

Speech by Lilian Halls-French, EFI-IFE Co-President

PitchWise Festival of Women's Art and Activism organised by the CURE Fondation and held in Sarajevo (<https://fondacijacure.org/en/pitchwise-eng/>)

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Mesdames et messieurs, dear colleagues, dear friends,

It is a huge pleasure and an honor for me to be present in this festival and to be part of this panel.

I am representing EuroMed Feminist Initiative - EFI - whose 20th anniversary will be celebrated soon.

EFI is a policy network present on both sides of the Mediterranean, that provides expertise in the field of gender equality as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, we advocate for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of people to self-determination. We have long term relations of cooperation and solidarity with your region and now narrow ones with Cure Foundation

Thank you for giving me the opportunity today to share our approach to patriarchy and war, to peace and women security issues which have always been at the heart of our network's concerns.

The situation of the region where we are acting is, in the North, countries devastated by the crises, successive austerity plans, rising of the populisms, religious extremists, nationalisms and threats of global war, in the South, countries ravaged by military interventions, occupation and conflicts.

To act in this uncertain world led us very early to question the traditional approaches of democracy, peace and security and to highlight the continuum of VAW from peace to war: physical, social, sexual violence exist in peace times, the presence of arms does not create them but just amplifies them: Peace means nothing for women subjected to physical, psychological and economic violence, whether it comes from their partner, their family; their employers, armed groups, fanatical movements, institutions or States, in other words security deserves its name only if it includes the two components of humanity and integrates the intricately linked notions of real equality, full citizenship and the universality of rights.

Unfortunately, the concept of human security at the international level.

20 et 25% of women in Europe are victims of violence during their life. The terrifying scope of this violence is now well known; however, the state's security policies continue to ignore it.

We are active with other components of the women's' rights movement to make the voices of women heard in the whole EuroMed region.

In the wake of Arab spring, for now more than a decade EuroMed Feminist Initiative has supported the relentless fight of women in the southern countries: Palestine, Syria, Iraq, for political solutions to conflicts, democratic transitions inclusive of women's rights, end of occupation and apartheid. One of the most valuable tools we use in this field is the UNSC Resolution 1325 the first to state that war and the militarization of the world affect women and men,.1325 is also a binding resolution on the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace processes, finally, it is a precious mean of recourse for women

against the violence with which they are confronted and for enhancing women's participation in all aspects of post-conflict reconstruction.

The Implementation of this resolution requests a National Action Plan, this is a battle that we are very proud to have won with our Iraqi colleagues: we supported and accompanied the elaboration and the launching of the NAP 1325 in Iraq (2012-2014) the first one in the Region.

All along these years two main issues have been paving our common way: conflict related sexual violence and access of women to decision making in the field of peace and security with the shared conviction that without justice, there can be no peace or political solution/ and the same determination to fight impunity of crimes and to support to the work of national courts and international mechanisms against the perpetrators. The international community must act to stop and punish them but not with arms. As internationalists and pacifists, we know that military interventions and occupation are bringing neither sustainable peace nor sustainable solution to the conflicts and that during conflicts, women's rights are the first to be sacrificed.

The first victims of "punitive actions" and "surgical strikes" are always the civilian population. The term "collateral damage" is a cover of misery that hides the grim reality of unspeakable human suffering.

We are working daily to broaden the concept of security to violence against women, the structural violence that women face daily. Our goal is to radically change the terms of the debate on security and to make the voices and experiences of women heard.

Our common commitment is based on the absolute certitude that feminism is a driving force for the transformation that our societies urgently need because it carries the requirement of equality.

Hélas feminism remains in our patriarchal societies the weak link of the political thought, which largely continues to hide the fact that one half of humanity is dominated by the other.

The agreement in principle on feminism, we have it, but we still must convince that considering the values on which political feminism is based in daily social practices is one of the conditions required to transform our societies in the long term and build a world of peace social justice and peace. The political sphere is still widely male in all its aspects: composition, functioning, history, language.

The road is long and full of obstacles; however, it is only with the involvement of all the components of the democratic movement that the conditions for a real change will be gathered.

Let us come to war and patriarchy: who can deny that military armament goes hand in hand with social disarmament? States transfer their responsibilities on social level to the domestic sphere with the result of keeping or sending women home and maintaining them in their traditional role of mother and caretaker pillar at home.

This echoes the role the military institution assigns to women: being protected from the other NATO instrument of destruction and death, is now invested with the role of guarantor of democracy, the army is valued for its contribution to humanitarian assistance, to the overthrow of dictators. So, militarism is not only war, but also the supremacy of values that lead to the exclusion of women from conflict management structures and processes, peace negotiation processes and political transition. This is patriarchy

As long as the questions of male patriarchal domination and women subordination will not be first rank political issues, there will not be democratic alternative to our societies. So how long shall we wait, knowing that in all parts of the world, as consequences of the present economic, political and health situation, women face massive and increasing attacks on their rights, their freedom, and their security?

Violence against women in all its forms is the wall that must be knocked down.

Allow me to refer to the French philosopher Olivia Gazalé. In her book *«Le Mythe de la virilité»* (the myth of manhood) she writes *« The Goal of Mussolini is the regeneration of his country by the He wants to create the warrior class always ready to die «. « The war must be the forge of the new male Italian by soaking in the iron and the fire a new virility »* but she brightly demonstrates that a man is not born a man but becomes a man in our patriarchal societies.

No, we don't believe in a bad male and good female nature: when women rule in the name of patriarchy—they launch wars and pass into effect policies that benefit this system of domination.

Besides we are not convinced that the new prime Minister in England Liz Truss will bring back peace and democracy in Europe as she pretends to do

So, it is not on behalf of their smoother and better human nature that we fight for the presence of women in all the political processes notably peace and transitional justice processes but on behalf of social justice and fundamental right of women to take part of the decisions that engage their lives. The historical Feminist slogan "private is politics" is still ours. European governments are pushing societies back into the 19th century, but women refuse to go back homes, women back homes is a general tendency and we oppose the present revival of the reactionary patriarchal model, father at work, mother at home - with a demand of a real equality in all aspects of life.

I will conclude here by highlighting once more here the work accomplished by Women's Rights CSOs to combat VAW and defend the right of women to a life free of fear and oppression but also their right to a meaningful role in all spheres of decision making, peacemaking processes and transitional political processes, this work is tremendous and irreplaceable. International solidarity is one of our precious assets, that's why I am sincerely happy to be present with you to day