



International Women's Day

International Secretariat, League for the Fifth International Tue, 08/03/2022 - 13:04

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Against War, Women's Oppression and Capitalism!

For an International gathering of Women's Movements!

This year, International Women's Day is taking place as more than a million refugees, most of them women and children, are fleeing their homes in Ukraine. Indeed, they are the ones suffering the most from the bombardments by Putin's forces.

Today, they are sharing the harsh fate of their sisters in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia, Myanmar and many other war zones around the world. Very few of them can take advantage of open borders to the European Union or acceptance of their right to asylum. One of our key demands today is for the land and sea borders of Europe to be opened to all of them.

The media in the Nato countries are beating the war drums for 'devastating economic sanctions' against Russia. The impact of such sanctions will again be felt first of all by Russian women. Others are even agitating for a Nato imposed No Fly Zone, which would lead to a direct clash with Russian forces and thus a war between the two imperialist camps. Not only would this be of no benefit to Ukrainians but could lead directly to a third imperialist world war, more terrible than its predecessors

This tightening turn of events confirms what the League for the Fifth International has been saying: that we have entered a new stage of the struggle between the world powers, the US and its allies in one camp and China and Russia in the other, for the world's resources, markets, and countries to dominate.

This has been widely called a new Cold War. It can easily become a hot one, with the even more devastating use of thermobaric bombs and even nuclear weapons.

Last year, in Afghanistan, we saw women, who had already suffered twenty years of war, inflicted by US, British and other imperialist occupiers, forced to flee their homes and homeland or subjected to brutal restrictions in all spheres of public life. In Syria, too, millions are still internally displaced or living in appalling conditions in refugee camps. Those who seek refuge in Europe meet frontier forces on land and at sea who drive them back.

War in Ukraine comes on top of the two years of the Covid 19 pandemic in which the majority of humanity had to wait at the back of the queue for vaccines and adequate public health measures until the citizens of the imperialist countries were fully protected.

The pandemic underlined in the starkest terms how capitalism oppresses and exploits working women, not only during wars but also during 'peace'. The fact is that women play a huge role in essential, but poorly paid and precarious, jobs, that the family home is all too often the site of domestic violence and that, as the crisis ends, governments and employers will seek to make them pay its costs. Already, rising inflation is eroding the value of wages, pensions, social security, and health cover.

During the pandemic, women have born the heaviest burdens, faced dangers as health workers on the frontlines in hospitals and care homes, or through increased childcare, including 'home learning' where schools have been closed.

All this work is, of course, unpaid. Worse, they have suffered severe income loss when forced to abandon their jobs in hospitality, retail or office work, where workforces are mostly female. Meanwhile, it was big capitalists like Jeff Bezos of Amazon who enriched themselves, super exploiting their workforces while denying them the right to join a union.

The combination of economic crisis and pandemic has revealed the clear connection between women's oppression and class exploitation under capitalism. Now, we enter a new stage, where Ukraine has become a focus of the struggle over the redivision of the world. In the coming months and years, this struggle will sharpen even more, threatening the world with rounds of sanctions and even a global war. The working class and the poor and, amongst them, first of all women, will be the first who have to pay the price for this.

War will drive women and their families from their homes, working class women and men will be the ones who will give their lives when the cities are bombed and will be faced with price increases, job losses, attacks on working conditions and food shortages all over the world.

The coming year will be a decisive one for the women's movement and indeed for the whole working class, youth and the oppressed peoples of this world in determining whether we can help defeat the Russian invasion and, at the same time, prevent Nato from turning it into a global war. It will be decisive, whether we can fight back against the looming global crisis, price rises and the threatening environmental catastrophe, which, after the total failure of the Glasgow COP26, has been driven from the headlines by war. Young women have played a major role in exposing and combating climate change, in the school strikes of movements like Fridays for Future.

And, once again, it is women in the global south who will suffer, indeed are already suffering its first effects in the form of extreme weather events; floods, droughts, wildfires and, in their wake, hunger, malnutrition and outright famine.

The resurgence and rise of global women's struggles in recent years demonstrates that their continuation and further development are key to both women's liberation and class struggles against the bosses and their governments. Without them we could face historic defeats.

Those struggles have shown that women are not passive victims of exploitation and patriarchal oppression but that they have exposed them and fought back against them. The heroic struggles of women in the front lines of movements such as #MeToo, Ni Una Menos, the Women's Strike, Black Lives Matter, as well as the farmers' protests in India and movements for social and democratic rights in Belarus, Hong Kong, Myanmar or Lebanon, show there is good reason for hope. Women in Russia are in the forefront of the emerging movement against reactionary war, despite the massive repression. This hope, we think, needs to find a perspective in an international struggle with the goal of fully socialising reproductive and productive work.

This, of course, can only be achieved with the revival or formation of organisations of militant class struggle. Over the past years, many important steps were made to develop such organisations. Many struggling women increasingly see themselves as part of a global movement that links patriarchy and capitalism and struggles against them.

We think that this calls for the preparation of a global mass conference of the women's movements, similar in spirit to the early continental and world social forums. These would bring together the experiences of different working women's movements but, more than that, give them a common direction through mutually agreed action. This could send a strong signal around the entire world. This movement needs to be in the forefront of an anti-war movement not only to stop the Russian invasion but equally to prevent the warmongers in the imperialist NATO Camp dragging the world into a third imperialist war.

Comrades of the League for the Fifth International are doing their best to contribute to the building of such a movement. They would likewise do all they can to argue for an alternative vision of society, socialism, to achieve women's liberation, workers' liberation, liberation for lesbian, gay, trans, and non-binary gendered people. If thousands of international activists gathered in person and online to discuss together the way forward, this would

strengthen the struggles going on all over the world by bringing them solidarity and support.

We call on all those who agree with this proposal to contact us, and one another, to discuss what first steps we could take together, to win more and bigger forces such as the trade unions, working class parties and whole women's movements, like the women's strike, for such a goal.

The protests on March 8 this year are therefore particularly crucial as they will be a show of strength and self-consciousness about the need to fight back in one of capitalism's greatest ever crises.

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