Around Europe
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Mainstreaming Conflict Prevention Needs a Dual Track Approach

Violent conflicts are the reality for millions of people around the world. The effects on the personal level are enormous, from killing and maiming to loss of livelihoods and separation of families. It is devastating for the countries involved – without peace there can be no development. Increased efforts to prevent violent conflict are essential but it also involves enormous challenges.

In a post-conflict situation activities such as the rehabilitation and reintegration of former soldiers and efforts to collect weapons are obvious ways in which to prevent the refuelling of conflict. It is, however, increasingly accepted that effective conflict prevention requires a comprehensive approach, ranging from conflict-sensitive development and trade cooperation to more traditional conflict prevention related activities. The European Commission has recognised this need and declared in a communication in 2001 that they would mainstream conflict prevention in all their activities relating to conflict and post-conflict countries (COM(2001) 211).

The mainstreaming of conflict prevention means that it is systematically incorporated into all areas of EU policy and engagement with third countries, or as the Commission states, that 'conflict prevention measures will be made an integral part of the overall programmes of the Community.'

During the past two years, QCEA has conducted research on the Commission's approach to conflict prevention. The Commission is quite active in the area, and conducts projects in many post-conflict countries on for instance disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; small arms and light weapons; and security sector reform. The Commission also supports the United Nations and works closely with the African Union.

As an example, the European Union has guidelines on children in armed conflict. These guidelines stress the rights of children as a priority in the EU's human rights policy and the EU commits to address the short, medium and long term impact of armed conflict on children. Commission activities include rehabilitation of war affected children, demobilisation of child soldiers and support to internally displaced persons. Another example of Commission activity is that in the diamond trade. The Kimberley Process was initiated in 2000 by governments, NGOs and industry players to stem the flow of so-called 'blood diamonds' (rough diamonds used to fuel violent conflict) into the legitimate diamond market. The European Commission has been involved with the Kimberley Process since its start and chaired the Kimberly Process during 2007.

As a result of mainstreaming, there is no allocated budget for conflict prevention, nor is it listed as a focal area in the country-specific programming - the Country Strategy Papers. As mentioned above the Commission does a lot of work on conflict prevention but the lack of specific programming or budget makes it difficult to trace what exactly is being done. It also makes it difficult for organisations in the affected areas to recognise that the Commission is working on the issue. This hampers effective monitoring as well as the

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Ban the Use of Depleted Uranium Weapons

On 22 May the European Parliament in plenary session in Strasbourg took a vote; it was one of many votes taken that day and probably did not make the headlines of your daily paper. But it is no less important for that.

The text that was adopted (Reference: P6_TA(2008)0233) urges Member States to adhere to their commitments under relevant UN resolutions and demands that the current review of the European Security Strategy (ESS) should consider seriously whether the use of unguided munitions and weapons of indiscriminate effect (such as depleted uranium weapons) can be justified in the future. It calls on Member States to commit themselves not to use such munitions and weapons, and certainly not in missions which are carried out under the umbrella of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

On one level, all of this is common sense. Even if one does not reject all military intervention, it is commonly agreed that there are some types of munitions and weapons that have a particularly damaging effect; depleted uranium is highly toxic; it affects those who manufacture it, those who handle and transport it, those who use it in military engagement and those exposed to its radiation afterwards. It does not discriminate between combatants and civilians.

The European Parliament does not have decision making powers in this area of European policy; the ESS and missions carried out in the context of ESDP are entirely matters for the Member States. But the fact that the European Parliament has adopted this resolution is still an important step: it should give the Member State governments pause for thought in their considerations. The Members of the European Parliament are the elected representatives of European citizens.

The initiative for the resolution came from five of the political groups in the European Parliament: the only large group not party to the original motion for a resolution was the European People's Party – European Democrats (EPP-ED) who include the UK Conservative Party and a number of Christian Democrat Parties across Europe. And during the vote the EPP-ED also agreed to the resolution. This means that the vast majority of the Members of the European Parliament voted for this resolution. The text of the resolution can be found on the European Parliament Website: www.europarl.europa.eu

The discussions about the European Security Strategy are progressing at the moment and will be concluded before the end of the year.

Now is also the time to ask all the relevant people within your national political structures to do what they can to ensure that your country agrees to stop using depleted uranium weapons (and cluster munitions and landmines, all of which are equally appalling means of inflicting injury and death on civilians) and to reflect that commitment in the ESS and the approach taken to missions in the context of the ESDP.

Who are these people?
- The Member of Parliament (at national level) representing your constituency
- The chair of the Foreign Affairs or European Affairs Committees of your national parliament
- The Minister responsible for Foreign or European Affairs
- The Minister responsible for Defence matters.

There is no time to lose.

Martina Weitsch

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opportunities for local organisations to advocate and influence the Commission's work. Mainstreaming conflict prevention is necessary, but not the only answer. Instead the Commission could take a dual-track approach through combining conflict-specific programming with conflict-sensitivity in all of its programming.

The QCEA study consists of one general report covering EU action in the areas of: political dialogue; gender; disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; child soldiers; small arms and light weapons; security sector reform; management of natural resources; and transitional justice. Apart from this, the study also consists of several case studies where these issues are researched more closely on the country level. The main report and the case studies of Uganda, Sudan and Nigeria are available on the website: http://www.quaker.org/qcea/

Sara Erlandsson

45 Year Old Greek CO Sentenced to Three Years in Prison

Greek conscientious objector Lazaros Petromelidis, Vice-President of the European Bureau of Conscientious Objection (EBCO), has been sentenced in abstentia to three years' imprisonment for two cases of insubordination because he refuses to accomplish the alternative service which he sees as punitive. (Lazaros Petromelidis has always declared himself ready to accomplish an alternative service that is not punitive and complies with European standards.) The Greek alternative service lasts twenty-three months compared to one year of military service. According to the standards set by the Council of Europe, every alternative service that lasts more than one-and-a-half times the duration of military service is of a punitive nature. The judgement also contradicts the fundamental principle of jurisdiction "Ne bis in idem", which means that nobody should be sentenced twice for the same offence. Lazaros Petromelidis has passed through a dozen trials and been jailed three times for his so-called insubordination. He first declared his conscientious objection in 1992 when the right to conscientious objection was not yet recognised in Greece. As Petromelidis has just turned 45, by law the army only has until the end of 2008 to call him up again. No doubt this is also one of the reasons for these latest charges.

Petromelidis has now appealed against the current judgement and has had to pay 7000 euros in order to avoid immediate imprisonment. If the Court of Second Instance turns down his appeal, he wants to bring his case to the European Court of Human Rights. Meanwhile EBCO is mobilizing MEPs to intervene on Petromelidis's behalf in this scandalous case.

Liz Scurfield

Conscientious Objection - Still a lot of Work to do

Since summer 2007, we have been updating our report on the situation of conscientious objectors throughout Europe. The original report was written by Marc Stolwijk and published in 2005. Since then, not much has moved. The situation for objectors in some countries, mainly in Eastern Europe, remains critical and unsatisfying.

The human right to conscientious objection to military service was explained in a very detailed way by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1987 and has now been mentioned for the first time in an international human rights document in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which will hopefully come into force on 1 January 2009. The practical implementation of this right in Europe is still far from being sufficient.

In the last decade, fifteen European countries have abolished conscription, a tendency that QCEA warmly welcomes and which shows Europe is moving in the right direction. This mainly involves countries of the former Warsaw Pact and the former Yugoslavia (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Latvia, Montenegro, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary) but also some Western European countries (Portugal, Spain, France, Italy). Poland is set to abolish conscription in 2010, and it can be expected that possible future NATO members such as Georgia and the Ukraine will take steps in the same direction. In this respect, NATO enlargement has had a very positive effect, since it requires the professionalisation of the armed forces – and the absence of a mandatory service is the best way to avoid mistreatment of conscientious objectors, even though there have to be rules for the objection of professional soldiers in these countries too.

But in a lot of other countries the situation remains grave: three countries, Belarus, Turkey and Azerbaijan have not even legally recognized the human right to conscientious objection to military service. In these countries, objectors are

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still sent to prison without being given the right to accomplish an alternative service. But also in Greece, Lithuania, Armenia, Cyprus, Georgia, Russia and even in Finland, substitute service is not really an alternative – either because the length of it is of a punitive nature (more than 1.5 times the duration of military service), or the conditions for being accepted are extremely difficult to fulfil, or because the alternative service is not available in practice at all. Given this, especially when combined with the fact that some of the countries concerned are EU Member States, means that QCEA and the European Bureau for Conscientious Objection have ample reason to continue the struggle for the human right to conscientious objection to military service throughout Europe.

Lucas Guttenberg

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