

The Importance of U.S. Signature on the Arms Trade Treaty: Letter from 33 National Organizations

August 19, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We congratulate your Administration for helping to successfully conclude negotiations for an effective global Arms Trade Treaty earlier this year. The U.S. decision to join other leading supporters of the ATT helped overcome the consensus-blocking actions of three states and was critical to securing the overwhelming support for the treaty at the UN General Assembly on April 2. With the process of conforming the Treaty text in various languages to be resolved this month, we urge the US government to emphatically throw its support behind the treaty with your signature at the United Nations in New York in September.

Your signature would be a powerful step demonstrating the United States' commitment to preventing mass atrocities and protecting civilians from armed conflict around the globe. We also encourage you to make a strong, high-profile statement of the Treaty's value for national and international security and human rights protection at time of signature.

The development of the Arms Trade Treaty was a historic achievement. Governments joined together and agreed to a plan that will, if implemented rigorously and universally, put an end to the irresponsible arms trade that fuels so much suffering in the world. The Arms Trade Treaty is a common sense agreement that will have positive impacts for US security and civilians living in the midst of armed conflict or unstable environments. Among other things, the Arms Trade Treaty prohibits arms transfer authorizations to states if the state "has knowledge at the time of authorization that the arms or items would be used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, attacks directed against civilian objects or civilians protected as such, or other war crimes."

We urge you to seize the opportunity to sign as soon as possible in order to build momentum for additional signatures and rapid entry into force. If the United States clearly signals its intent to be bound by the Treaty, other countries currently sitting on the fence are more likely to follow.

Your Administration demonstrated leadership by supporting the Treaty through its development. Signing the Arms Trade Treaty will demonstrate strong US leadership and help create important momentum for the treaty.

We respectfully encourage you and your Administration to seize this historic opportunity and provide US signature on the Arms Trade Treaty this September.

Sincerely,

Melanie Greenberg, President and CEO
Alliance for Peacebuilding

Shan Cretin, General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Eric Sapp, Executive Director
American Values Network

Frank Jannuzi, Interim Co-Executive Director
Amnesty International, USA

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director
Arms Control Association

Sarah Holewinski, Executive Director
Center for Civilians in Conflict

Stanley J. Noffsinger, General Secretary
Church of the Brethren

Kathi Lynn Austin, Executive Director
Conflict Awareness Project

Alexander D. Baumgarten, Director of Government Relations
The Episcopal Church

John Bradshaw, Executive Director
Enough Project

Dennis W. Frado, Director, Lutheran Office for World Community
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Emira Woods, Co-Director
Foreign Policy In Focus

Diane Randall, Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers)

Krista Hendry, Executive Director
The Fund for Peace

Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, President
Genocide Watch

Don Kraus, President & CEO
Globalsolutions.org

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director
Human Rights Watch

Michael Christ, Executive Director
International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

Robert Naiman, Policy Director
Just Foreign Policy

Gerry G. Lee, Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

J. Ron Byler, Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

Galen Carey, Vice President for Government Relations
National Association of Evangelicals

Raymond C. Offenheiser, President
Oxfam America

Hon. Ross Robertson MP, President
Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, Executive Director
Pax Christi USA

Jon Rainwater, Executive Director
Peace Education Fund

Catherine Thomasson, MD, Executive Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, Director, Office of Public Witness
Presbyterian Church (USA)

James E. Winkler, General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society
The United Methodist Church

Mary-Frances Wain, Deputy Executive Director
United Nations Association of the United States of America

Thomas H. Andrews, President and CEO
United to End Genocide

Bishop Richard E. Pates, Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Joy Olson, Executive Director
Washington Office on Latin America