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SECURITY IN EUROPE FOR WHOM?

European Feminist Conference
European Parliament, Brussels
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CONCLUSIONS

European Feminist Initiative IFE-EFI gathered on September 18th-19th in premises of The European Parliament in Brussels about 60 feminist activists from The Balkans and the other European regions and some members of the peace movement on a conference "*Security in Europe for Whom?*" The conference was supported by the European Parliamentary group GUE/NGL. Feminists across geopolitical borders and different contexts shared knowledge and experiences and brought forward feminist discussions and alternatives for a different Europe, aiming at broadening and enriching the political debate in EU on human security and having the women's feminist and experiential voices heard in this field.

1) The conference provided space for articulation of the multi-layered discrimination of women within the gender power structures in our societies that sustain the oppression, the subordination of women and their feeling of in/security globally, in Europe /within EU and outside/, in our communities and reaching further our homes.

2) The conference agreed that if the European project wishes to be a bearer of true peace, social justice and democracy, the EU mainstream politics should recognize the link between patriarchy, male violence against women and war and should urgently start reshaping and re-conceptualizing the European security and defense politics. In doing this feminist analyses and critique is indispensable and is urgently needed to be taken into consideration by policy-and decision makers.

3) The conference made connections and outlined different links stressing the emergency of the political recognition of the (global) marginalization of women's different needs and resources, including security needs, as a precondition to affect the political, economical and just redistribution of resources and power. It brought forward inequality between men and women as a major obstacle to development of societies. The discussions uncovered the connection between male violence against women, patriarchy and gender power structures that sustain and perpetuate gender power misbalance. They outlined links between structures of violence in war and in patriarchal societies in "peace" whose faces are precariousness, unemployment, economic insecurity, trafficking and prostitution. The conference also highlighted the links between the global militaristic system and the patriarchal oppression and called for articulating and affirming ethics of care and a feminist platform of security through responsibility.

4) The discussions made it possible to see that and how military violence used by armies in war justifies and turns into rape and sexual humiliation during war and also into domestic violence against women at home in "peace". This on the other hand brought light to the need of applying multiple and radical approaches to questioning and destabilizing the conventional patriarchal concepts of war and peace and security. The speakers conveyed a sense of urgency, viewing security as a position towards humanity and based on solidarity ethics. This conveyed the need of urgently including feminist analyses into the politics of mainstream on all levels and while theoretically re-conceptualizing the above mentioned concepts. Along with this an immediate denunciation of all forms of war as a way to solve conflicts, of militarism and other forms of violence and demanding global demilitarization was put forward.

5) The speakers went further into outlining the link between (lack of) gender equality in nowadays Europe and the (lack of) binding legal framework on European level that promotes and insures gender justice and democracy and secures redistribution of power between women and men. This also raised the question of urgently and on a broad level starting re-examining the concept of democracy. The fact that of the 202 members of the Convention that produced the proposal for EU constitution only 17 were women is only one side of a democratic sufficiency problem.

6) The conference uncovered the connection between the increase of military budgets and the rise of armaments with the shrinking of budgets for the public sector uncovered how the (global) neo-liberal political regime imposed in EU is being established and spread to future member countries on the expenses of women. The conference showed concerns and questioned the European security and common defense model that creates federal security structure superior to that of the member states and that asks directly from the member states to increase military expenditure.

7) Further more the participants outlined the situation of sexual and reproductive rights of women across Europe and linked its deterioration with among others the growing influence and privileged status of the church given by the state and promoted in the Constitutional Treaty of the EU. They stressed that separation of the church from the state and promoting a secular Europe should be one of the main priorities of the European politics and concluded that EU should create policies that affirm the women's reproductive rights, the freedom of choice over her body and the right to free abortion as a women's human right and an issue of security.

8) Further the participants stressed the connection-and the difference between women's representation, participation and mainstreaming feminist politics that brings women's interests, needs and feminist demands high on the political agenda together with the needs of other neglected and discriminated groups of our societies. Targeting the patriarchal system in continuum and deconstructing the myth that (political) power does not suit women through, among other things, popular education was among the stated priorities.

9) The participants provided experiential and theoretical insights as well as critique into the traditional concept of security linking it with the posed title of the conference "Security in Europe for Whom?" By facing and uniting different experiences and knowledge of shared multilayered discrimination of women though peace and war, feminists and peace activists across the borders of the continent legitimately questioned the traditional concept of security as one limited to defending the rights of those in power. The question of human security was posed as personal, political and social

question and as a legitimate request to life without fear in all places and phases of life.

Male violence against women in its different forms is structural and crosses borders of states and boundaries of private homes. It is everywhere. For this reason it constitutes a security problem for each woman. The conference stressed the importance of the widening the conception of global security politics by including structural violence towards women in everyday life. It also reaffirmed that free choice for women means access to education, health, resources, labor and decision making power. While doing so the conference called for the urgent creation of policies and attitudes that would lead to transformation of gender power relations and perceptions of sexuality both in the private as in public space.

10) An address to the EU parliament, EC and the national governments demanding transformative changes and corrective policies that target the misbalance of gender power and women's sense of in/security is going to be delivered in the name of the participants of the conference.