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Swedish peace activists get four months imprisonment

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For breaking into a Saab Bofors arms factory in Eskilstuna, Sweden, and disarming 14 Carl Gustaf bazookas, a local court today sentenced Anna Andersson and Martin Smedjeback to four months imprisonment. The judge dismissed Saab's claim for some 120 000 Euros in damages.

– I commend with all my heart the bravery of Swedish citizens who oppose the weapons export of their government, said Daniel Berrigan, poet and fellow founder of the ploughshares movement, who joins some one thousand international and Swedish supporters on www.avrusta.se and on Facebook.

The trial on March 9 was unusual in so far as the judge never once interrupted Andersson and Smedjeback. Instead they carefully argued and explained how their action on October 16, 2008, was a way to safeguard the official Swedish guidelines banning the country from supplying arms to warring states.

– Saab Bofors Dynamics deliver grenade launchers to the US military, which among other places, uses them in Iraq. I am ready to be imprisoned if necessary to hinder arms exports that cause so much suffering and death, said Martin Smedjeback, 35, a nonviolence trainer.

In a public gathering on the Eskilstuna main square representatives from the largest peace movements in Sweden spoke - the Swedish Peace and Arbitration Society and the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation. The chairperson of the Christian Social Democratic movement also held a speech, about the importance of popular resistance against the weapons export. The manifestation also contained witnesses from the actions, a book cafe for locals who were also entertained by a musician and jesters.

– It is my duty to intervene due to the gross criminal damage and death that Saab causes around the world. Others who get in the way of Swedish weaponry, for example in Iraq and Afghanistan, pay a substantially higher price, said Anna Andersson, 27, a web developer.

Smedjeback was also sentenced to pay restitution of some 15 500 Euros for jumping over a fence at the Aimpoint red dot sights facility in Malmö, Sweden, in November 2008.. The ongoing campaign Avrusta ("Disarm") now counts a total of fourteen months of prison time and some 37 500 Euros in damages for stopping export arms.

Andersson's and Smedjeback's work is part of the Avrusta campaign, launched in September 2008 by the Swedish antimilitaristic network Ofog ("Mischief"). The campaign has rendered useless 14 Carl Gustaf grenade launchers and parts to 9 units of howitzer FH77B. The campaign continues its work.

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For more info on the trial, including statements and video: <http://www.ofog.org/r%C3%A4tteg%C3%A5ngar>

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For images from trial day: http://www.ofog.org/avrusta_bilder

The Ofog network works since 2002 against nuclear arms and militarization, using techniques including peaceful actions and civil disobedience

www.ofog.org

www.avrusta.se