



Socialist International Women

Council Meeting
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DECLARATION ON WOMEN AND WAR IN UKRAINE

The war in Ukraine, which has been going on for months, has forced millions of Ukrainian people to flee their homes in order to survive. Among the refugees and displaced people, Ukrainian women and children are the most numerous. Yet it is not only a matter of numbers but also of harshness as the impact of the war on women is disproportionate. In all conflicts women are the most affected: the burden of civil duties, part of which were previously carried out by men, weigh on the shoulder of women.

Men being conscripted, women have become heads of most households and they also take care of their communities in order to meet the needs for food, health, medication, shelters.... Women do most of the practical and organizational work, maintain relationships and communications, they drive, accompany, set up first aid, distribute aid they receive, in short words, they take charge of the protection of the community they belong to. Unfortunately, their efforts are not recognized and, as *The Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine* produced by UN Women and CARE International says, women “remain largely excluded from formal decision-making processes related to humanitarian efforts, peace-making, and other areas that directly impact their lives”.

In this war 40.000 women are fighting in the Ukrainian army, in all roles and not only in traditionally female ones as nurses and doctors. They are combat officers in the fleet, they are pilots or tankers, sometimes even with roles of commands.

As in all wars, we are tragically witnessing cases of sexual violence and of rapes mostly on women, but sometimes also on men and children. These crimes never happen accidentally, they are tolerated, when not promoted; in some cases, it is a deliberate choice to use rape as a weapon of war. In most cases it is not possible to assist victims and offer them shelters to recover. Cases of sexual violence and rape are reported from the occupied territories together with cases of killing and torture of civilians.

What is happening in Ukraine today is atrocities and horrors for which we were not prepared as we were convinced that they would remain a legacy of the past. Unfortunately, it is not so. What is happening in Ukraine is a terrible lesson for all of us. When the international law is not respected, democracy is challenged and protection and promotion of human rights are despised, these are the unavoidable consequences.

We Socialist International Women are deeply convinced that the only effective way to protect women is to prevent war by all means. War is incompatible with decent life and civilization therefore we condemn war and, using the words of our founding mother Clara Zetkin, we declare with our strong voice “war to war”.