

Statement on the occasion of the Global Days of Action on Military Spending

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18-28 April 2017

There are plenty of reasons to renew, once again and for the 7th year running, our call for a cut in military spending (based upon SIPRI data), so that the world can move a little closer to the human security approach that would better serve humanity.

The Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) [\[1\]](#) is an international campaign promoted by the International Peace Bureau. The aim of the campaign is to press governments to invest money in the sectors of health, education, employment and climate change, rather than the military. GCOMS includes the Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS), which in its 7th edition includes over 70 different actions in more than 20 countries, as listed on the GCOMS webpage.

According to the updated 2016 military spending data, published today by SIPRI [\[2\]](#), world military expenditure has increased in 2016 by 0.4% in real terms, and is now estimated at roughly \$ 1686 billion. The top 10 spenders in 2016 have been the USA (with a small increase over 2015), China (showing a significant increase), Russia (a moderate increase), Saudi Arabia (having reduced its military budget), India (with a significant increase), and France, UK, Japan, Germany and South Korea (all of them with no changes or only small increases). This shows an overall constant increase over the last four consecutive years.

Civil society is most affected since these increases also mean reduced funding for social and human needs. It is increasingly urgent to reverse this trend, to reduce drastically the military spending worldwide, and to redirect this money towards the promotion of human rights and the construction a new, peaceful, way of life based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Today the Global Campaign on Military Spending declares that we must start building peace again. It is urgent that we build human security structures worldwide and at the same time put a stop to war and destruction. Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya are examples of wars that have destroyed countries and devastated their peoples. What is happening before our eyes in Yemen and Syria is intolerable: in time we will be asked "What did you do to stop the killing? What did you do to aid the millions of displaced people?" The vast majority of humankind desires an end to wars and the opportunity to live peaceful lives.

Moreover, this year could be the most deadly in the past three decades in terms of famine victims; 20 million people are at risk in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, and Nigeria. As an international community we are failing to respond to the deadly threats posed by famine, caused in part by war and by unconscionable economic inequality. According to Oxfam's recent report on "An Economy for the 1%", the 62 richest people in the world have accumulated as much wealth as the 3.6 billion poorest people, and, during the last five years, the "wealth" of this poorer half of the world has declined by 41%.

What we see is a predatory system of greed and power, a system that exploits the natural resources and the energy of most of the world. The military is this system's primary tool. For this reason, military spending must be reduced if we want to ensure peace, a fair distribution of natural resources, an effective world decolonization and human security. GCOMS calls for a yearly 10% cut in military spending; according to SIPRI's research this would be enough to achieve critically important individual goals, such as eliminating extreme poverty and hunger, addressing and reducing the refugee crisis. Another effect of the current increase in military expenditure is to amplify the refugee crisis. Instead of building walls, militarizing borders, ignoring human rights, the main "peace weapons" needed for real security are offers of refuge and shelter, cooperation, global justice and integration. Instead of a military budget, we need a Global Social Budget to address the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals. Instead of munitions industries and the militarization of borders, we should respond to the present humanitarian crisis with a budget to secure and promote human rights. We need to involve citizens and organisations more actively in an open and robust debate to challenge the counter-productive results of military expenditure. More than ever, we welcome new partners to work on the ongoing Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS), and to make the Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) a great success

Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS)

Footnotes

[1] <http://demilitarize.org>

[2] <https://www.sipri.org>