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- **PRESS RELEASE**
PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GUNS AND COMMUNITY SECURITY IN THE MIDDLE EAST- new report - GAZA, WEST BANK, LEBANON, SUDAN

REPORT:

'Too many guns in our society,' say young people across the Middle East region according to a new report published today by the Middle East North Africa Network on Small Arms (MENAANSA).

- In Gaza, from January 2003 to October 2005, at least 1,258 people, including children have been injured or killed as a result of gun misuse in their communities. 51.7% of the young people surveyed identified the proliferation and misuse of small arms to be their major source for insecurity.
- In Ramallah, 60% of young people surveyed believe there are too many guns in their communities. Further, 56.7% of the study sample believes that small arms proliferation and misuse considerably decreases human development and living standards in Ramallah,.
- In Lebanon, more than 22% of the young people surveyed possess more than 3 guns; however given the choice more than 50% of the respondents would choose not to own a gun. This is definitely a challenge to the idea that there is an uncontested gun culture in the region, at least in the areas studied.
- Survey results show that in Sudan, 70% of young people earn less than 100 US dollars a month. The unemployment rate of Al Haj Yousif district is 40%. Young people highly recommend extended and improved community and economic development programs. They insisted that if local public services are improved, such as proper street lighting, improved access to potable water, electricity and education, a resulting decrease in the rate of crimes (supported by the misuse of guns) would most definitely occur.

"While the threat of, or actual ongoing conflict and occupation continue to trigger community insecurity, the intensity of demand for weapons is also heavily conditioned by the quality of local governance and socio-economic environments in the studied communities." said **MENAANSA's Regional Coordinator, Dr. Eizadin Al Asbahy.**

The participants' responses in all four of the communities studied suggest that one of the major factors driving demand for guns is mistrust of governments' ability to ensure security.

The new study lifts up the voices of ordinary young Arabs on how *they* experience human insecurity, what *they* see as their community security priorities and how *they* may choose to improve conditions for community security. Each of the communities studied (Northern Gaza, Ramallah, Southern Lebanon, Bekaa district, and Beirut, Al Haj Yousif district, Khartoum), is either in conflict or, at serious risk of conflict and where small arms and light weapons are a serious contributing factor to this conflict. It is not the objective of the network and publication to challenge concepts of political resistance and historical or tribal customs in the region.

"We focused on community perspectives because we believe that members of communities facing security issues are often best qualified to provide solutions that will address their human security needs. Politicians, community level decision-makers and analysts need to develop approaches to security, together *with* communities and their leaders, and these approaches must consider and address the needs of all people living there." said **MENAANSA's Regional Coordinator, Dr. Eizadin Al Asbahy. END -----**