



Women as victims of austerity policy

Declaration on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Poverty on 17 October 2012

Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte

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On the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (IFFF / WILPF) alerts on the tragic consequences of the austerity policies of the European Union, especially for women. By the pressure of financial markets, the policy in Europe is shaped by drastic reduction of public spending, wage and pension cuts and the reduction of social security, sometimes also by tax increases that hit in particular the poor and vulnerable.

Women are affected by it in the first place: the unpaid work of women increases, the state withdraws from the social security. Thus also increase pressure and stress, dependency, violence, roll back in traditional roles and exclusion from access to resources. Instead of investing in poverty, civil conflict resolution and human rights, the promotion of prevention against HIV, abortion centers, family planning, pre- and post-natal health care and preventive health services are being reduced. The Federal Constitutional Court attested Germany in its ruling on the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act / Basic Services of July, 18th 2012 that the present rates according to the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz), being significantly lower in relation to the general welfare, violate the fundamental right to a minimum existence, protected as human dignity in the Basic Law of Germany (Grundgesetz) – and this has been the case for 20 years so far.

Against the background described, it seems particularly strange that of all the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Poverty threatens the social peace and cohesion in the world. The EU stands not only for social sell-out, it is also directly involved in global conflicts over resources and strategic influence, created with FRONTEX a militant institution to exclude immigrants, and Europe's armament industry and arms trade is one of the greatest destruction causes worldwide. WILPF will address this also at the European Social Forum in Florence in November, where the German Section participates together with other WILPF sections of Europe.

One in eight people worldwide suffer from hunger, as the world food organization FAO announced in its hunger report this month. After 2007, there was hardly improvement in the fight against hunger, although already in 2000 150 countries committed to the Millennium declarations, to provide for halving the proportion of people who suffer from extreme poverty and hunger until 2015. More than 100 million children worldwide are underweight. Malnutrition leads to more than 2.5 million children's death. This even though a yearly amount necessary for the fight against hunger by only € 10 billion was calculated.

Given these numbers, it shocked that Germany alone spent 2011 around € 35.5 billion for armament. 1.3% of the gross domestic product of Germany was for military purposes, and only 0.38% for development cooperation. Germany is the largest arms exporter in Europe and ranks third as arms supplier worldwide behind the U.S. and Russia. We call to reduce the excessive military expenditures and the arms trade in favor of social and economic development, as the community of states had decided at the UN Conference on Women in Beijing 1995.



The **Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF, Internationale Frauenliga für Frieden und Freiheit, IFFF)** campaigns against war and the military and for the support of non-violent approaches to conflict management. It is an international non-governmental organization with sections in over 40 countries and all continents of this world. WILPF has consultative status with various bodies of the United Nations with an international office in Geneva, and a New York office, which is mainly dedicated to the work of the UN. Since its founding in 1915, WILPF women from around the world bring together women in order to jointly commit to peace and to economic, political and social equality for all people.

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