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Global Women for Peace united against NATO/IPB, Speech online, March 23, 2024

NATO and US-bases in UK and the Nordic countries

Dear friends,

When we spoke last of the militarization in the Arctic - in July 2023 - the theme was **NATO's Northern expansion – encircling of Russia - consequences and threats**. This time we concentrate on **NATO and US-bases in UK and in the Nordic countries**. And we can state already at the outset that the situation has become dramatically worse with also Sweden and Finland becoming members of NATO – and with an enormous expansion of US bases or so-called “joint areas” in the Nordic countries, with a present goal of 44 bases. With these bases USA is in fact able to attack Russia, next door, with nuclear weapons without the knowledge of the Nordic countries. A potential war between USA and Russia risks to be played out on Norwegian and Nordic soil.

As for Norway this happens in blatant disregard of the previous policy of having neither foreign bases nor nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil in times of peace and in disregard of paragraph one of the Constitution guaranteeing Norwegian sovereignty. This ongoing heavy militarization of the Arctic will provide not more security, as proclaimed by the government, but less! The escalation is also seen as a serious and additional threat to Russian security. If the Russian president's main security concern is to keep NATO away from the Russian border, he has indeed obtained the opposite.

The Nordic countries have, through this process, become part of the global network of US bases – considered to be between 800 and 1000 in almost half of the countries of the world. For comparison, Russia is supposed to have eight bases on foreign ground and China one. Nordic defence has been Americanized in a short time, nearly without debate. And not to forget, the American military is a tremendous polluter and the bases are environmentally disastrous. They may be harbouring nuclear weapons; they pollute the air, the earth and the water; they are not under national law and protection, but under US dominance. International law, as developed by the UN, is replaced by the so-called

“rules based order” profiting the Western big powers – whether countries or multinationals.

Norway has for many years been considered the “eyes and ears of NATO in the north”, which in practical terms means sharing vital military information with the US government. People, to the extent that they are informed, are bewildered as to what is NATO and what is the US. The confusion created is probably deliberate. The public has over time been led to think that NATO is essential for Norwegian security. With the uncertainties and the dramatic decline in US democracy, people may well have been much more sceptical to these new bases if they knew they were based on bilateral agreements between the US and Norway as initiated by the USA, with no other link to NATO than the fact that NATO is almost totally controlled by the US.

Norway has previously been of the view that a friendly country with good internal welfare systems, solidarity with the poor and generous foreign development aid, as well as being a strong supporter of the UN, would be the best security guarantee. Now, with NATO and the “Stoltenberg-effect” on the Norwegian government and his native country, the majority, at least as expressed by politicians, media and many academics, seems to think that peace necessitates military might and ever more lethal weapons.

Membership in the North Atlantic Treaty was until recently a political divisive issue in Norway between the traditionally pro-military and capitalistic right wing parties and the socio democrats on one side and the more progressive left on the other. The fact that most people in Norway are against nuclear weapons does not seem to stop their support for an oversized military alliance based on nuclear strategies and with a first use doctrine. And no one so far is asking for a referendum, nor insists that the policy of no to foreign bases and nuclear weapons on Norwegian soil be integrated into the Norwegian Constitution. The USA is braving or occupying parts of Norway almost to full applause.

The US was granted four new so called “joint areas” in Norway in 2023 and recently the Government has allowed eight new American bases. The decision will be rubberstamped by Parliament this spring. This comes in addition to the sophisticated American military installations of surveillance and spy-facilities – in the air – on the land – in the sea, that the Norwegian government has already allowed for years. These decisions have to a

very limited degree been known to the public, perhaps not even to the majority of Parliamentarians. The effects of the new and extended agreement of military cooperation between USA and Norway is of course of huge concern to the peace movement.

Militarism is in fact the black hole of democracy – also in our countries ranking on top of the global successful-democracy-list. The government has also allowed allied nuclear submarines into two Norwegian harbours, in Bergen and Tromsø, NATO and US military exercises are much more frequent, bigger and closer to the Russian border than ever before. We have just had 20 000 soldiers training on a potential war with Russia on North Norwegian ground. Nordic Response 2024 was part of the NATO Steadfast Defender with 90 000 soldiers as well as of the British-led naval exercise, Joint Warrior. These exercises show full disregard for the huge cod-fisheries that take place at the coast in the north exactly at this time as well as the ongoing transfer of reindeers from inland winter pastures to coastal spring pastures. The war-games interrupt and threatens both local and indigenous food security and survival.

There are many reasons for looking more carefully at what is happening in the far north. The Arctic is presently attracting huge international interest as the global warming and the melting of the ice open up for more fisheries, more drilling of oil and gaz and extractions of minerals from the sea bed, and, not least, allow for new and efficient transportation routes notably in the North-East passage with new possibilities for trading between the West and the far East. The location of the Arctic and this new situation with broader access to valuable natural resources adds to the tension and already heavy militarization of the area.

This happens in parallel with a very strong weakening of ordinary, friendly cultural, diplomatic and business relations between Norway and Russia. Norway almost fully participate in US and EU sanctions. Russia is excluded from the very important Arctic Council despite the fact that half of the Arctic belongs to Russia. A new Iron Curtain is established with detrimental effects not least on the important cooperation between the different indigenous groups, as well as on environmental protection and safety at sea.

For many years it was important to Norway to keep a certain balance between deterrence and reassurance in the dialogue with the Soviet Union and later with Russia. Now we have to insist on a “No” to a militaristic definition of security! NATO must never replace the UN.

Instead of the old patriarchal model of economic growth, militarism, competition and confrontation, with warfare over welfare, which risks leading ultimately to apocalypse, we acutely need to strengthen our peace- and disarmament processes, including eliminating nuclear arms, and in stead build trust and international solidarity.