

June 20, 2023 | Myanmar

## Sweden must act to stop Indian arms sales to Myanmar military

Sweden must act on recent Indian arms sales to the Myanmar military and investigate how components of Swedish arms are once again being exported from India to Myanmar, despite the EU arms embargo.

Justice For Myanmar calls on the Swedish government and its arms control authority, the Inspectorate of Strategic Products (ISP), to take necessary measures to ensure that Swedish arms do not end up in the hands of the illegal Myanmar military junta that is committing atrocities throughout the country with total impunity.

On 29 March 2023, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs Tobias Billström responded to an inquiry by Member of Parliament, Håkan Svenneling, on measures taken by the Swedish government to prevent the re-export of weapons produced under Swedish licence in India.

The inquiry follows an investigation by Justice For Myanmar that found that some of the arms and associated components sold from India to the Myanmar military have been Swedish designed, including fuses for Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles, developed and produced by Saab Group.

As an EU member state, it is prohibited for Sweden to transfer arms and dual use items and technologies to the Myanmar military.

In responding to MP Håkan Svenneling's question, Billström confirmed that Swedish Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles have been manufactured in India under licence since the 1970s. He also confirmed that Sweden has transferred Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles to India and that some of these transferred arms have been diverted from India to Myanmar.

In 2012, this diversion was subject to an official investigation by the ISP.

According to Billström, the ISP concluded that India was respecting its commitments to not re-export weapons manufactured under Swedish licence and that the Indian government had taken sufficient measures to reduce the risk of diversion.

However, since the 2012 investigation concluded, Indian firm Sandeep Metalcraft Private Limited has supplied the Myanmar military with time mechanical fuse 447 designed for 84 mm Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles, despite the Myanmar military's genocide against the Rohingya and ongoing international crimes. One shipment of fuse 447 was sent to Myanmar in 2019 and a second shipment likely of fuse 447 was shipped after the Myanmar military's attempted coup, directly supporting its campaign of terror. Sandeep Metalcraft still advertises Carl Gustaf fuses on its website.

The information exposed by Justice For Myanmar therefore suggests that key components for ammunition for Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles once again have been diverted from India to Myanmar. This casts doubt on the Indian government's willingness to comply with end-user commitments and take appropriate measures to reduce the risk of diversion.

Billström's response did not address the questions raised about the recent transfer of fuses for Carl Gustaf rifles from India to Myanmar.

In response to Justice For Myanmar's earlier investigation, Saab declined to respond to questions on whether the transferred fuses would require a Saab licence to be produced, and whether Saab's licence production agreements with Indian companies prohibit or restrict onward exports from India to other countries. It is unclear whether Sandeep Metalcraft is in a position to manufacture the fuses in India without licensable parts and assistance from the Saab Group.

India has continued to export military hardware, including 122 mm barrels for howitzers, to the Myanmar military as late as October 2022. The manufacturer of these barrels is Yantra India Limited, a state-owned public sector undertaking associated with the Indian Ministry of Defence.

Yantra India Limited's ordnance factory in Ambajhari currently produces 84 mm mark-III FFV 551 Carl Gustaf ammunition. The FFV551 is the primary high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) round and is a rocket-assisted projectile.

Billström, in his response, also noted a new system, in place as of March 1, 2022, that implies supervisory controls in foreign countries that have received transfers of light weapons made in Sweden, such as Carl Gustaf recoilless rifles and ammunition for this category of weapon.

This system may include post-transfer verification visits in recipient countries to reduce risks of diversion, including the risk of re-export to other countries without prior and explicit permission from Sweden.

The new system also implies that countries that have not acted in accordance with commitments to not re-export Swedish light arms without prior consent from Sweden should not be considered eligible as recipients of new transfers of arms made in Sweden or of transfers foreseen as part of prior deals made with Sweden, as long as the commitments continue to be contravened or where a recipient country refuses to accept a post-transfer verification visit.

It is not clear whether ISP has undertaken, or intends to undertake, an official investigation into the transfer by Sandeep Metalcraft fuses for Carl Gustaf rifles to Myanmar. ISP should urgently investigate if any of the Sandeep Metalcraft shipments to Myanmar contain Swedish technology and make public any past or future investigation carried out to this end.

Justice For Myanmar supports the proposal made by members of Parliament Håkan Svenneling et al of April 28, 2023, asking the Swedish government to adopt a strategy to prevent the re-export of Swedish arms to Myanmar.

Justice For Myanmar notes with concern that in September 2022, Saab announced its decision to set up a production facility in India for its Carl-Gustaf M4 shoulder-fired weapon system. For this venture, Saab FFV India is being established as a new company to make the rocket launchers for the Indian military, as well as parts of other weapons platforms for foreign states.

This move is particularly alarming in light of India's increasing military co-operation with the Myanmar military after its campaign of genocide against the Rohingya in 2017. In July 2019, India and Myanmar signed a Memorandum of Understanding to increase defence co-operation and has continued to support the Myanmar military after its coup attempt.

According to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India was the third largest supplier of weapons to Myanmar for the years 2017-2021, accounting for 17% of Myanmar's arms imports after China (36%) and Russia (27%).

**Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says:** “We are deeply concerned about Sweden’s apparent ties to the supply of weapons to the Myanmar military, which is intensifying its indiscriminate attacks against the people.

“The ISP must fully investigate how components of Swedish light arms and their ammunition are still being exported from India to Myanmar, including from Sandeep Metalcraft, and ensure that Sweden abides by the EU arms embargo, which prohibits Sweden from transferring arms and dual use goods to the Myanmar military.

“The Swedish government needs to take urgent action to prevent further diversion, including a suspension of export and production agreements with Indian arms manufacturers in light of India’s blatant disregard for the norms of conduct contained in the Wassenaar Arrangement and in international humanitarian law, as seen in the continued business Indian arms manufacturers have with the illegal Myanmar military junta.

“We demand that the ISP evaluation leading to a decision to grant Saab the right to establish an M4 manufacturing plant in India be made public in light of India’s well-known track record of exporting conventional arms, ammunition, parts and components to Myanmar, including from Swedish designed weapons.”

**More information:**

Read our investigation on how India is supplying fuses to Myanmar military, deepening complicity in its atrocity crimes: <https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/stories/india-supplying-fuzes-to-myanmar-military-deepening-complicity-in-its-atrocity-crimes>

**Justice For Myanmar** | [media@justiceformyanmar.org](mailto:media@justiceformyanmar.org)  
<https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/> | Mirror: <https://justiceformyanmar.github.io/justiceformyanmar.org/>  
<https://twitter.com/justicemyanmar> | <https://www.facebook.com/justiceformyanmar.org/>

Justice For Myanmar, a group of covert activists campaigning for justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar, is calling for an end to military business and for federal democracy and a sustainable peace.