



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
ON SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS



THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
THE HASHEMITE
KINGDOM OF JORDAN

Regional Meeting for Middle East and North Africa „ Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons – Responsibilities, Challenges and Opportunities for Middle Eastern and North African States “

**House of Representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Wednesday 12th
November 2014, Amman**

**Organized by the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the House
of Representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**





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Participation

A total of 34 people participated including; 13 members of parliament from Burkina Faso, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mali, Morocco, Palestine, the Republic of Somaliland, Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman and Turkey; representatives from Conflict Armament Research, Kvinna till Kvinna, Saferworld and Sisterhood is Global Institute as well as the Parliamentary Forum on SALW and parliamentary staff (list of participants attached).

Host's introduction – Sufian Elhassan, Director of Research and Information, House of Representatives – Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Sufian Elhassan welcomed the participants and congratulated the Forum and the House of Representatives for their efforts to organise a meeting that addresses this important topic. He noted that there are 650 million SALW in the world today and 70% of these are in the hands of civilians. Every year 300'000 people die from the use of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and millions more are injured and maimed. States that purchase and export arms as well as the industry should be subject to mechanisms that reduce the impact of these weapons. He then gave the floor to General Secretary Peter Weiderud.

Chair's introduction – Peter Weiderud, Secretary General, Parliamentary Forum on SALW

Secretary General Peter Weiderud welcomed the participants to the third regional meeting on SALW in the MENA Region. He greeted and thanked the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and proceeded to give a brief history of the activities, goals and work of the Forum. The Forum was founded in 2002 in the Spanish Congress and today joins over 200 parliamentarians from 70 countries in Africa, Latin America, North America, Europe and the Middle East. He emphasized the role of the Forum as a platform for debate where MPs can join forces and contribute to the advancement of the SALW and armed violence reduction agenda. Peter Weiderud highlighted the fact that the Middle East is severely affected by conflicts and armed violence and the resulting brutality of groups such as the Islamic State. He explained that the focus of the seminar is the proliferation of SALW and that the role of the Parliamentary Forum is to provide a space to find ways of addressing SALW and the role that parliamentarians have in solving the problem.

Host's introduction – Ahmad Al-Safadi, Deputy Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament

Ahmad Safadi, Deputy Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament gave his welcome speech. He briefly mentioned the history of the Forum and highlighted the fact that it is the only organisation of parliamentarians that, regardless of political orientation and region of origin, unifies all parliamentary efforts against armed violence. Ahmad Safadi emphasized the role of parliamentarians in ratifying instruments, creating new laws and generating public awareness. He



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highlighted the expertise of the Forum in helping parliamentarians in the task to enact public legislation and develop relationships with other parliamentarians seeking to tackle the problem of SALW. He also mentioned that a fundamental task is to monitor weapons, prevent and limit the use of them, reduce the number of weapons in hands of civilians and work to limit armed violence in our societies. He finished his message by welcoming everyone to the Houses of the Parliament and wishing everyone a safe trip back to their countries of origin.

Sufian Elhassan closed the session and opened for a photo and a coffee break.

First session: Arms Proliferation and the Present Crisis in the Region – Shawn Harris, Associate Field Investigator, Conflict Armament Research

Introduced by MP Ala Talabani, President of the Parliamentary Forum on SALW

MP Talabani greeted and thanked the Jordanian Parliament for their cooperation and support in organising the meeting. She introduced the topic and emphasized the magnitude of the problem



that trafficking of SALW in the region represents. She called on parliamentarians to increase oversight over arms production, trade, export and purchase made by governments, mentioning the historical obligation parliamentarians have in this task. MP Talabani used her own home country Iraq as an example of the chaos and problems that the unregulated flow of SALW brings to society, development and security of the people, making it easy for groups like ISIS to exist and spread across

borders. Lastly she concluded that the main issue is the availability of SALW in the hands of civilians which facilitates the creation of groups like ISIS/DASH. She gave the floor to Shawn Harris.

Shawn Harris is the Associate Field Investigator at Conflict Armament Research and the lead investigator for the case of ammunitions captured from ISIS/DASH in Northern Syria and Iraq. Mr. Harris explained the work of CAR which serves three main purposes 1) to produce physical evidence in the form of qualitative and quantitative data of the weapons and ammunition being used in conflict zones 2) to brief and advise policy-makers on how to better counter the illicit trafficking of conventional munitions and 3) when appropriate, to share information regarding the presence and movement of weapons and ammunition to and from these conflicts on a public portal funded by the European Union called iTrace.

Mr. Harris explained that CAR forensically documents ammunition and SALW worldwide used in real time and that CAR has been documenting ammunition used by ISIS/DASH since July 2014



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and can document cases in as little as 24 hours after their capture. The organisation has to date documented over 130,000 weapons and rounds of ammunition since starting operations of this project four months ago.

Five key findings have been established after four months of tracing and documenting efforts. First, serial numbers on some weapons have been welded off, showing some level of awareness as to the value of using serial numbers. Second, some weapons had secondary serial numbers added in a fashion that shows different levels of skills, from amateur to very professional engraving. Third, the extensive area of documentation has revealed significant movement in Islamic State munitions within its area of control. Fourth, the documented ammunition is widely diverse in terms of country and year of manufacture. CAR has documented ammunition manufactured as early as 1945 to as recent as this year from 21 different countries. This would suggest a diverse array of suppliers to the Islamic State forces. Fifth, most of these documented weapons and ammunition are of Soviet, Chinese and American origin, which is explained by the advancements by ISIS/DASH forces on munition supplies in Mosul and various Syrian Regime stockpiles.



President Ala Talabani, Shawn Harris

Parliamentary interventions:

MP Ala Talabani, President of the Parliamentary Forum outlined the situation in Iraq regarding the proliferation of SALW and stressed the importance of oversight and ensuring transparency at all stages of weapons transfers. She said that the major challenge is to make the government accountable for its decisions regarding weapons transfers and weapons trafficking. She mentioned the fact that parliamentarians have tools to implement monitoring as well as making information about procurement processes available to the public.



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Mrs Talabani insisted that governments have to sign and ratify international treaties and agreements in order to limit and ban the uncontrolled procurement of weapons. She also asked why countries like Israel or Jordan have not signed these treaties yet, and called on parliamentarians to pressure their respective states to sign and ratify these international instruments. MP Talabani further elaborated on the problem of SALW after the Arab Spring. The instability and the emergence of groups such as ISIS/DASH are pushing people to arm themselves to face the lack of security in their regions. She mentioned the fact that nowadays in Iraq is possible to purchase weapons on Facebook, where weapons dealers publish their offers, location and products as well as telephone numbers and names. SALW are available for everybody without need for a license or permit.

This issue, combined with the facts that young people lack opportunities for education and jobs as well as a general lack of infrastructure, makes groups like ISIS a serious option for the young population in the region. At the same time, leaders are calling on the same young population to join in the fight against ISIS, inciting and providing them with weapons. Mrs Talabani once again stressed the need for major parliamentary involvement in the crisis, creation of special committees to increase transparency and raising government responsibility and responsiveness to the problem of weapons trafficking. Finally she proposed to create an Arab network for monitoring and observing acquisition and trade of weapons in the region, as well as an international agreement to increase control and oversight of the use of weapons.

MP Alain Aoun from Lebanon shared the Lebanese experience in relation to the problem of SALW and the current instability in the region. He mentioned the existence of three main driving forces behind the proliferation of SALW in the Lebanese society. First, the legacy of the Lebanese war and the militia culture means that people are used to having weapons in their homes. For many Lebanese the use of weapons is no longer taboo and weapons are often used in celebrations, weddings, birthdays. Second, he explained that people abuse the law. Even though Lebanon has a law that regulates the ownership and use of weapons, there is no capacity for enforcing it and people simply ignore the law. He explained that in the Gulf States the attitude towards this kind of legislation and the rule of law of is stronger than in Lebanon. Third, the fact that Lebanon is surrounded by countries that are in conflict has pushed the population in the border areas to seek security that they believe the state forces cannot provide. He explained that, seeing the challenges that people face in Lebanon, he understand the survival reflects of the population. MP Aoun summarized the situation in Lebanon with regard to SALW proliferation in two points. One, there is a need for a strong state that can ensure the rule of law. Two, there is a need for security forces that people trust. He finished his intervention by calling for a global international effort to tackle armed violence which would make it easier to track and limit the availability of arms and at the same time making it more difficult for people to acquire weapons on the ground. He stressed the need for coordination between parliamentarians and society. He said the more the government and society can gain in stability, the more they can contribute to fighting illegal SALW.



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Discussion

MP Dr. Sahar Qawasmi from Palestine, asked Shawn Harris about the countries highlighted in the presentation, and why Egypt was at the top of the list.

MP Saleh A. Ashour from Kuwait believed that the Forum's efforts will not change the reality of the problem of SALW. He stressed that discussions need to take place at higher level in terms of implementation of these treaties. He asked who ISIS really is, how they have formed and how reliable figures on ISIS are and where these are sourced. He mentioned that ISIS is composed of members of more than 40 states - not only Iraq and Syria – and they will continue to expand given this international composition. He also highlighted that Western countries are the main manufacturers of SALW while Gulf States are the main buyers. He raised doubts on the forces driving ISIS, since their weapons, organisational skills and logistics do not match those of a movement by normal people. MP Ashour mentioned that Gulf countries need to change their path to avoid problems like ISIS. Culture and education have to change. People must be educated to coexist with others, including a newer sense of respect for plurality within countries. He finished his intervention by stating that Gulf States have to cooperate more with Western countries to succeed against the problems of illegal SALW and groups like ISIS. A change of culture has to take place to be successful in tackling such problems.

MP Diallo, Mali asked Shawn Harris about information regarding Nigeria and Ukraine.

MP Ahmed Obsiye from Somaliland explained the issues that Somalia confronted after the civil war broke out i.e. the decentralisation of the regime, the agreements for stability, the legislative process and the reforms the country went through. He emphasized the fact that conflicting parties have to be disarmed in order to be able to achieve a consensus and he hoped conflicting parties will no longer receive assistance in the form of SALW.

Shawn Harris answered the questions asked by Dr. Sahar with regards the list of countries in the presentation. He explained the process of documentation, the official request of information and the follow up process of this data. He also explained that CAR has not been able to cover the conflict in Nigeria and that CAR does not have the resources to work in Ukraine due to security reasons. Shawn Harris emphasized that CAR is very careful regarding publishing information about which countries may be providing ISIS/DASH with armaments. The evidence is still inconclusive and the organisation needs more time before drawing any conclusions. He recommended that countries should improve their request response times regarding weapons and ammunitions, as well creating risk profiles for countries that may become points of diversion for sellers and recipients.

Secretary General Peter Weiderud asked the participants where they see room for improvement in their parliamentary work and how the problem should be addressed in the future.



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MP Ala Talabani agreed with MP Alain Aoun on the cultural character of the problem, stating that it takes time to change the culture. She emphasized that the parliament has to be more aware of the problem and push for more transparency. Mrs Talabani mentioned that the conditions in the region are set for teenagers to join ISIS, given the lack of opportunities and the current instability.

MP Alain Aoun asked Secretary General Peter Weiderud and President of the Forum Ala Talabani, what kind of outcome they expect from these meetings and how parliaments can cooperate between each other and with the community.

Secretary General Peter Weiderud explained that the Parliamentary Forum is a place to share experiences, listen to each other, getting new ideas and wisdom from other countries and practices. It is a place where parliamentarians, through dialogue, can reach a consensus that reflects a shared concern for the problem.

A member of the Jordanian Parliament explained the situation of illicit SALW and terrorism in Jordan. He mentioned that the Hashemite Kingdom is taking steps against the problem and he will ask the government to ratify international treaties on SALW. He also highlighted that before ISIS, groups like Nusra and Al-Qaida were present. Therefore is not a very new problem the region is facing. He also mentioned that the conflict is international but with a regional character.

MP Bouamor Taghouan from Morocco expressed his concern for the problem and although he stated he is new to the topic, he highlighted the responsibility of Western countries in promoting ideas of democracy, human rights and freedom. At the same time these countries do very little to support these movements after dictators have been ousted.

MP Saleh A. Ashour from Kuwait explained the process of weapons confiscation and control in Kuwait after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The government gave three years to the people to turn in their weapons without facing persecution. He also called for stronger government accountability on the issue of weapons. Ashour also brought up the psychological diseases that are a result of widespread use of illicit SALW.

MP Hamza Dağ from Turkey shared his concern with the problem of illicit SALW and the prevalent culture of weapons in celebrations across Turkey. This takes place despite the fact that Turkey has a law that prohibits the ownership of a gun without a license. He also mentioned the difficulties that countries in the Middle East face with regards to weapons control, especially after the fall of the Gadhafi and Saddam regimes. MP Hamza Dağ also emphasized that there are around two million Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Shawn Harris continued to elaborate on the questions and comments made by the attendees. He explained that a core issue to address regarding illicit SALW is effective management, security and oversight of stockpiles as well as development of technical and logistical measures to better monitor SALW and tackling corruption in major producer and recipient countries.



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Ala Talabani closed the session and once again emphasises the issues of oversight, corruption, legislation and better cooperation between affected parties in the region.

President Ala Talabani closed the session and opened the lunch break.

Session II: The Role of Women in Peace Building – Senator Asma Khader, Founding Member of Sisterhood Is Global Institute

The session was moderated by Chister Winbäck – Vice-president of the Parliamentary Forum.



Senator Asma Khader, Jenni Wisung, Johanna Wassholm

The session was introduced by Johanna Wassholm, Field Representative of the organisation Kvinna till Kvinna. She briefly introduced the work of the organisation, emphasizing the belief that peaceful and democratic societies can only be achieved through the full participation of women on all levels of society. Johanna Wassholm explained that the main focus of her organisation is to increase the participation of women in the decision making process, given the fact that 92.4% of participants of peace negotiations are men and 97,5% of signatories of peace agreement are men.

Senator Asma Khader greeted the attendees and expressed her gratitude with the House of Representatives and the Parliamentary Forum. She voiced her concern over the fact that the region is confronting a cultural, social, economic and political issue. In search for safety, the human-being resorts to different measures to assure its existence. However, women are often left



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outside decision-making and become targets of armed violence. She provided some staggering facts: having a gun at home increases the risks of getting killed by 40%, and in the case of women it the risk increases to 72%. Senator Asma Khader emphasized the fact that women should have a greater role in peacebuilding. She called on leaders to follow the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and to raise awareness of the problems that women face during conflict. She also stressed that more efforts should be made from the parliament to hold government accountable on issues like SALW manufacturing and trade, sexual abuses and the underrepresentation of women in the decision making process. She finished her intervention by stating that the relation between weapons and manhood must be broken if peace is to be achieved.

Christer Winbäck further elaborated on the fact that women are neglected from the decision making process and more should be done to include them in the mechanisms of the peace building international system.

Parliamentary interventions:

MP Dr. Sahar Qawasmi from Palestine started her intervention by highlighting the importance of women in peace and the traditional role as mediators in conflicts. However, as she explained, women also become victims and subjects of armed violence. She elaborated by explaining the suffering that the Palestinian population has gone through because of the attack and occupation by Israel. Dr. Qawasmi provided some facts of the situation in Palestine. Of 3200 people killed, 102 were children and 1092 women. Four thousand people are permanently disabled as a result of the attacks, and it has also lead to a 4% increase on miscarriages in the area and 30% of the children present psychological problems. 20'000 residences have been destroyed and 40'000 were partially destroyed. The recent attacks in Gaza have, according Dr. Sahar Qawasmi, limited the rights of women to their bodies and the right to have a partner. She also emphasized that civilians are mostly victims, given the small amount of SALW in Palestine. She finished by calling on all governments and parliamentarians to support and increase the participation of women in peacebuilding, since women are capable of providing alternative solutions to conflicts. She also called to end the occupation of Palestine and to strengthen the diplomatic channels to end the conflict.

MP Bouamor Taghouan from Morocco presented the issues that women face in his country, stating that there is currently a programme that seeks to increase the participation of women in the Parliament. He explained that women represent one half of the community and therefore a greater participation should take place. He explained that during war and after war, women were the ones taking care for the family and the house. They also worked as a communication bridge between warring parties, thus, giving women a main role in conflict resolution. MP Taghouan also highlighted the current state of affairs, where the constitution states that half of government positions should be held by women, however, due to traditions and conservative views, this is not the case. He mentioned the need to change the traditional views and costumes regarding women, but insisting that these changes, in order to succeed, should take place at a slow pace.



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Christer Winbäck thanked MP Bouamor Taghouan, insisting on the need for an increased role of women in participation as well as its position in the society.

Board member Daisy Tourné finished the parliamentary interventions by stressing the need to shorten the distance between speeches and reality. She mentioned that in order to try to solve the issue of women in peacebuilding this also means to participate in the fight for power. She mentioned that conflict cannot be eliminated as it is part of human nature. The efforts should rather be aimed on to how to administrate and diminish the conflict. Ms Tourné mentioned the fact that women are taught to do certain things, to be feminine, to be weak in front of the male, something that leads to the victimization of women. Society teaches people that being aggressive is to be masculine. This has to change. She finished by highlighting the fact that until 2012, 61 peace agreements had been signed, but only two of them were signed by women. Law does not change the problem if we do not want to change it in the practice. She also mentioned the media's role in exacerbating the roles of men and women.

President Ala Talabani mentioned how women are totally absent from the progressive development in peacebuilding. Even in Western countries women are absent from political discussion, so other means to get women involved in the issue have to be found.

Johanna Wassholm from Kvinna till Kvinna highlighted the difficulty in finding statistics regarding women participation. However, she mentioned that 70% of women are killed by a family member.

Senator Asma Khader emphasized how statistics show the impact of SALW in the hands of family members, show the limited role for women as a figure of authority in the family and in the community. Women are excluded of power positions. She mentioned the case of Jordan, where women in the Judiciary had 60% of acceptance among the population, however, the government decided to create a 50% quota for men after these statistics were made public, to avoid the possibility of a gender "unbalanced" judiciary. Khader concluded that this shows the need of innovative tools to enable women to take part at the decision making process in the region.

Christer Winbäck closed the session and opened the coffee break.

Session III: International Instruments and Treaties to prevent and reduce armed violence – Roy Isbister, Saferworld

The session was introduced by Daisy Tourné.

Roy Isbister is the Head of the Arms Control Unit at Saferworld and Board member of the Forum and he started his intervention by briefly introducing Saferworld. The organisation is present in 20 countries and the main goal is to prevent of violent conflict.



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He started by mentioning the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, which is a diplomatic initiative aimed at addressing the interrelations between armed violence and development, focusing on influencing processes, measuring violence and supporting programming. He then proceeded to explaining international mechanisms and instruments, starting with the UN Program of Action on Illicit SALW (PoA). He highlighted that the PoA, as a tracing instrument that could soon be ready to become legally binding, although it is rather technical in its nature. He explained the core activities of the PoA is the marking of individual firearms, the documentation of these weapons from the point of manufacture to the point of reception, as well as a tracking requests of illegal SALW that have been discovered in one of the country members. The UNPoA entered into force once it had 40 ratifications, and 110 states signed and ratified it.

Isbister moved on to explaining the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and its core components and the role



that the Treaty will have for the reduction of armed violence. As a legally binding, the ATT consist of a set of rules of the transfer of conventional arms. It aims to create a national system of transfer control, although it does leave out a small range of equipment, mostly used in supporting roles such as telecommunications and radar systems. Under the ATT, states are required to refuse any weapons transfer if their assessment of the situation of the recipient country concludes that the weapons will be used to breach UN arms embargo, other conventions and agreements, as well the violation of human rights. The ATT will also create a

system where transfers made have to be reported and kept on record.

However, the decision making process is a national prerogative of the state members, thus, a final decision is made by individual states. The ATT will serve to reduce illegal transfers of conventional arms or the possibility that weapons end up in the wrong hands. It will also help to reduce armed violence and it adds a very strong language on SALW. Other clear practical issues, such as civilian access to firearms, how to create national action plans, monitoring, weapons collection, destruction and border control were also highlighted in his presentation. He finished by reminding parliamentarians of their important role in questioning the government, pushing for signing and ratification, as well as passing legislation that goes in line with the ATT provisions.

Parliamentary interventions:

Christer Winbäck, Vice President for the Forum, highlighted that parliamentary insight must be ensured with regards to the application of the export control regulations in our countries. He explained the intention of the Swedish system, which is unique in international terms in the sense



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that representatives of the political parties can discuss potential export transactions in advance, in order to build a broad consensus on export control policy and promote continuity in the conduct of that policy. He also believed it is vital for parliamentarians speak to each other, bridging party lines in order to achieve a greater momentum towards their governments, to ratify international treaties and to improve parliamentary transparency.

MP Hamsa Dağ from Turkey elaborated on the various challenges that Turkey has faced since the Cold War and how these challenges have changed after this period. He explained the great troubles Turkey is facing because of the SALW proliferation in the region, together with the spread of terrorist and militant groups that make use of such weapons. He mentioned that Turkey is implementing procedures to reduce traffic and increase control of SALW, in order to increase transparency in the trade of SALW, as well as working with the international community to strengthen control and transparency in weapons trade. He also highlighted the signing of the ATT by Turkey and the willingness of his country to advance the agenda of SALW control.

Daisy Tourné closed the session and the meeting.

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