



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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April 11, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As Chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write regarding the Arms Trade Treaty. The Catholic Church has a longstanding commitment to protecting human life and dignity and supporting arms control as a means to this end. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “The production and the sale of arms affect the common good of nations and of the international community. Hence public authorities have the right and duty to regulate them” (No. 2316).

On the occasion of the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations in New York, said the Holy See “viewed its adoption as constituting a step towards establishing in the world a culture of responsibility and accountability.” In my own travels to Sub-Saharan Africa, and specifically to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d’Ivoire, I met with Church and civil society leaders who repeatedly expressed profound concerns for the untold human suffering that result from the unregulated flow of arms.

The treaty is not perfect, but it is an important step. As the Holy See noted, “[T]here remain in the text of the treaty considerable gaps, particularly with regard to an emphasis more on States’ prerogatives than on the dignity and human rights of people, the predominance of commercial or economic considerations, and an inadequate elaboration of the principles of sufficiency, of victims’ assistance and of the need to reduce demand for arms.”

In light of the position of the Holy See, I urge the Administration to expedite a thorough review of the Treaty so that the President can sign it in early June. As a world leader and a major arms exporter, our nation should set a positive example for other nations to follow in efforts to reduce the flow of weapons into situations that violate human rights and cause terrible suffering.

With the Holy See, we see the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty by the United Nations as a positive step in promoting human rights and dignity and in building a more peaceful world. My hope is that our nation will give further impetus to this process by joining other leading countries as a signatory in early June.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops