



Press Release

CHRR CONCERN ON MISUSE OF FIREARMS

The Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) is extremely concerned at the conduct on Monday 5 December, of Admarc Guards in Nsanje where they shot and injured two boys while they were trying to stop people from entering Admarc to buy maize. This is happening just two weeks after a National Conference on Small Arms control in Malawi.

CHRR brings to the attention of all those guns owners that agreed international standards do exist to control the use of force and firearms by law enforcers and all those who are licensed to own guns. They include **UN code of conduct for law enforcement officials** and **UN basic principles for the use of force and firearms**.

CHRR understands that those licensed to own firearms such as Admarc must sometimes use force in order to do their job of keeping communities' safe and protecting the people or their property. But the force used must be not being arbitrary; it must be proportionate, necessary and lawful. And force must only be used in self-defence or against the imminent threat of death or serious injury.

In order to comply with this essential principle, law enforcers must know how to assess rapidly when a threat to life is being made. They need to be extremely well trained in tactical threat assessment so that they can judge in each different context whether a use of force, including lethal force will be proportionate, necessary and lawful. We take note that too many of gun owners are trained how to fire but not how to decide whether it should be fired or when.

CHRR therefore reminds law enforcers and all private companies owning guns that they should be representative and accountable to the community as a whole. We also emphasise on human rights training and alternative use of firearms by companies owning guns. We again appeal to the government to take up the challenge of controlling the misuse of arms as urgent. To achieve this, the government must invest more resources in professional training based on the agreed international standards. Only then can the nation provide protection to women, men and children through legitimate national and private security that respect human rights and gain the widespread support from civil society that is needed to curb the flow and use of arms.

Lastly, we request for further investigation into the matter to know what really happened to enable appropriate actions against the guards and compensation to the victims of this gun violence. The government should also urgently look at supporting the review of the Firearms Act which is outdated and not compatible with current regional and international standards in controlling small arms and light weapons.

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