

Author: Nelly Martin

Coordination Européenne Marche Mondiale des Femmes
<marchfem@rezisting.org> <<http://www.marchemondiale.org>>

PEACE AND DEMILITARIZATION

Patriarchy and capitalism use war to maintain their domination. Militarization is a reflection of the division of roles in patriarchy. It conveys the idea that masculinity is associated with violence and militarization, and implies that women need the protection of men and the military. The patriarchal and capitalist systems have made violence natural, a violence that is expressed through militarization and war.

The military institution contributes in various ways, to train young men to occupy their dominant place in the social relations of gender. We can consider the army as military as one of the most important patriarchal organizations in all societies, and one that most reveals the unequal social relationships characterizing gender: hierarchy of power, domination and leader-worship, obedience, physical abuse, lack of critical thinking, a closed circle of "boys" ... This model of masculinity, associated with force and aggression, is unfortunately a reference for growing young people.

The governments and the elites do little or virtually nothing, through cynicism and helplessness, leaving the poor to kill each other for well-defined territory, with few jobs and few public resources. And, when they react, they do so by increasing repression through zero tolerance policies and fuelling the spiral of violence.

Women's bodies: a battlefield for soldiers

Women have always suffered the horrors of war, both in body and in their living conditions. They were in turn regarded as "spoils of war", "bargaining chip", "warrior's repose" or "battlefield". They are in every instance reduced to the rank of objects and perceived as the property of men.

Rape is used, either to humiliate, shame or demoralize the enemy, or as a means of military propaganda, or more recently as a deliberate policy of purification or ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war in former Yugoslavia, as act of genocide in Rwanda, as political terror in Haiti, or finally as a symbol of victory. The massive and systematic rape of women during armed conflict also helps prepare them for other ill-treatment, but above all to isolate and marginalize them socially because in many countries they will be rejected by their families and banished.

The lives of women in armed conflict

- In the wars called "modern", the number of civilian casualties is much larger than military casualties, and it is mostly women and children.
- There is a systematic increase of trafficking for sexual purposes and prostitution in the vicinity of military bases or military camps. There is regulation of "official" brothels used for the "warrior's repose." Very often, these are women who were raped and banished from their community and that way led into prostitution and trafficking.

- Women must deal with tasks of daily life, children, and food in times of war, and these tasks become very difficult and often dangerous: destruction of their homes, lack of supplies of food, reliance on NGOs,
- Women are becoming refugees in large numbers with massive dislocations in difficult conditions, living in camps .
- Women experience humiliation in war and after. For example, Palestinian women are constantly sexually harassed at checkpoints in Israel, which are also known as "barriers of humiliation"
- After the war, women, having also lost children and family members often find themselves alone in caring for children, elderly, sick.
- Domestic violence increases in armed conflicts, and after the return of their husbands, often marked by deep trauma, physical and / or psychological, after experiencing the horror of war.
- Fundamentalism of all kinds increases with war, weakening of the status of women.
- Fundamental freedoms are curtailed in the name of national security.
- Military budgets affect public finances and reduce investment in public services - health, education, income security, housing, environmental protection - that women need as users, for themselves and their families, and as women.

Feminists for a culture of peace

There are two perspectives on the importance of women in building a culture of peace. One argues that women are key elements in the peace process. Because of their natural and spiritual role as the source of life, they are less prone to be violent. The other, the wider feminist vision that links patriarchy to war, insists on the question of demilitarization and believes that a culture of peace goes further than the mere absence of war.

Thus, feminists fighting for women's rights in conflict zones, for the elimination of rape and slavery as a weapon of war, protest against the impunity of attackers / states / groups. Their actions against war and militarization also require the inclusion of women in peace processes, civil disobedience as a response to aggression, the construction of transnational linkages and the rejection of nationalism.

An active vision of peace is the full and active recognition of women's rights, equal participation of women in the process of building peace, the eradication of poverty, violence and exclusion, solidarity, the existence of an independent judiciary and an education that does not value violence and sexist behaviour.

Proposals

- Actions for the demilitarization and pressure on national governments to reduce military spending and non-renewal of agreements on foreign military bases.
- Denunciation and boycott of companies and states benefiting from war (arms industry, oil).
- Make known the reality of countries in conflict, including "hidden" conflicts; make heard especially the voices of women and the extreme double violence they experience.
- Combat impunity by denouncing those who perpetuate violence against women in countries in conflict: states, paramilitaries, guerrillas, peacekeepers of UNAIDS.
- Make visible the ideological manipulation of the fight against terrorism which seeks to legitimize war and terror as a means to control women, peoples, Natural resources, and to criminalize social protest and social movement.

Council Resolution 1325 UN Security underlines specifically the impact of war on women, and requires that member states include women in all peace negotiations and in the process of conflict resolution. Its approval is the result of the work and pressure from women. We need better awareness and demand its implementation.

