

A brief report on the workshop “Feminism and Militarization” at the NATO counter-summit in Lisbon, Portugal, November 2010.

The counter-summit was part of the activities against the NATO Summit in November 2010 in Lisbon organized by the network “No to war – no to NATO”.

Although the counter summit had many qualified speakers and good workshops, participation was less than expected.

As in Strasbourg in April 2009 at the NATO 60th ‘Birthday’ summit, a “Feminism and Militarisation” [workshop](#) was organised for Lisbon, but due to a lot of local activities of women in Great Britain (demonstration in LONDON, action in STANFORD), and in Italy (TORINO, RAVENNA, PADOVA, ALBA, UDINE, FANO, BERGAMO, BOLOGNA, VERONA) the participation of women in preparation and participation directly in Lisbon was less than in Strasbourg, and one of the announced speakers, Christiane Reyman, canceled her participation at the workshop two days before.¹

Also the full program of the counter summit was not gender balanced.

Nevertheless the participation of around about 20 women was satisfactory. Among the participants were activists like Irina Castro from PAGAN, Portugal; Marlene Tuininga from French section of WILPF and Woman in Black France; Christine Hoffmann from pax christi, Germany, and myself, from [INES](#) (International Network of Engineers and Scientists)/[KriWi](#) (Unterstützung internationaler Kommunikation kritischer WissenschaftlerInnen und IngenieurInnen) and, also from Germany. The others were interested women from Portugal and abroad looking how they can participate in the struggles against war and NATO and for the emancipation of women. We had a sometimes controversial but inclusive debate in the workshop.

¹ The Strasbourg workshop 'NATO = Security? Gender Questions' was part of a mobilization of women by Women in Black, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Women and Life on Earth, and was attended by 40 women from eight countries. 14 papers were presented setting out a feminist case against NATO. Feeling the Strasbourg mass demonstration had been counter-productive, however, the women participants decided NOT to attend the following summit in Lisbon Nov 2010 as a group, but rather to put energy instead into organizing local actions against NATO that same weekend. Working together through an e-list womenagainstnato-list@gn.apc.org, they kept in touch during the year and on Nov 20 mounted women's 'say no to NATO' actions in London, Sheffield, Torino, Ravenna, Padova, Alba, Udine, Fano, Bergamo, Bologna and Verona. For our news, photos and articles see www.wloe.org. Women are welcome to join the ongoing e-list - for information or to subscribe please click on the link: <http://mailman-new.greennet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/womenagainstnato-list> (comment by Cynthia Cockburn).

We tried to analyze and criticize militarization from a feminist point of view, emphasizing the interrelation between patriarchal structures, militarization and NATO. We tried to work out our ideas and goals for a gender balanced and peaceful society by discussing the following questions:

- What are our specific criticisms of the new NATO strategy?
- What are the differences between female and male views of NATO?
- How can we overcome the misuse of women in NATO operations?
- Why is the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 into the NATO strategy not a step forward for empowering women and a peaceful society?

This discussion should be embedded in the general questions of:

- What can we do against the increasing connections between NATO operations and NGO civil development work.
- What must to be done to empower women?
- How can women fight against the militarization of our societies?

Irina gave a short overview of the situation in Portugal, which she has summarized here:

In November, Lisbon will be the stage for the signing of the new NATO strategic concept.

But that, you already know.

What you don't know yet, is that 65% of Portuguese population, that recently saw successive cuts in their social supports, health care and education, support this new and bloody concept.

What they don't know is that with this signing of the NATO strategic concept, this will be paid with more cuts in education and public health, with more and bigger cuts in social benefits increasing their taxes and this scenario will not be unique to Portugal. All citizens that belong to countries in NATO will have to pay this bill too.

The first thing that citizens of countries belonging to NATO must understand is that there is no difference between NATO and the United States regarding war and occupation.

Despite what these warlords say, as a feminist, I do not believe in other solutions to the conflicts than non-violent ones. The existence of army and militarism evokes a

spirit of nationalism, of misleading narratives, which impose heteronormativity within and calcified rigid gender roles.

Feminists in the world must refuse to be patriots' wives and mothers. We must refuse to stain our hands, as soldiers, with the blood of other women. Because we understand that support for NATO and its imperialist policies are responsible for immigration, exile and deportation linked with gender oppression. We feminists in the world must reject the demonization of Muslim citizens and their association with the term terrorism that only serves to justify capitalist imperialist invasions.

The model of democracy that is being taken to Afghanistan is fraudulent and manichaeian second capitalist freedom, and we know that the neoliberal economic model creates problems that affect dramatically women around the globe. We reject the imposition of an oppressive society over another.

*In November, we will take action in the streets of Lisbon to say enough is enough! We will be the voice of Afghan women **who** daily face the violence of the Taliban regime and the imperialist forces of NATO. And we will say no! Not in our name, never in our interest, this war is not allowed!*

Kristine spoke besides other about the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (women, peace and security) into the NATO strategy, which was also on the NATO summit agenda in Lisbon and asked the question: Is the implementation of Resolution 1325 into NATO a success for women?

The resolution requested more women everywhere, more women in decision taking roles, more women in security missions, more female soldiers on one hand and on the other hand the resolution stressed implementation of a gender perspective in all negotiations and to respect women's rights and the specific needs of women and girls. The resolution was created by the Security Council, which is an institution built up in the period of the cold war, dominated by five not elected countries, which reproduces heirarchical and patriarchal structures and dominates the UN.

The NATO uses this resolution to get more female soldiers and to misuse the women for their dirty job of war, of killing people. Due to this resolution NATO implemented a Gender office and an advisory committee of experts (NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives) tasked with promoting gender mainstreaming as a means of making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the

design and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and military operations. They enlarge the recruiting of female soldiers, especially in Afghanistan. The female soldiers should make contact to the Afghan women and convince them to support NATO and also to influence their husbands to stop fighting against NATO.

In Germany the implementation of UN resolution should increase the participation of women in the army to 15%, actually it has increased to 35 %. It is obvious that this reflects also the difficult social situation of women, who have no other possibilities of finding a job.

There was a very controversial debate about the resolution, as to whether or not it is a good or bad resolution and if it can help women to emancipate or not. This point must be analyzed and worked out in more detail.

A lot of examples were put on the table where NATO respectively the national army tried to recruit especially female soldiers in schools and universities by promising them a good job and an adequate income.

We agreed to enlarge our efforts against militarization of our societies and to convince women and men not to participate in the army. For emancipation and gender justice we need a peaceful society and non-violent conflict resolution. Therefore we have to overcome NATO and the military structures, because the nature of the military is patriarchal, hierarchical, undemocratic and neither participatory nor emancipating.

[No to war - no to NATO!](#)

Kristine Karch January 2011