estimations. Trends in unintentional homicides depend largely on legal definitions and the codification of relevant indicators, which vary widely across states".⁶¹ The Global Violent Deaths database for the year 2018 estimates 82,000 people were either unintentional homicides or legal interventions deaths.

3.2 Organized Crime and Terrorism

The UNODC (2019) has found correlations that show: countries that have the largest share of male homicide victims among their victim populations, are generally the same group of countries that report a large share of homicides related to organized crime or gangs, and many of the countries that reported a large share of homicides related to gangs and organized crime also appear among the countries with the largest shares of firearm homicides.⁶²

Most of these countries are located in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, these correlations have to be viewed with the caveat from UNODC that just "a few countries provided UNODC with data on homicides

55 UNODC (2019): Global Study on Homicide 2019 - booklet 3.

56 L. Dahlberg, et al. (2022): "[Firearm Injuries and Public Health](#)." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Global Public Health.

57 L. Dahlberg, et al. (2022): "[Firearm Injuries and Public Health](#)." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Global Public Health.

58 FBI (undated): [Crime in the U.S. 2018 – Murder](#).

59 D.M. Studdert et al. (2020): "[Handgun Ownership and Suicide in California](#)." The New England Journal of Medicine, 382: 2220-2229.

60 Small Arms Survey (2021): Still Not There: Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30. Briefing Paper: footnote 32.

61 Small Arms Survey (2021): Still Not There: Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30. Briefing Paper: footnote 14.

62 UNODC (2019): 2019 UNODC Global Study on Homicide - booklet 3.

known to be related to organized crime and gang activity.”⁶³ There are several factors that explain why individuals get involved in organized crime and extremism. A 2017 study on the factors that drive individuals to join extremist groups in Africa, notably refers to repressive “government action” as the predominant “tipping point” leading individuals to enter violent extremist groups.⁶⁴ Other factors identified include childhood experiences, education, perceptions about religion and the individuals’ economic situation.⁶⁵

Terrorists and organized criminal groups continue to exploit and benefit from a lack of good governance and rule of law, porous borders, high levels of corruption, weak democratic institutions and poor criminal justice systems. In order to detect and prevent the movement of illicit small arms and light weapons across borders effectively, States should develop and implement comprehensive border security and management strategies and engage all relevant national agencies effectively.⁶⁶



(Feb. 12, 2021) The guided-missile destroyer USS Winston S. Churchill (DDG 81), in accordance with international law, boarded a stateless dhow off of Somalia and interdicted an illicit shipment of weapons and weapon components, Feb. 12. Maritime security operations, as conducted by the U.S. 5th Fleet, entail routine patrols to determine pattern of life in the maritime environment as well as to enhance mariner-to-mariner relations. These operations reassure allies and partners and preserve freedom of navigation and free flow of commerce.

SOURCE: US DoD (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Louis Thompson Staats IV)

⁶³ UNODC (2019): 2019 UNODC Global Study on Homicide - booklet 3, p. 44.

⁶⁴ UNDP, Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment, p. 5.

⁶⁵ UNDP, Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the Tipping Point for Recruitment, p. 4 and 5.

⁶⁶ Small arms and light weapons - Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/839, 30 September 2021: p. 40-42.

3.3 Estimating Conflict-related Deaths

The term 'conflict-related deaths' has been used by researchers to refer to the number of people who have died violently during armed conflict.⁶⁷ Data on conflict-related deaths are characterised by large variability due to uncertainty of estimates. In general, no national data sources exist on conflict-related deaths, as the normal registration systems of governments are heavily affected by war operations. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded 69,276 civilian deaths in only 12 of the world's deadliest armed conflicts between 2018 and 2020. The records were from armed conflicts in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, State of Palestine and Israel, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen.⁶⁸ However, this OHCHR figure may vary from other UN civilian casualty figures due to the methodology used that build on UN casualty data by integrating new data sources.

Two large-scale data-collection projects on conflict-related events have been developed by non-State research organisations. The [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#) (UCPD) incorporates several datasets on "organised violence", and distinguishes three types of such violence: state-based conflict, non-state conflicts and one-sided violence. For the year 2018 UCPD reported 52 active 'state-based armed conflicts, 76 'non-state conflicts' and 32 cases of one-sided violence worldwide. However, UCPD only records those events which have at least 25 fatalities in a year.

The [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project](#) (ACLED) records various forms of political violence and demonstrations around the world. ACLED categorizes these events as battles, explosions/remote violence, and violence against civilians, as well as mob violence. Demonstrations include protests, as well as all events coded as violent demonstration. Only reported fatalities are included – not injuries or other harm. As ACLED notes "Fatality numbers are frequently the most biased and poorly reported component of conflict data. Conflict actors may overstate or under-report fatalities to appear strong to the opposition or to minimize international backlash against the state involved. Fatality counts are also limited by the challenges of collecting exact data mid-conflict".⁶⁹

The Uppsala University's Conflict Data (UCPD) program defines "conflict deaths" as (a) 'battle-related deaths': the use of armed force between warring parties in a conflict dyad, be it state-based or non-state, resulting in deaths; as well as (b) 'one-sided armed violence': the deliberate use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organised group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths in a year.⁷⁰ For the Uppsala research program these two categories exclude extrajudicial killings in government facilities, indirect fatalities of armed violence, and any killings totalling less than 25 deaths.

UCDP noted a record-high number of 56 state-based conflicts in 2020, including eight wars, resulting in 49,828 fatalities. Most of the conflicts occurred in Africa, as the region registered 30 state-based conflicts, including nine new or restarted ones.⁷¹ UCDP also registered 72 different non-state conflicts in 2020; in total, these conflicts resulted in at least 23,570 fatalities. The Americas have replaced the Middle East as the worst hit region; Mexico is now driving the trend in non-state conflict, as the country witnessed almost 16,400, or 71%, of the global fatalities in 2020 UCDP recorded 39 actors carrying out one-sided violence in 2020 with almost 7,700 intentional killings of civilians.⁷²

67 I. Pavesi (2017): Tracking conflict-related deaths. A preliminary overview of monitoring systems. Small Arms Survey: p. 4.

68 United Nations Economic and Social Council (2021): Report of the Secretary General on Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, E/2021/58, 30 April 2021.

69 ACLED (2022): ACLED 2021: the year in review.

70 [UCDP definitions](#).

71 T. Pettersson, et al. (2021): "[Organized violence 1989-2020, with a special emphasis on Syria](#)." Journal of Peace Research 58(4).

72 T. Pettersson, et al. (2021): "[Organized violence 1989-2020, with a special emphasis on Syria](#)." Journal of Peace Research 58(4).

In total UCDP recorded 80,100 deaths in organized violence in 2020. However, the totals should be treated with caution. Uppsala's definition of 'one-sided violence' and 'battle-related deaths' only includes results where there are at least 25 deaths in a year. In addition, only events which have been publicly reported are recorded, extrajudicial killings are not included, indirect fatalities of armed violence are excluded.⁷³

Using the Uppsala conflict data, and the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) the SAS Global Violent Death database estimates that in 2018 some 105,000 fatalities were conflict related deaths. However, the monitoring of conflict-related deaths is still hampered by the lack of common definitions and gaps in the standardization of data collection and the verification and disaggregation of data.⁷⁴ A major problem appears to be the under-recording of conflict-related deaths.⁷⁵

The lack of common definitions and gaps in the standardization of data collection and the verification and disaggregation of data leads to under-recording, but makes comparison between conflicts, countries and regions very difficult if not highly misleading in some cases. Examples of such difficulties are shown by the following figures:

(a) For 2020 the Uppsala Conflict Data Program estimated that there has been a global total of 81,447 conflict related deaths, including 73,398 battle-related deaths and 8,049 one-sided violence deaths. Africa is currently suffering mainly from one-sided violence, in other words in killings from the actions of state repression and armed group attacks. Of the almost 7,700 intentional killings of civilians documented in 2020, nearly 7,000 occurred in Africa.⁷⁶

(b) According to United Nations Statistics Division it is estimated that 5 civilians per 100,000 people were killed globally in armed conflicts during 2020 – that is an estimated 390,000 civilian deaths. One in seven of those civilian deaths were women or children. Furthermore, it is estimated that, of the total estimated 390,000 civilian deaths in armed conflicts, 27% (105,300) were killed with small arms and light weapons.⁷⁷

The 12 deadliest conflicts between 2015 and 2020, according to the UN statisticians, were those in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Libya, Mali, State of Palestine and Israel, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen. In these 12 conflicts between 2015 and 2020 the UN agencies recorded at least 176,095 civilian deaths, or approximately 2,900 civilian deaths per conflict per year, which was an obvious under-recording of civilian deaths compared to the UN's estimated 390,000 civilians in 2020 alone. Globally the estimated annual number of civilian deaths decreased by 61 per cent over this period according to United Nations Statistics Division. However, in sub-Saharan Africa (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan), civilian deaths in conflicts over the period 2015–2020 increased by 66 per cent.⁷⁸

A recent study published in 2020 estimated that the global number of civilian deaths indirectly attributable to armed conflict between 1990 and 2017 was roughly 30 million.⁷⁹

73 [UCDP methodology](#).

74 G. Hideg, et al. (2021): Still not there. Global Violent Deaths Scenarios, 2019–30. Small Arms Survey: p. 5.

75 Geneva Declaration (2008): The Global Burden of Armed Violence.

76 T. Pettersson, et al. (2021): "[Organized violence 1989-2020, with a special emphasis on Syria](#)." Journal of Peace Research 58(4).

77 United Nations (2021): The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021. United Nations Statistics Division: p. 59.

78 United Nations (2021): The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021. United Nations Statistics Division: p. 59; United Nations Statistics Division (2021): [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021: Extended Report – Goal 16](#): p. 5.

79 M. Jawad et al. (2020): "[Estimating indirect mortality impacts of armed conflict in civilian populations: panel regression analyses of 193 countries, 1990-2017](#)." BMC Med 18, 266 (2020).

3.4 Estimates on Forced Displacement of Populations

A growing global problem is the use of armed force and armed violence to forcibly displace populations and to cause people to flee their home countries as refugees and asylum seekers. The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, reported that by May of 2022 100 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.⁸⁰ This included at least 32 million refugees, 59 million internally displaced people, and 4.1 million asylum seekers. In 2021 some 14 million new displacements occurred. UNHCR estimated that in 2020 47% of all refugees were women and girls, and on average 52% of all IDP's were women and girls.⁸¹

Refugees and asylum seekers in 2020: country of origin (in millions)

Syria: 6.8	Afghanistan: 2.8	Myanmar: 1.1	Somalia: 0.9	Central African Republic: 0.6
Venezuela: 4.9	South Sudan: 2.2	DRC: 0.9	Sudan: 0.9	Eritrea: 0.6

(Source: UNHCR (2021): *Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2020*)

Turkey hosted the largest number of forcibly displaced persons with approximately 4 million Syrian refugees. Followed by Colombia with 1.7 million Venezuelan refugees, Germany with 1.5 million Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers, Pakistan and Uganda with each 1.4 million refugees.⁸²

Internally displaced persons 2020 (in millions)

Colombia: 8.3	DRC: 5.2	Somalia: 3	Ethiopia: 2.7	Sudan: 2.6
Syria: 6.7	Yemen: 4	Afghanistan: 2.9	Nigeria: 2.6	South Sudan: 1.6

(Source: UNHCR (2021): *Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2020*)

4. Concluding remarks

There is no doubt, as this briefing shows, that the international community of States needs to considerably improve the recording and reporting of data to measure all forms of SALW proliferation as well as the incidence and patterns of violence committed with SALW by various types of actors. A major problem is that many governments have been failing to collect and make available accurate data to develop measures that will effectively counter the avenues of proliferation and types of misuse. Each country has primary responsibility for collecting accurate data and issuing reliable reports on that data, yet many countries lack sufficient resources to do so and, furthermore, some governments prefer not to publish meaningful data.

Statistics can be flawed, due to errors in collection, recording, or conveying. The poorest countries and territories and those affected by conflict and severe state repression are generally lagging furthest behind. One researcher commenting on the general record of governments' reporting of relevant data concluded in 2017 that: *"Failure to create comparable, accurate, reliable statistics on homicides, battle-related deaths, one-sided violence, and legal intervention deaths will maintain or worsen the international community's skewed understanding of violence."*⁸³

80 UNHCR (2022): [Ukraine, other conflicts push forcibly displaced total over 100 million for first time.](#)

81 UNHCR (2021): [Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2020](#); UNHCR: [A record 100 million people forcibly displaced worldwide.](#)

82 UNHCR (2021): [Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2020](#);

83 R. Kleinfeld (2017), *Reducing All Violent Deaths, Everywhere: Why the Data Must Improve*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

UNODC and WHO have been working together with the UN Statistics Division and other UN agencies to harmonize data and procedures to produce joint UNODC-WHO homicide estimates at country, regional and global level. The OHCHR has been attempting to provide verified estimates of conflict-related deaths. However, as the UNODC reported in 2019, *“There is still a need for comprehensive data to improve understanding of the scale of homicidal violence in Africa and parts of Asia, and for more refined disaggregation of homicide statistics around the globe.”*⁸⁴

To improve the quality of crime data the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS), has been developed under guidance of the UNODC. Its use by States, as an international statistical standard for data collection and as an analytical tool to elicit unique information on crime drivers and factors, is endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.⁸⁵

To conduct comprehensive and detailed analyses UNODC and WHO recommend States to collect data on a wide range of disaggregating variables as additional descriptors of intentional homicide or conflict related deaths:

- On intentional homicide, possible disaggregation include: the sex and age of victims and perpetrators; the relationship between victims and perpetrators (intimate partner, other family members, acquaintances, etc.); the means of perpetration (firearm, blunt object, etc.); and by region; and by population group; etc.
- On conflict-related deaths, possible disaggregation include: the sex and age of victims; the population group of victims; the sex and age of the perpetrators (where possible); the means of death (firearm, explosive device, artillery/heavy weaponry, unmanned aerial vehicle, etc.) and the civilian versus military status of the victims.

In addition:

IANSA calls for the following measures to improve relevant data:

- Governments should invest in the use of vital registration systems to register births and deaths, and fully implement the use of the ICCS crime data system developed by UNODC.
- Consistent registration by governments of fatal and non-fatal injuries of SALW violence is urgently needed.
- Statistical data collected by States should be made accessible by governmental agencies for researchers conducting analytical surveys.
- Governments should adopt freedom of information laws, as recommended by the UN Secretary-General and UN agencies, including on extra-judicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances and other serious human rights violations.
- States should report regularly on all their international trade in SALW and related ammunition, parts and components to the UN Comtrade.

⁸⁴ UNODC (2019): [UN Global Study on Homicide 2019](#), Booklet 1: p. 38.

⁸⁵ UNODC: [The International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes](#) (ICCS).

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