



WILPF Resolution on threats to Costa Rican unarmed democracy and culture of peace

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), meeting at the Quadrennial Congress in San José, Costa Rica in August 2011,

Recognizing the significant step towards peace that Costa Rica took when it abolished its army in its Constitution, article 12, in 1949, stating: "The Army as a permanent institution is abolished. There shall be the necessary police forces for surveillance and the preservation of the public order. Military forces may only be organized under a continental agreement or for the national defense; in either case, they shall always be subordinate to the civil power: they may not deliberate or make statements or representations individually or collectively,"

Concerned that some Parliamentarians want to reform this constitutional decision in a moment of heated border conflict and in a way that prioritizes a military response to this crisis rather than the promotion of peaceful ways to seek solutions,

Recognizing that Costa Rica is known around the world as a country devoted to peace and justice since our Constitutional Chamber on 8 September 2004 declared peace as a fundamental human right, and peace as a leading value, and reason and law as mechanisms to solve internal and external conflicts, thus becoming the first country in the world to state peace as a fundamental human right by a Court, such decisions evidenced by the speeches of official representatives in international forums in favor of peace in the world and the region, have gained admiration and praise;

Concerned about the threats to peace in Costa Rica, even before the so-called war against drugs, people, and weapons trafficking, and before we were more familiar with words such as "organized crime", wherein Costa Rica began to militarize its police, using camouflage uniforms, heavy combat weapons, and forming squads as in the military to "control" demonstrations, strikes, and civilians protests,

Concerned also about the military training given to the national police forces by the armies of Colombia and the United States and that Costa Rica continues to send police to be trained in the School of the America, located in a US Military Base, known for teaching military practices, abuse and torture,

Considering that war ships, helicopters, heavy weapons, and hundreds of uniformed army personnel regularly come to Costa Rica to fight a "war on drugs", which are temporary but not part of an integrated program to eradicate drug consumption and the trade of illegal drugs,

Considering further that such incursions of troops are accompanied by pressure from the U.S. to have Costa Rican police that have previously been trained in a U.S. Military Base, which are part of a consistent effort to break Costa Rican authorities' resistance to a military presence, affecting Costa

Rican values of adherence to peaceful and judicial solutions to internal and external conflicts,

Understanding that being a peace loving country is part of the national identity of Costa Rica, and that such values need to be promoted, cherished, and guarded from threats and discourse that constitute a cultural fight against such values,

Noting that military actions connected with the war on drugs and organized crime, which have not been successful in other parts of the world, do not justify the presence of soldiers in impoverished areas with much natural wealth,

Noting further that the proliferation of light and heavy weapons rather than increasing security creates more human insecurity,

Observing that heavily armed police squads patrol marginal neighborhoods to arrest crack and marihuana vendors, which although a felony, does not address the urgent need of integral preventive security policies, which should encompass but not be limited to controlling drug use and trade in poor neighborhoods, strong educational programmes, recreational options, and physical spaces for youngsters to gather and connect as an alternative from falling into drug abuse,

Recognizing that drug trafficking and organized crime are serious problems and having seen how military responses worsen these situations, as illustrated by the Mexican reality, where the war between the army and the drug cartels have caused more than 35,000 deaths, and considering that a similar bloodshed must be avoided in this unique peace loving country,

Reaffirming our deepest belief that a military answer is not the solution to these problems,

Understanding the importance of work at the local level to ensure personal security in its communities,

Celebrating Costa Rica's first woman president and her devotion to dialogue and her understanding of security as a broad concept that encompasses social development, consultation, and involvement of communities and civil society organizations, as characterized by her discourse,

Understanding that the Costa Rica President has obtained international support for more police training, as part of her effort to combat drug trafficking, as a donation of thirty million dollars for that purpose, as has been recently announced in the media,

Aware of the need for more financial resources to ensure human security, enhancing social and economic living conditions of most citizens in the country, including the indigenous communities, the single female householders and their children,

Understanding the great concern among citizens of Costa Rica provoked by violent incidents in the streets, which have taken away many lives of youngsters and brought great sorrow to many families, from the student killing a professor, one driver killing a student, a drunk recently taking five lives with his car, elevating the anguish of many to the point that Marching for Peace in the streets of San José (24 July 2011) was called for by the families of victims of this violence,

1. *Calls on* the government, community leaders, local organizations, and the civil population in the country to continue engaging in finding ways to bring peace to communities by fostering formal and informal education, such as through the recovery of public spaces for neighbors to meet, share, and enjoy entertainment and cultural events;
2. *Calls for* the promotion of a culture of peace by providing opportunities in the media and in

schools to reaffirm this trait of national identity at the local and national level, by celebrating special days such as the international day for peace, 21 September; the day against violence, 2 October; the Abolition of the Army, 1 December; as well as furthering WILPF Costa Rica's petition to the UN to declare Latin America an arms-free-zone;

3. *Calls for* a review of the Law of Arms to revise the trade and license mechanisms and connect this to the incidence of violence in the country and the killing of women in domestic violence instances with small arms and light weapons, specifically calling for the country of origin of the weapon used, as well as its manufacturer, to be made public in the media;
4. *Calls for* resistance to all pressure from government and corporations to increase militarization in the country under any pretext, irrespective of how sound that may seem;
5. *Calls for* the promotion in schools, in the media, and through any other possible means, nonviolent conflict resolutions on a daily basis in interpersonal and social relations;
6. *Calls for* the promotion of the concept of human security, understood as the security of human beings rather than the security of states, by taking its starting point in freedom from fear and life with dignity;
7. *Calls for* the transcendence of discourse and bringing into practice efforts to engage many individuals and organizations of civil society, irrespective of political parties, in different undertakings and actions, to promote citizen security, to stop violence in our streets, to control the use of small and light weapons, to prevent abuse of legal and illegal drugs, to promote better understanding among people, to ensure support of women committed to stop violent relationships and ensure them the conditions necessary to start a life free of violence with their children;
8. *Calls for* civil society to communicate these concerns and calls to the Costa Rican president and interested media and to divulge it in the social media; and
9. *Calls for* the devotion of our international and national institutional resources to cooperate in every way we can with efforts being carried out in Costa Rica, in the direction stated above.