



Forum: First Committee (Disarmament and International Security)

Question of: Regulating gun laws with special focus on firearm trafficking

Student Officer: Neele Schrader

E-Mail: firstcommittee@gym-meiendorf.de

I. Description of the Issue

As the term “trafficking” entails an illegal trade practice, the question of defining the issue partly explains itself as such. Meaning that firearms, which according to the FRT (Firearms Referencing Table), a computerized database recognized by the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) includes arms such as;

- Revolvers
- Pistols
- Shotguns
- Rifles and/or Carbines
- Assault rifles
- Sub-machine guns
- And Machine Guns.

The illegal trade of such is a complex issue which is why it’s a challenge to eliminate as the regulation with laws and law enforcement does not solely have to be sound on a national level, but also on an international level, which is why cooperation between nations and uniformity in laws and regulations can be/are essential, as trafficking of firearms often also occurs between borders and states. It’s an issue with a multitude of severe implications in regards to human rights and public safety, that affect millions of people globally, according to Amnesty International more than 500 people die daily due to gun violence and just between 2012 and 2016, 1.4 million deaths were reported that had been caused by firearms. The reality of these numbers give cause to worry, which is why the global community has committed to not only reducing the numbers of illegal firearm trafficking until 2030 with the SDG target 16.4 but also to reduce the extent of violence and deaths caused by such violence with the SDG target 16.1, in this case violence executed with firearms, to connect the context



of the two, it is important to name that 44% of all homicides involve gun violence. An important act to minimize these numbers is to regulate gun laws and add to those already in place, as it is of great importance to solve this issue.

II. Definition of Key Terms

- **SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons):** This term is of importance since it's an abbreviation for the most common category of trafficked weapons and their parts, this category includes small guns that are easy to use and light in weight making them portable, examples of them are e.g., rifles and pistols.
- **Transit country:** The states through which the firearms, with all of their parts, passed through on their way to the final destination. Between a source and a destination country, there may be more than one transit country.
- **Altered markings:** Weapon markings that have been altered, destroyed, or erased in order to contribute a firearm unrecognizable.
- **Assembled arms:** Any weapons that have been unlawfully assembled from a variety of industrially produced parts and components without going through an official industrial procedure.
- **Firearm:** Any portable barreled weapon that fires a shot, bullet, or projectile, or that may easily be modified to do so by the use of an explosive.

III. Background Information

Location and Reasons of/for Firearm trafficking

Generally speaking, firearms are being trafficked all over the world, but especially in regions of conflict and crisis firearm trafficking is very common, to inform oneself on which nations and regions of the world are especially affected by the issue, delegates can check the headline IV. or should do further research on their own country.



However, there is a variety of reasons for why firearm trafficking is so popular, especially in regions in crises or political instability, this can be explained by the usual lack of personal security either by a lack of law enforcement or already existing gaps in regard to gun policies, which can further increase mistrust in the state leading to an overall increase in the craving for self-defense options, giving citizens the feeling of having to protect themselves from threatening dangers. On another note, the trafficking of firearms is in most cases tied to organized crime, as it is an illegal activity, even if the purchase of illegal firearms stems from a feeling unsafe, the reciprocator as well as the final owner/s of said firearms are entangled in illegal activity, as there's a misuse in purpose of these arms, leading to harm that can potentially endanger many. Dropping in on organized crime, a primary reason for trafficking is for profit, as significant financial gain can be pulled from illicit trade in support of other illegal causes such as but not limited to criminals engaged in drug trafficking, robberies and generally to supply the demand for arms on the black market. Oftentimes the variety of reasons intertwine with one another, such as with the following: terrorism/extremism and armed conflicts. Both reasons base themselves on the same tactics and reasons, for one the supply of weapons, as especially with terrorist organizations there is the obvious issue of supplying the weapons they intend to need for their purposes in a legal way. The base on which armed conflicts and terrorist action share their requirement for illegal arms is in the tactic. Leaving opposed groups clueless of the amount in supply or existence of firearms as a whole is a tactic that greatly supports their causes.

Statistics on Gun violence

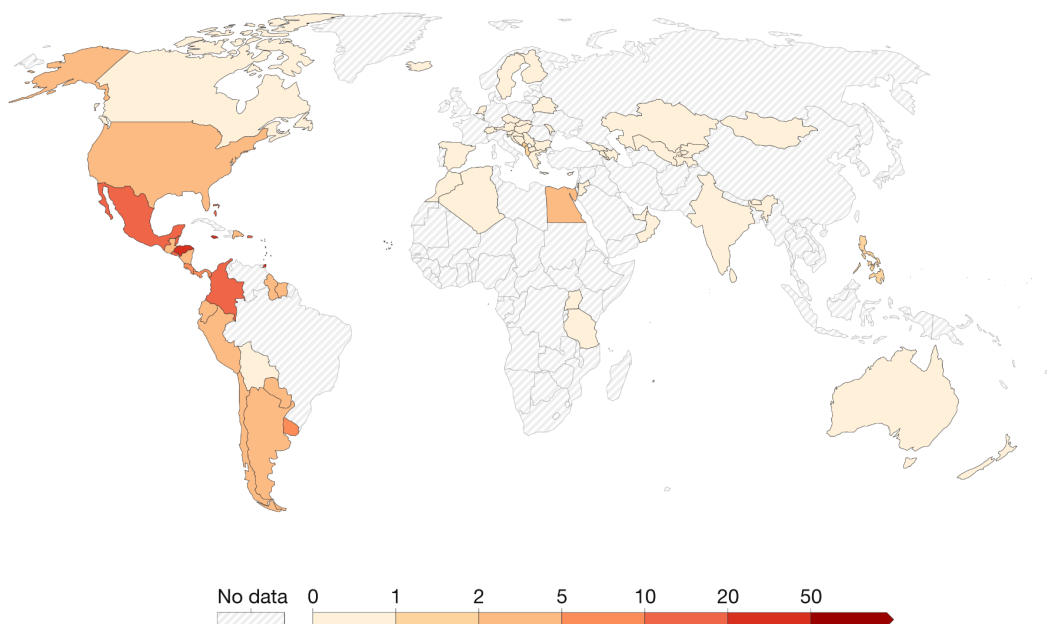
Gun violence is the cause of many unnecessary deaths every year, and easy access to firearms, whether illegal or legal is the reason for this, which is why to showcase the consequences of the issue which is trafficking of firearms and inadequate gun laws it is necessary to take a look at gun violence as a result of said issue. To recall and as already stated earlier, 500 people die every single day because of firearms which in total, between the years of 2012 to 2016 adds up to 1,4 million firearm-related deaths. And these are just the death-related incidents, as the number of injuries is way higher, the estimated number by Amnesty International is said to be at 2.000 injuries caused by firearms daily, leading to over 2 million people across the globe living with injuries caused by such. Many of the people that have been injured like this suffer from physical and/or psychological damage and trauma for



the rest of their lives. Currently the rates of injuries and deaths are not decreasing by any means, as for example in the United States of America the number of children in one year who died rose from 1,637 in 2016 to 1,814 in 2017. The topic becomes even critical when considering that especially minority groups are affected by gun violence, and that women are at particular risk of becoming victims of gun violence when it comes to intimate partners, mostly men in this case, showcasing that even gun violence is a reflection of patriarchal structures in most western societies, and that gun violence is very much so also in parts not only a security issue but also one of human rights, and contributing to better gun laws would also be contributing to gender equality.¹

Homicide rate from firearms, 2020

Homicide¹ rate from firearms, measured as the number of deaths per 100,000 people.



Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022)

OurWorldInData.org/homicides • CC BY

Note: The weapon used in homicides is not always recorded, therefore it's likely these values are an underestimate.

1. **Homicide:** The killing of a person by another with intent to cause death or injury.

2

Procedures/Tactics

¹ Source: <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/homicide-rates-from-firearms>

² Source: "Global Study on Firearms trafficking 2020" UNODC, (https://www.unodc.org/images/data-and-analysis/firearms/Factory_non_factory-01.png)

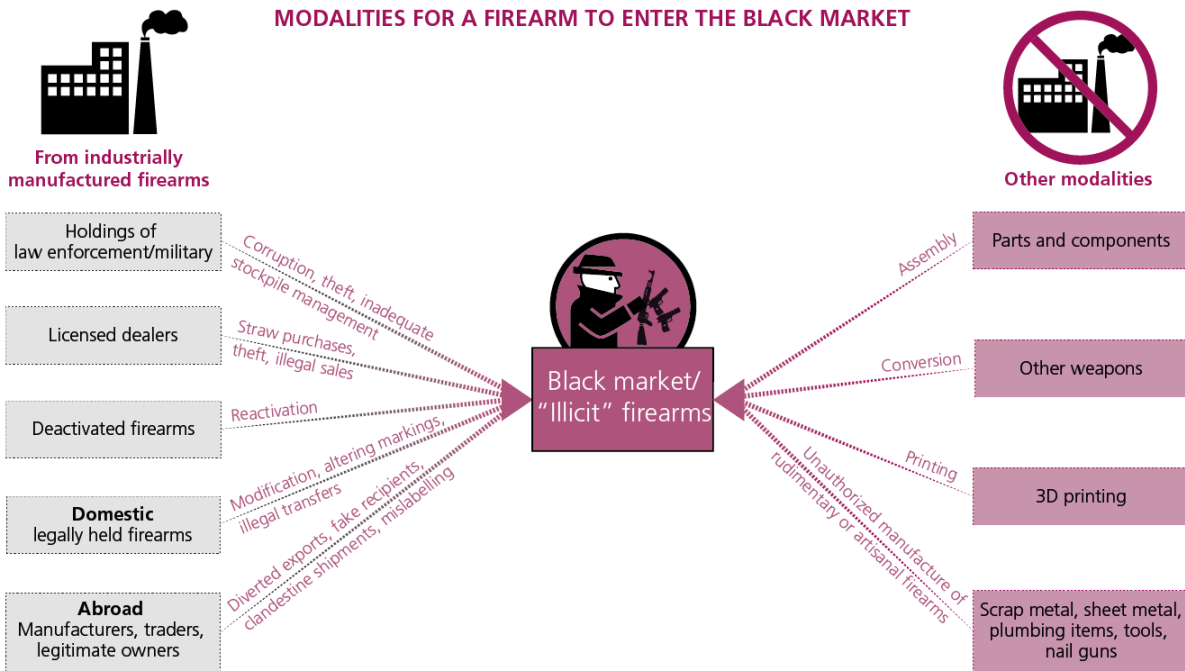


When it comes to finding fitting solutions, it is important to firstly take a look at the methods and procedures of how illegal trafficking can and does take place, these can vary from region to region as the illegal trade has to adapt to the gun laws and the law enforcement that are set in a particular country/region. The following methods are being used by both individuals and criminal organizations, they are used to avoid detection by law enforcement, take advantage of weaknesses and gaps of gun laws or law enforcement, and to increase revenue.

A common tactic is smuggling through border crossings, this is common in areas with weak control of borders, to enable passing through borders traffickers will conceal arms among legal goods or use false compartments. Traffickers in firearms make use of well-known unlawful transit channels, to avoid detection, they avoid official checkpoints and take advantage of inaccessible places or unobserved border crossings.

Another common method is for traffickers to modify semi-automatic firearms in order for them to become fully automatic, making them more lethal and increasing their revenue.

So-called “straw purchases” are especially difficult to detect as this practice entails traffickers employing intermediaries to purchase arms from licensed dealers. Lastly, another very well-known method utilized by traffickers is selling things online on the dark web, giving them the security to sell, purchase and deal with illegal firearms. Assembled arms and altered markings are also incredibly important to recognize in the conversation around strengthening gun laws and eliminating firearm trafficking, as these methods make it harder for authorities to track and keep track of firearms. The following graphic may help to get a quick and also further overview of methods used when trafficking firearms.



3

IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

- **UNODC (United Nations Office on Drug Control):** The UNODC works on combating the issue in various ways, such as enhancing states' abilities in prevention and enforcement of already existing laws, but also by providing legal assistance, statistics and data and public awareness.
- **USA:** The USA is one of the nations with the highest numbers in gun violence e.g. concerning mass shootings, the gun laws are very liberal as well.
- **Brazil:** The situation in Brazil is especially alarming since it's not only a source country of illegally traded firearms but also a transit country for illegal firearms posing a serious threat to public safety.
- **Mexico:** The proximity to the United States along with gaps in border controls allows firearms trafficking to thrive in Mexico.
- **Russia:** Similar to the situation in Brazil, Russia is a large source and transit country for firearms trafficking, firearms are being trafficked domestically and internationally, making it a pressing issue.

³ **Source:** "Global Study on Firearms trafficking 2020" UNODC, (https://www.unodc.org/images/data-and-analysis/firearms/Factory_non_factory-01.png)



- **INTERPOL:** Interpol is an organization which plays an especially important role in combating this illegal practice as they offer data and support initiatives and treaties in the fight against it.

V. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

There have been many attempts to solve the issue, one good example is the following, as it allows perspective into what can be done better in eliminating firearm trafficking, the Small Arms and Light Weapons Treaty Organization's Programme of Action (UNPoA),

The UNPoA, which was established in 2001, aims to prevent, fight, and eliminate the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW). It encourages improvement of domestic law, global collaboration, and aid to nations that are impacted. The UNPoA has helped raise awareness and enhance reporting on SALW-related issues, but its implementation has been lacking by a lack of funding and a lack of uniformity among member states' reporting capabilities.

VI. Possible Solutions

To solve the issue there are various possibilities that require initiative on a national and international level, a few of which will be discussed here. As the problem can lie in unidentifiable and mismarked arms it is firstly important to introduce universal and more clever systems that make it more difficult for traffickers to fake and modify markings, another solution that goes hand in hand is the one of targeting known trafficking networks and smuggling routes. While both of these solutions deal with the prevention of further firearm trafficking, there also need to be solutions which grasp the issue at its root. A way to do this would be to strengthen international cooperation to identify trafficking networks more quickly, but the most essential solutions are also the most obvious, enhancing and if needed making gun laws and legislations stricter and also filling gaps when it comes to border controls.



VII. Questions Delegates Should Consider during Research

- How is my country affected by the issue? Does it pose a threat on public safety?
- What can be improved regarding gun legislation?
- Is my country a transit country concerning firearm trafficking?
- How does gun violence affect everyday life?

IX. How to prepare as a Delegate?

Firstly, it's most important to think of the country you represent in relation to this topic, the questions one should ask themselves during the research process are important to answer for this. Think about how this issue affects the country you represent and also do your research on which countries are in a similar situation and with whom you might be able to form alliances in order to advocate for the actions you want to implement regarding the topic.

You will need to write at least one draft resolution and a minimum of two position papers on your topic of choice, just make sure that you have every topic covered with the three documents you are supposed to write. The deadline for you to send in all three documents is the 13th of September 2023, please remember that and make sure to send them until no later than this date.

IX. Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/55 (2016)
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/170 (2020)

IX. Useful Link

This pdf by the UNODC perfectly sums up the issue at hand as well as offers a list of vocabulary that can be important when debating and multiple graphics showcasing statistics:



- https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Firearms/2020_REPORT_Global_Study_on_Firearms_Trafficking_2020_web.pdf

XII. Sources

- UNODC, “Global Study on Firearms Trafficking 2020”, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Firearms/2020_REPORT_Global_Study_on_Firearms_Trafficking_2020_web.pdf
- OHCHR, “Arms and human rights”, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/arms-and-weapons>
- UNODC, “The firearms protocol”, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/firearms-protocol/the-firearms-protocol.html>
- OHCHR, “Human rights and the regulation of civilian acquisition, possession and use of firearms”, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/human-rights-and-regulation-civilian-acquisition-possession-and-use-firearms>
- Amnesty International, “Gun violence”, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/gun-violence/>
- UN News, “Firearms trafficking, ‘enabler and multiplier of violence’ worldwide”, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/07/1068451#:~:text=Data%20from%20cities%20in%2081,then%20half%20of%20all%20seizures.>
- UN Chronicle, “The Sustainable Development Goals and a Substantial Reduction in Illicit Arms Flows”, <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/sustainable-development-goals-and-substantial-reduction-illicit-arms-flows>
- International Action Network on Small Arms, “International Tracing Instrument”, <https://iansa.org/international-tracing-instrument-iti/>
- Global Initiative against Transnational Crime, “Arms Trafficking and organized Crime”, https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GI-TOC-policy-brief_Arms-trafficking-web-1.pdf