



Newsletter 1/2022

FOCUS **DEMILITARISATION**

Invest in comprehensive security for all

Since the beginning of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, there have been calls for rearmament and higher military spending. As a feminist peace organisation, we oppose the claim that more weapons lead to more security. We call for demilitarisation and disarmament, because this is the only way to achieve genuine peace and comprehensive security. Our Board member Margo Okazawa-Rey and our programme and network manager Annemarie Sancar explain why the world is at a crossroads today.

Several parties, including some left-of-centre, and also some women, are either calling for rearmament or support arms deliveries to Ukraine. How is this possible? “The patriarchal ideas of security are firmly anchored in the social structures of the countries of the Global North,” says Annemarie Sancar. In crisis situations, such as the war in Ukraine, many people would therefore “fall back on what seems to give them security, namely weapons, tanks and fighter planes”. With a simplified black-and-white model of an “enemy”, any militarised decision can be pushed through, from increasing the military budget to buying fighter jets, using the argument of protecting one’s own community.

Even before Russia escalated the war in Ukraine, global arms spending reached a new high: in 2021, for the first time, states worldwide invested more than two trillion US dollars in their

armed forces. UN Women has calculated that global military spending in one year could cover the regular budget of the United Nations for 650 years.

“War is the tip of the iceberg. It’s the visible manifestation of how many countries’ political and economic institutions are organised, and now re-organising, to prepare for wars and armed conflicts,” says Margo Okazawa-Rey, co-founder of the International Women’s Network Against Militarism, citing the USA, China or Israel as examples. Switzerland, too, after almost 30 years of slightly decreasing military spending, now wants to increase the Swiss army budget by 2 billion Swiss francs annually, to 1% of the gross domestic product.

People instead of profit maximisation

Militarisation is more than “just” more spending on armed forces. From a feminist perspective, militarisation is a form of violent masculinity that reinforces or reconstructs a patriarchal system and is closely intertwined with other systems of oppression, such as racism and colonisation. Spending on the military is “investing in security geared towards war”, explains Annemarie Sancar, and falls well short of the goal of comprehensive security.

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The consequences of these investments are far-reaching and profound for the whole of society, and especially for women. When a state spends more money on armaments, it has to be taken from elsewhere. Rearmament happens at the expense of spending on education, health and development cooperation. When men are sent to war, women often remain in contested areas for a long time. They bear the consequences of war: violence, food and drinking water shortages, polluted environments and additional care responsibilities.

Security should not be understood in military terms but in socio-political terms, says Annemarie Sancar. "Security has to mean that the economy focuses on people and not on maximising the profits of individuals and companies." Demilitarisation consequently requires a shift in investment away from military build-up towards a society "that sees the well-being of all people at its centre". To this end, notions of strength must be rethought and all the voices must be heard.

Voices for a just peace

What is often dismissed as banal is the only route to more peace and more security for everyone. Feminists in particular need to react. "Wars and militarism are patriarchal, masculinist ideals and practices. Women participate and support these as well. As feminists we must challenge these ideals – ideologically and in practice," says Margo Okazawa-Rey. She sees the world at a crossroads. "At this point in human history and given the current situation, we – people of the planet – stand either on the side of culture of killing or culture of life."

What could the response to this be? Margo Okazawa-Rey believes a global movement confronting militarism with non-violent action is needed now. The voices of those demanding a just peace, in Ukraine and in the many other countries affected by armed conflict, must be amplified.

In our work in Switzerland and abroad, these voices are central. We are committed to disarmament and to the conditions that make a secure life possible for all, says Annemarie Sancar. Whether in the series of events on demilitarisation, in the "Feminist Peace Initiatives" projects from the global network or at the Women's Peace Tables, together with our project partners, we demonstrate the diversity of peace policy work "when the security of women doing care work in particular is at the centre."

Read an article by Margo Okazawa-Rey in the "Feminists Connecting for Peace" magazine (see article on the right). You can find more information on our website under Network and Events.

Supporting feminist peace activists and making their work visible are at the heart of PeaceWomen Across the Globe's vision and work. To this end, we have launched the "Feminists Connecting for Peace" magazine. Activists from our global network of the same name share their insights and experiences in articles and interviews. The first issue is dedicated to the topic of demilitarisation.

Countless people are affected by war and violence or suffer from militarised oppression and colonial policies. Militarisation is a form of patriarchal violence that affects the lives of many people. Feminists around the world are committed to making life safe in ways that go far beyond the military concept of "security", and instead embrace a feminist understanding of peace.

The magazine reflects the diversity of the network with its varied contributions and approaches to combating militarisation.

You can read the magazine on our website under Network. We hope that these three examples will inspire you:

Kosovo: Reintegration of "IS women"

The article by Shukrie Gashi and Hilmije Ramabaja is about the repatriation and reintegration of the approximately 400 Kosovar women and men who joined Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq between 2012 and 2015. "They were convinced they were supporting efforts for 'democratic change' in both countries, but when they reached the war zones, they were confronted with a completely different reality," they write.

Slightly more than half, mainly women and children, have now returned to a country still suffering the consequences of the war in former Yugoslavia. The authors describe the work of Partners Kosova Center for Conflict Management (Partners K), a non-governmental organisation that works, among other things, to prevent and counter violent extremism. Shukrie Gashi is the founder and director of Partners K; Hilmije Ramabaja is the programme manager. PeaceWomen Across the Globe is supporting their project "Women Breaking Silence, Changing Narratives".

The authors (from left to right): Hilmije Ramabaja, Shukrie Gashi (both Kosovo), Ha'ani Lucia Falo San Nicola (Guam), Marieke Fröhlich (Germany)



First issue of “Feminists Connecting for Peace” magazine

In their contribution, they show where obstacles to the reintegration of returnees remain and why women should exert political influence at the local and national levels to create space for the reintegration of returnees.

Guam: Indigenous people against militarisation

Hope Cristobal is a former senator and an activist who has campaigned for decades for the rights of the CHamoru indigenous people on the Pacific island of Guam and against colonisation and militarisation by the US. Hope Cristobal has been nominated for the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize.

“How do we resist colonialism and militarism?”

For the magazine, Ha’ani Lucia Falo San Nicola spoke with “Saina Hope”, as she is known, about CHamoru activism against militarisation. Ha’ani is a member of our project partner I Hagan Fama-lao’an Guåhan, a CHamoru women’s organisation co-founded by Hope Cristobal. We supported a project in 2021 that facilitates intergenerational exchange between indigenous women who are grappling with the question of how to resist colonialism and militarism.

Saina Hope was a key figure in the formation of several demilitarisation groups after nearly 10,000 US Marines were redeployed from Okinawa to Guam in 2006. Guam has been a major base for US forces since World War II, with far-reaching impacts on the local population and the environment.

WILPF Germany: Feminist solidarity and demilitarisation

An excerpt from the text by Marieke Fröhlich, co-chair of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the women’s peace organisation founded in 1915:

“Today, disarmament is at the centre of our work for feminist peace. The reasons for this have long been proven by research: from the harmful production industry to corrupt sales flows to lethal use – there is no place in the existence of weapons that does not exert ecological, gender, racial or other forms of violence. However, when speaking from the position of relative privilege and security, e.g. in EU countries, unreflective universal declarations of disarmament ‘come what may’ can themselves become means of oppression. (...)”

“No place without violence in the existence of weapons.”

Even emancipatory movements can be afflicted with and exist in structural systems of discrimination, violence and oppression. The women’s movement is no exception. (...) It is important that we take care not to place our own perspectives (...) above those who are affected by the very violence and oppression we want to fight.”

You can find the magazine on our website under Network.





UKRAINE EMERGENCY FUND

“It is nice that you haven’t forgotten us”

Shortly after the war of aggression in Ukraine began in February, we opened an emergency fund to support people in embattled areas in eastern Ukraine, especially the women who participated in our 2021 Women’s Peace Tables. Thanks to the network of our partner organisation, KFR Public Alternative, a large number of people in need received essential everyday items.

While the war raged around them, volunteers opened distribution points within a very short time. They located and bought food and medicines, among other things, and also delivered the goods directly to people with health-related restricted mobility. For families with disabled people, mothers and children, they organised transport abroad. The volunteers told us how people held out in the basements and corridors of bombed-out apartment buildings, how the earth shook during bombardments. They carried on nonetheless.

Olena Zinenko coordinated this initiative together with a network of volunteer activists and their co-workers in and around Sloviansk, Sievierodonetsk and

Kharkiv, where Public Alternative is based. She is the project coordinator at Public Alternative and also the coordinator of our project in eastern Ukraine. Olena, who fled abroad with her family, continues to be in contact with us, organising the money transfers and making sure the funds reach the volunteers.

Medicine and “Good News”

One of the Women’s Peace Table participants used the money to buy medicine for 30 children in the Kharkiv hospice. Another used part of the money for an internet connection: with her “Good News” and #KharkovLIVE projects, she spreads useful information, encouraging stories and offers psychological support via social media.

Food, medicine, baby clothes, water, petrol, SIM cards and generators: the activists and volunteers have provided these to dozens of people. They enabled them not only to survive, but also to have vital contact with the outside world.

Without donations from people like you, this would not have been possible. By the end of April, more than CHF 28,000 had been received. We thank you from

the bottom of our hearts and gladly convey the words of another Peace Table participant: “Thanks to this support, we can persevere. It is nice that you have not forgotten us.”

The editorial deadline for this article was 9 May. You can find out more about our Ukraine projects on our website under Activities – Projects. If you would like to donate, you will find all the information on the website under Support – Donate (please mark your donation “Ukraine”). The photographs were sent to us by the volunteers.

Your legacy is in good hands

Do you want your lifelong commitment to women to have an impact beyond your death? PeaceWomen Across the Globe, together with its partners, is committed to a more just society. With your legacy you contribute towards this.

Deciding on a legacy takes care and time. We shall be happy to support you.

Contact Franziska Vogel, +41 31 312 02 40 or franziska.vogel@1000peacewomen.org.

For peace and gender justice

Please support our women’s peace work with a donation. Thank you!

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