



Gun Free Valentine's Day 2021

Background

In some countries, gun ownership is viewed as a sign of strength and masculinity. Sometimes, a man purchases a gun with the purported aim of protecting his home and family from intruders. However, it is well documented that a gun in the home does not make people, especially women, safer (see, for example, this [report](#) on South Africa). In reality, a gun makes a home much more dangerous.

Women are at a higher risk of intimidation, violence and death in the domestic sphere and this is especially so when there is access to a firearm in the home. Studies show that in domestic violence cases, the majority of fatalities are women and the perpetrator is usually a current or former partner. About one in three of these femicides is committed with a firearm. Typical reasons reported by men for having killed an intimate partner include possessiveness, jealousy and fear of abandonment. For instance, an Australian [study](#) on intimate partner homicide found that almost half of the men killed their partner within three months of the relationship ending. Guns are not just used to kill women, however. [Studies](#) show that in situations of intimate partner violence, the threat of using a gun that is in the home battery with and brandishing of guns can heighten fear and compliance for women, reducing a woman's willingness to leave or otherwise end the relationship. This can result in chronic abuse.

The current global pandemic is worsening the situation. The measures to prevent and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, such as quarantine, isolation or social distancing, and restrictions imposed on mobility, have exacerbated the violence against women, girls and adolescents that occurs in homes.

More effective laws can make a difference

Global [research](#) shows that the killing of women and girls by intimate partners is not random or spontaneous. Common sense laws that keep guns out of the hands of abusers can reduce gun violence and IPV. National legislation on firearms should, at a minimum, include:

Enhancing criteria for civilian possession of a gun: This means including domestic, sexual and family violence as an offence that would disqualify someone from receiving a gun licence.

Mandatory background checks: As part of the licensing process, a determination on whether a current or potential gun user has a history of violence should be based not only on criminal records, but also on applications for civil restraining orders, record of complaints, information and insights from local police, and references from current and former spouses or partners.

Automatic suspension: ensure legislation requires automatic suspension or cancellation of a firearms licence in domestic violence (including complaints of actual or threatened violence) and removal of the

guns until a considered determination is made by the authorities on whether the weapons can be safely returned or whether the suspension should continue. This should also apply to ammunition.

Examples of legislation

In South Africa, both the [Firearms Control Act](#) and the [Domestic Violence Act](#) give women the power to take action against domestic violence by requesting police or court officials to confiscate firearms when a domestic violence complaint involving a gun or other weapon is made (see excerpts [here](#)).

The UN Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNLIREC) has done considerable work looking at preventing violence against women through arms control. While these documents are focused on Latin America and the Caribbean, the findings are broadly applicable, including the recommendations for integrating arms measures into responses to prevent and reduce violence against women during the COVID-19 crisis.

“Preventing violence against women through arms control in Latin America and the Caribbean” is available in [English](#), [Portuguese](#) and [Spanish](#).

“Normative studies: Making the link between norms on violence against women and small arms control and regulation norms”:

- Analysis of CARICOM States is available in [English](#);
- Analysis of Central America, Colombia, Mexico, and D. Republic is available in [Spanish](#);
- Specific case of Peru is available in [Spanish](#).

How to Get Involved:

1. Urge legislators in your home country to enact or strengthen laws that increase protections domestic violence. If your national legislation does not include basic minimum measures call your national officials and government representatives and demand change.

2. Learn more from and share these sources:

- The Guns and Violence Against Women [report](#) by Everytown For Gun Safety (US) details the inextricable link between gun violence and IPV, and provides comprehensive list of legislative practices that can save lives.
- The [Women Under the Gun: Actions to Protect Women From Gun Violence](#) briefing by Gun Free South Africa identifies the particular risk that firearms pose to women across the world, as well as key policies to reduce gun-related IPV.
- The IANSA submission to the High Level Review of UNSCR1325, [Guns and Violence Against Women](#) discusses the relationship between guns and violence against women, with specific attention to violence in the home.
- [The Recommendations for action against gender-related killing of women and girls](#) by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provides a summary of general information about United Nations support and assistance to counter gender related killing.
- Various MOSAIC modules are useful in developing measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, including:
 - National regulation of civilian access to small arms and light weapons ([03.30](#))
 - Designing and implementing a National Action Plan ([04.10](#));

- Designing and implementing community safety programming ([04.20](#));
 - Women, men and the gendered nature of small arms and light weapons ([06.10](#)).
- The 7th Biennial Meeting of States under the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms is taking place in July 2021. Remind your national officials of their commitments towards gender responsive arms control and share this [IANSA](#) document with them.

3. Share these [four tweets](#) on your social media platform, including one in the leadup to February 14th.

4. Share on social media a picture of you and someone you love with the hashtags:

#GunFreeValentine #LoveLivesHereGunsDont

Implementing arms control policies with a gender approach responds to the call of the Agenda for Disarmament “Securing our Common Future” launched in 2018 by the UN Secretary General António Guterres. Thank you for joining us in working to make Valentine's Day and every day free of gun violence.