

May 12, 2026

Dear friends,

We're gearing up for a special Stop the Violence Forum on arms trafficking and gun-related violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Quixote Center's Kim Lamberty will present and lead the discussion on Saturday June 6th from 1-3pm at the Friends Meeting in Chatham.

Also, at the end of June, the Fire Me Up Studio in Cranford is hosting "Brushstrokes for Peace," a fun and informative evening of painting, good food and drink while raising money for Inhiambia. The \$50 suggested donation includes taking home a 16x20" canvas painting that you create with guided instruction. Sunday June 28th, 7-9pm, 17 North Union Ave., Cranford.

Stop the Violence

PeaceWorks was founded in the immediate aftermath of the US-sponsored mercenary war in Nicaragua in the 1980s. Decades later, Nicaraguans continue to grapple with the war's impacts – extreme poverty, economic hardship and even political violence.

And as arms trafficking heats up from the US and our neighbors to the South, we are witnessing the ongoing impacts right here in New Jersey.

Stories from Delaney Hall immigrant detention in Newark, NJ.

An arms trafficker in Haiti held his three children in seclusion for years and poured acid on his wife's face while she slept to keep her quiet. The wife is now seeking asylum in the US and, after escaping capture by the

JOIN US FOR A LUNCH FORUM ON ENDING ILLEGAL ARMS TRAFFICKING TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

SATURDAY JUNE 6TH
1-3pm

CHATHAM FRIENDS MEETING
SUGGESTED DONATION \$15, KIDS FREE
RSVP TO smsteiner100@gmail.com

**PEACEWORKS, PO Box 268, 634 Eagle Rock Rd.,
West Orange, NJ 07052, peaceworks.org**

authorities for seven years, the husband was finally arrested this past April.

An Ecuadorian woman is seeking asylum in the US because her husband was shot and killed for refusing to pay for gang “protection.” She was taken by ICE in NJ and spent two months in immigration detention away from her three children.

Mexican immigrants are sent back to cities and communities where drug cartels use sophisticated weaponry and heavy artillery to not only move drugs, but to challenge the sovereignty of the Mexican Government.

A Common Thread

The Mexican Government makes around 20,000 arms trace requests to the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) per year. The results showed that around 70% of the traced guns were purchased in the United States.



During our solidarity work at Delaney Hall in Newark, providing comfort and support for detained immigrants and their families, we hear the harrowing stories of people fleeing situations of persecution and violence. Many times, those stories include gun violence.

How does this happen? A “straw buyer” purchases arms in the US on behalf of bad actors in Mexico (oftentimes sold by US arms sellers who themselves are bad actors). Handguns make up the largest percentage of purchases, but semi-automatic rifles are the fastest growing. Handguns are for the street-level drug trade. Semi-automatic weapons are for taking the streets.

The percentage of arms that were traced to a US purchase is even higher in the Caribbean. Data shows that in the Bahamas, 99% of all illegal guns are traced back to the US. The situation in Haiti is even more pernicious where arms and drug traffickers have melded into a single business

model.

It is reported that arms flowing out of Miami to Haiti are not purchased, but bartered with drugs. So, as the drugs compounded our own national health crisis here in the US, the arms helped gangs in Haiti coalesce into one big alliance to control around 80% of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

What happened to Ecuador?

Until just a few years ago Ecuador was considered a relatively peaceful country. But nestled between Colombia and Peru, Ecuadoran ports have become the launch pad for cocaine to Europe. Related gun and gang violence have wreaked havoc on local populations.

The percentage of US-purchased arms in Ecuador is significant, but the further south a country lies, arms from other countries, like Brazil and even Turkiyë pick up any trafficking slack. And as we hear with our own ears at Delaney Hall, the result of the gun violence is devastating.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Caribbean countries accounted for six of the world’s 10 highest national murder rates in 2021, with the majority of homicides stemming from gun violence.

(SOURCE: 2024 US GAO REPORT)

What can be done to stop arms trafficking?

Experts focus on one overarching goal to stop arms trafficking: we must foster greater collaboration among governments and governmental agencies to close the porous channels of arms exports.

But the Trump administration has gone in a different direction. In a nod to the National Rifle Association (NRA), the first Trump Administration transferred the governmental oversight of small arms exports from the State Department to the Commerce Department.

Why consider the moral, humanitarian and international implications of international arms sales when you can just super-size the order?

A Clear Path Forward: The Armas Act

Recognizing this humanitarian crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean, in 2023 Congressman Joaquin Castro (D - Texas) introduced the Armas Act to put the oversight of international arms trade back at the State Department and prohibit the Commerce Department from promoting small arms sales globally. The Armas act also requires the State Department to:

- develop a comprehensive interagency strategy to disrupt arms trafficking and create a certification requirement for arm sales.
- provide congressional notification, review, and oversight of certain small arms exports
- submit an annual report to Congress to understand the challenges and successes of these efforts

We need your help to move the Armas Act Forward

Help us launch an outreach campaign to ask our representatives to co-sponsor the 2025 Armas Act. We have postcards for you to sign asking our senators to join their colleagues, Senators Durbin, Kaine, Markey, Murphy, Blumenthal and Warren to co-sponsor the Senate version of the Armas Act, S.3508. You can ask your Representative to sign on to the House version, HR.6736, using the congressional letter template on the Quixote Center's website.

Brushstrokes for Peace

A fundraiser for PeaceWorks

Please join us for a fun and informative evening of painting and conversation benefiting **Inhijambia, a youth education program in Managua, Nicaragua**

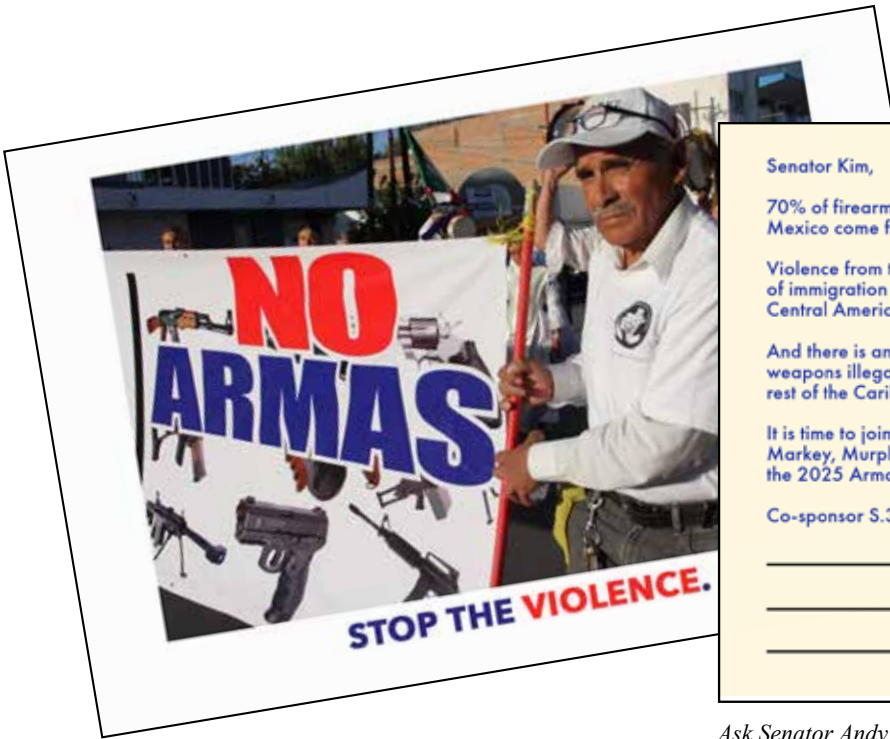
Hosted by **Fire Me Up! Studio**
117 North Union Ave
Cranford, NJ

Sunday, June 28th
7:00 - 9:00 PM
\$50 per person
100% of proceeds will be donated to PeaceWorks
Refreshments will be provided

RSVP: June Brown
(908) 370-2563
Skip Winter
(908) 625-9676
By June 23rd

Please make checks payable to PeaceWorks,
a 501(c)(3) organization





Senator Kim,

70% of firearms recovered from crimes in Mexico come from the United States.

Violence from trafficked guns is a key driver of immigration and asylum claims from Central America.

And there is an uptick in high-caliber weapons illegally trafficked to Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean.

It is time to join Senators Durbin, Kaine, Markey, Murphy and Warren to co-sponsor the 2025 Armas Act (S.3508).

Co-sponsor S.3508 now!

**US SENATOR
ANDY KIM**

**Suite 550
Hart Senate
Office Building
Washington, DC
20510**

Ask Senator Andy Kim to help move the Armas Act through Congress by co-sponsoring Senate Bill, S.3508. Request a small stack of postcards to share with your contacts: info@peaceworks.org. Also, go to PeaceWorks.org to download a letter to send to both Senators Kim and Booker.

And please come to our June 6th lunch forum with the Quixote Center’s Kim Lamberty to learn more about this campaign and other steps we need to take together to stop the illegal arms trade in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In friendship and solidarity,
 Denis, Diane, Guy, John, Maggie, Marilyn, Micha and Susan
 PeaceWorks Board

[**Note:** the information provided in this newsletter is based on a 2024 GAO Drug Trafficking Report, Congressman Joaquin Castro’s Armas Act news release, a Center for Strategic & International Studies forum posted on youtube, the Quixote Center’s website, the ChurchTimes.uk.co and our own interaction with Delaney Hall volunteers and families.]

PEACEWORKS Ready-to-go Projects

- General support for PeaceWorks to expand programming and explore new projects.
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$_____
- Potable water systems and sanitation for families in Santa Ana and Los Corozales.
\$50 \$100 \$250 \$1000 \$_____
- Come to “Brushstrokes for Peace” on June 28th at the Fire Me Up Studio in Cranford. If you can’t make it, make a donation to support Inhijambia:
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$_____

- Contribute to rural development projects for women.
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$_____
- Support education and therapy for children with disabilities with the Mariposa Spanish School’s Chispa de Vida Program.
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$_____
- Assist with sea turtle conservation at the Juan Venado Sea Turtle Sanctuary.
\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$_____

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