

SIG Sauer Must Pay Historic 11 Million Euros Over Illegal Arms Sales / SIG-Sauer-guns are being used in Colombia to commit crimes and human rights abuses

In the case of illegal small arms exports from Germany via the USA to Colombia, the German Federal Court of Justice (BGH) in Karlsruhe has ordered the German-American gun maker SIG Sauer to pay more than 11 million euros, thus largely confirming a verdict of the Kiel Regional Court from 2019. The order to pay this historic sum is a huge success for the German campaign against the arms trade, "Aktion Aufschrei - Stoppt den Waffenhandel!" (Action Outcry - Stop the Arms Trade!), which had initiated the trial with its criminal complaint in 2014.

"This is the highest sum ever confiscated from a small arms manufacturer! The Federal Court of Justice has thus confirmed that illegal arms deals cost those responsible dearly," Holger Rothbauer, the lawyer for "Aktion Aufschrei - Stoppt den Waffenhandel!", comments on the decision. "Even though the legislation against arms dealers remains too weak, this ruling against the SIG Sauer company finally treats illegal arms trafficking for what it is: organized crime," Rothbauer says, referring to the confiscation of the entire turnover from the illegal sale under a law that has been in place since 2017 and is mainly aimed at organized crime.

"After Heckler & Koch, SIG Sauer is the second German small arms manufacturer to be ordered to pay millions by the Federal Court of Justice within a few months. This is a milestone on the road to holding the merchants of death *Made in Germany* financially responsible. It is also a huge success for the campaign 'Action Outcry - Stop the Arms Trade!'," says Jürgen Grässlin, spokesperson for the campaign and national spokesperson for the "German Peace Society - United War Resisters" (DFG-VK). In 2014, the campaign, represented by lawyer Holger Rothbauer, had filed a complaint about the illegal arms exports by SIG Sauer. The company had initially exported more than 38,000 pistols to the U.S., which were then illegally shipped to then war-torn Colombia. As a result, three executives of the company from Germany and the USA were sentenced to suspended prison terms by the Kiel Regional Court in 2019. This verdict is final. The BGH now only heard appeals regarding the confiscation of revenues from the illegal arms sale demanded by the Regional Court. The appeals were largely rejected by the BGH, although one appeal was referred back to the Kiel Regional Court for reassessment. Only the distribution of liabilities within the group of companies is still affected by the reassessment.

In April 2020, the campaign filed the next criminal complaint against SIG Sauer alleging illegal small arms exports (this time to Mexico, Nicaragua, as well as Colombia again), and the Kiel Public Prosecutor's Office is investigating. "Policy makers must finally draw the consequences from the respective trials in the Heckler & Koch and SIG Sauer cases," says Charlotte Kehne, arms export control officer at "Living without Armaments" and spokesperson for "Aktion Aufschrei - Stoppt den Waffenhandel!". "The forwarding of SIG-Sauer weapons to Colombia via the USA has once again shown that the final destination of small arms cannot be controlled. A strict arms export control law including a ban on small arms exports is therefore more than overdue! Moreover, politicians must take a firm stand against the internationalization strategies of arms companies. It is unacceptable that SIG Sauer can export all over the world via

its sites abroad, while the profits from questionable arms deals continue to flow to the German holding company," says Kehne.

"We can prove with research on the ground and a [dossier](#) that SIG Sauer guns are causing great harm in Colombia," says Ralf Willinger, children's rights expert at terre des hommes Germany. "SIG Sauer pistols are used by drug gangs, paramilitaries and guerrilla groups in crimes, forced on child soldiers, and criminal police and military have also used them in serious human rights violations and crimes. Children and young people from our projects have been severely affected," Willinger reports.

Large protests for human rights and social justice have been taking place in Colombia since April 2021. The government of President Iván Duque is using lethal force against peaceful demonstrators. Police in Colombia are primarily equipped with SIG Sauer weapons. "It is an important sign for Colombian civil society that arms companies in Germany are being successfully tried. Nevertheless, these weapons should never have come into the possession of the Colombian police units, whether through illegal or legal channels," says María Cárdenas of the German Colombian collective "Red Colombia Rhein-Main". Red Colombia Rhein-Main, the German Peace Society - United War Resisters, and Colombia Viva e.V. jointly organized an artistic protest action before the verdict was pronounced in Karlsruhe to draw attention to the human rights situation in Colombia. // Berlin, 01.07.2021

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Further Information (In English): "Chronology of the legal export of more than 38,000 guns from Germany to the US and the illegal shipment from there to Colombia" on the "Global Net – Stop the Arms Trade": <https://www.gn-stat.org/?p=705> (In German): Dossier and fact sheet by terre des hommes „SIG-Sauer-Pistolen in Kolumbien“: www.tdh.de/kleinwaffen // (In German): „Aktion Aufschrei – Stoppt den Waffenhandel!“ Informationssammlung zu SIG Sauer: <https://www.aufschrei-waffenhandel.de/daten-fakten/ruestungsfirmen/sig-sauer/>

Organisations Supporting the Campaign: Aktionsgemeinschaft Dienst für den Frieden e.V. (AGDF) • aktion hoffnung Rottenburg-Stuttgart e.V. • Bischöfliches Hilfswerk MISEREOR • Brot für die Welt - Evangelisches Werk für Diakonie und Entwicklung • Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (BDKJ) • Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft – Vereinigte KriegsdienstgegnerInnen (DFG-VK) • Deutsche Sektion der Internationalen Ärzte für die Verhütung des Atomkrieges e. V. (IPPNW) Deutschland • NaturFreunde Deutschlands • Netzwerk Friedenskooperative • Internationale katholische Friedensbewegung pax christi - Deutsche Sektion • JuristInnen gegen atomare, biologische und chemische Waffen (IALANA) Deutsche Sektion • Ohne Rüstung Leben (ORL) • Deutsche Franziskanerprovinz • RüstungsInformationsBüro (RIB e.V.) • terre des hommes – Hilfe für Kinder in Not • Werkstatt für Gewaltfreie Aktion, Baden (WfGA). **Many other organisations and peace initiatives work to support the campaign.**