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Pressrelease

**Heckler & Koch employees sentenced over illegal exports of G-36 rifles to Mexico by German court**

For the first time in the company's history the German arms manufacturer Heckler & Koch has been found guilty of illegal arms exports. Two former H&K employees, the former sales director I. Sahlmann and the administrative case worker M. Beuter were sentenced to suspended prison sentences. The court found them guilty of illegally trading arms with Mexico in a "gang like" organization. The two CEOs P. Beyerle and J. Meurer, as well as the former sales director W. Mackrodt, were found not guilty.

"Clearly this is a two-class verdict: The small are hanged while the big fish go free," says Jürgen Grässlin, president of the Arms Information Centre, spokesperson for the DFG-VK and the "Outcry Campaign to Stop the Arms Trade", "As the original complainant in the case against Heckler & Koch I strongly welcome the high fine of over 3.7 million euros that was imposed on the company. All in all, this criminal trial against Heckler & Koch has been a big success for the peace, development and human rights movement. The trial sent the positive signal that illegal arms deals are uncovered by us and penalized by courts."

Moreover, the court decided that the so-called end-user certificates are not part of the official approval of arms exports. Consequently, the illegal arms exports to four Mexican provinces are not punishable under the harsher War Weapons Control Act but under the laxer Foreign Trade Act. "If this verdict stands, the current arms export control regime is finished. A completely new and effective arms export control law must be introduced," says the attorney Holger Rothbauer.

"The fact that throughout the trial and in the verdict the victims in Mexico did not play a role at all is reprehensible and quite frightening," criticizes Carola Hausotter of the German Human Rights Coordination Mexico. "We hope that this verdict will prevent any further arms exports to Mexico and other regions of conflict as they cause unfathomable suffering," says Leonel Gutiérrez, the brother of Aldo Gutiérrez, who was seriously injured in a police attack with G-36 assault rifles and has been in a coma since.

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