



Celebrate with your heart, not your gun! Join us in ending celebratory gunfire December 20th - January 3rd

Dear IANSA members and friends,

In partnership with the United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons ([SEESAC](#)), IANSA invites you to promote an end to celebratory gunfire from December 20th - January 3rd.

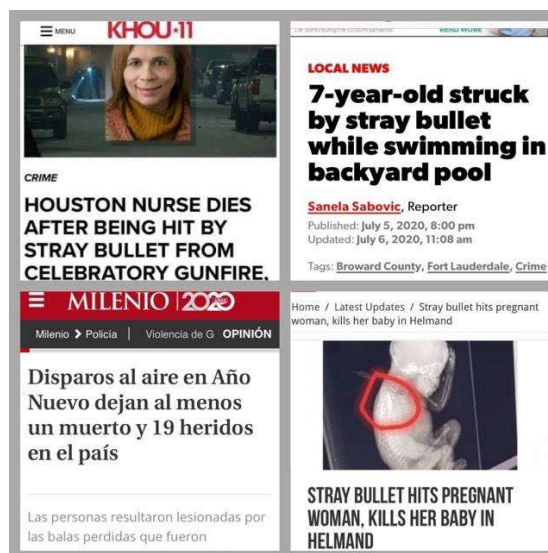
What is celebratory gunfire?

Celebratory gunfire, or the firing of shots into the air, is a way some people celebrate New Year's Eve, national independence days, or other special events such as weddings, elections, or sporting event victories.

Why is it dangerous?

Stray bullets from celebratory gunfire can cause critical or fatal injuries, and every year many people end up wounded or dead as a result.

During New Year celebrations in 2020, for example, a stray bullet from a distantly fired killed a beloved nurse as she and her family gathered in their front yard in the US. Meanwhile across the border in Mexico, by January 1 of 2020, one person was already reported killed and 19 other people injured in different regions of the country from New Year celebrations.



The gendered impact of stray bullets

In 2016, The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean ([UNLIREC](#)) published [a study](#) in Spanish (summarized in English [here](#)) analyzing 741 documented cases of stray bullet injuries from 2014 to 2015.

This study showed that women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean were more affected by stray bullets than by intentional gun violence in general. According to UNLIREC's study, almost half of all stray bullet victims were women. In contrast, women represent only 16 percent of victims of intentional lethal armed violence globally.

According UNLIREC's study of documented cases, 55 percent of all victims were men, 43 percent of victims were women, and the sex of 2 percent of the victims was not specified. Similar results were found in an earlier study conducted by UNLIREC covering the 2009-2013 period.

Raising awareness

Some countries and territories, have banned celebratory gunfire. For example, in Lebanon, stricter enforcement of an open-air shooting ban has significantly lowered stray bullet-related injuries. Some countries have also taken steps to discourage celebratory gunfire but problems persist, and civil society can help raise awareness.



[IEPADES](#), an IANSA member organization in Guatemala, provides an excellent example of awareness raising. To prevent more families from spending the new year mourning the loss of a loved one to celebratory gunfire, for the past decade IEPADES has campaigned on TV, radio, in bus stops, on public transportation, and on social media for gun owners to refrain from firing their weapons and to be aware of the criminal consequences if they do. Over the years, the national civil police, other NGOs, and media outlets have joined IEPADES in these efforts, allowing community members to enjoy the holidays without the devastating impact of armed violence.

In 2016, SEESAC launched a social media campaign in the Western Balkans called "[Celebrate with your Heart, not your Gun](#)," that reached 6 million people. In 2019, SEESAC ran another online campaign called "[Arm Yourself With](#)", to discourage the misuse and illicit possession of weapons throughout the region, and encourage people to arm themselves with knowledge about armed violence.

Here's what you can do:

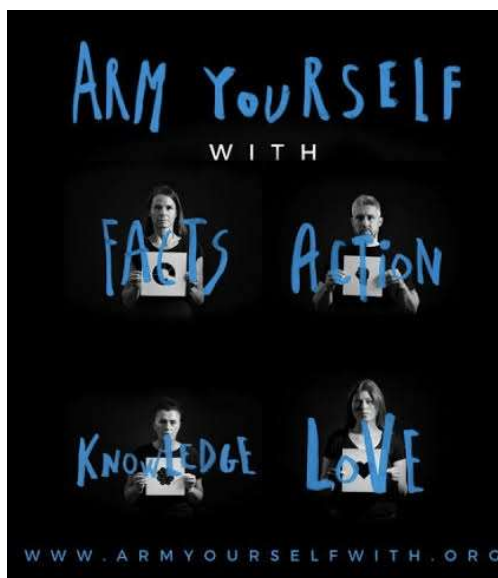
- Share the End Celebratory Gunfire animated campaign image on social media. Download the image [here](#). Use the

hashtags **#endcelebratorygunfire**
#DontRuinTheParty.

#IANSA

#SEESAC

- Share "[Arm Yourself With](#)" related facts about the impact of gun violence, including celebratory shootings with your social media audiences. Use the hashtags: #ArmYourselfWith #MakeYourFamilySafe #IANSA #SEESAC
- Ask your local media to provide coverage of the dangers of celebratory gunfire.
- Share your concerns about celebratory gunfire with your local law enforcement agencies and legislators in the lead-up to times when celebratory gunfire is most common. In countries where celebratory gunfire is illegal but still practiced, urge local law enforcement agencies to take legal action against offenders.
- Educate members in your community about the risk of celebratory gunfire before such celebrations take place.
- Share UNLIREC's report on stray bullets in Latin America, which can be found [here](#).
- Stay Informed! Check SEESAC's [Armed Violence Monitoring Program](#) for trends on gun violence in Southeast Europe.
- Use the power of social media to mobilize against celebratory gunfire like a youth group in Lebanon did with the release of a media campaign titled: "[Farha Taysheh, or Stray Bullets Kill Joy](#)" and [a video](#) on Facebook.



2020 has been an especially challenging year for many people. Let's work together to try to ensure that no one faces the trauma of a stray bullet injury or death as the year closes and we begin 2021. Join us in calling for gun-free, heart filled celebrations.

Sincerely,
 IANSA



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