

From Helsingborg to Ankara: Global Voices on NATO, Militarization, and Welfare

- WILPF Canada Speech - Mariam Furre

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Hi everyone, my name is Mariam and I'm speaking today on behalf of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Canada.

Our core message is simple: militarism does not create lasting peace. Governments are spending billions on weapons and military expansion while ordinary people struggle with housing costs, healthcare access, rising tuition, food insecurity, and climate disasters. We believe real security comes from investing in people and communities.

NATO countries have played a major role in the Ukraine war by providing weapons, military aid, intelligence support, and training. We believe that this war has accelerated global militarization and normalized long-term military expansion while diplomatic solutions receive far less attention. In fact, diplomatic solutions are not even being considered

NATO has also expanded troop deployments and military readiness in Eastern Europe. NATO is responsible for this war not ending.

long-term peace requires ceasefires, diplomacy, negotiations, demilitarization, and addressing the geopolitical conditions that contributed to the conflict. We are demanding an audit of the \$25.8 billion that Canada has given to Ukraine for this war.

Canada has continued increasing military spending under NATO commitments and pressure to raise defence budgets toward 2%, which it has met this year, and now aiming to reach 5% of our GDP to go towards the military. Much of our Education, healthcare, climate action, employment within our national budgets have been cut and now much of our money flows toward major defence contractors and specifically American weapons manufacturers rather than toward public services Canadians rely on.

Every budget reflects priorities. Billions for fighter jets and weapons contracts means fewer resources for affordable housing, healthcare, education, public transit, mental health supports, and climate action. Students, workers, and marginalized communities are often the ones who experience the consequences of these choices.

Militaries are the world's largest institutional consumers of fossil fuels. War destroys

ecosystems, contaminates water, damages infrastructure, and contributes significantly to climate catastrophe. Climate justice and anti-militarism are deeply connected.

On March 4-5, political, military, and corporate elites have gathered in Ottawa to promote military expansion and a long-term war economy. Behind closed doors, they have normalized massive increases in defence spending while communities continue struggling with underfunded social services and rising inequality. We led a protest which gathered hundreds of Canadians who opposed this conference and demanded that our tax dollars fund people over profit.

Much of these warmongers have recognized that they can get extra pocket money if they betray people and the planet and associate themselves with weapons contractors. People like Chrystia Freeland have encouraged the continuation of the Ukraine war, arguing that this will be long term beneficial to Canadians, so that we can quote “more easily go to war with iran, china and russia. Last i checked, none of those countries has threatened Canada one bit.

WILPF we believe that military alliances often escalate tensions rather than resolve the root causes of conflict, which is colonialism and resource exploitation.

We must remember that these wars that we are funding are not for our security they are literally for the pockets of corporate elites.

I find it incredibly strange and hypocritical that these liberal politicians claim to hate trump and say they oppose everything about him and yet not only endorse American wars, but they have dramatically increased their contribution to the American military

Shameful

We need to ask ourselves what actually keeps people safe. Is it endless military expansion, or is it housing, healthcare, education, food security, climate stability, strong communities, diplomacy, and collective care? At WILPF, we believe human security must come before militarism.

Peace is not passive. Peace requires organizing, solidarity, and challenging systems that profit from violence and war. We must resist the normalization of endless war and austerity and continue fighting for a world that prioritizes human dignity over corporate war profits. I am so proud to be in this space with active citizens of the world fighting for us all. Thank you.