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# Women and the crisis of civilisation

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**The convergence of the different aspects of the crisis of global capitalism today confirms that we are faced with systemic economic, ecological and social crises, which combine to produce a crisis of civilisation.**

In this paper we indicate some of the ways in which this crisis particularly affects women.

Women were already at the bottom of the pile before the crises started, so it is no surprise that we feel the effects of these disasters most acutely. Women's subordinate place within the labour market, notwithstanding the limited gains made as a result of women's self organisation, remain a reflection of the sexual division of labour and inferior status of women within the patriarchal capitalist family. The family, together with the education system, continues to reproduce notions that women are inherently inferior to men "or at best have different destinies as primary care givers to children and the elderly" a particularly important notion for the state to fall back on as it slashes public services. The family continues to be the main site of violence (and repression) against women.

And make no mistake: what is tested out on women today in terms of the capitalists' attempts to make sure they do not pay for the crisis will be imposed on the whole of the working class tomorrow, as we have already seen in many other instances, for example with part-time work.

In response to all these issues, we need to make sure that the demands we raise as parties and campaigns take into account the specific oppression of women. Sometimes this will mean raising specific demands that affect women (e.g., abortion or equal pension rights), but it always means looking at what we say from women's point of view.

So, for example, the demand for a shorter working day/week is in the interests of the whole working class, but has particular importance for women while we also carry out the double burden of domestic labour. Another example: nationalisation of the banks has come to the forefront of our propaganda as a result of the credit crunch, though of course we understand that the economic crisis did not start and will not end with the banking crisis. But women, as one of the poorest sections of the working class, are particularly affected by rises in interest rates and limitations in the availability of credit.

Of course, the context in which these demands are formulated will be different in each national situation and need to be adapted to meet the concrete realities in which we are working. The programme developed by the Belgian comrades for the 2009 European elections, "An ecosocialist Europe will be feminist or it will not exist," is a good example of how this can be done.

Women are also an integral part of the resistance to the onslaught and the fight we see taking place to create the other ecosocialist and feminist world that is daily ever more necessary. Women's self-organisation is essential to achieving this. The steps forward that women have made in terms of the constituent assembly and the campaign against public debt in Ecuador, for example, are not because Correa decided to grant women favours but because women's self-organisation helped create the balance of forces that won these gains.

## Women and Climate Change

Poverty and inequality is the lot of the majority of women in the south, and they are the first to be hit by the climate crisis, caused by emissions produced mainly in the countries of the north. Eighty percent of the 1.3 billion people in the world living under the poverty line are women.

Women produce 80% of food in the south, so desertification, the loss of water resources, etc., have a huge impact on their daily lives. When people are forced to move because the place they live can no longer provide any food because of climate change, women and children are and will be the majority of those displaced.

A report published by Oxfam in June 2009, *The Winds of Change: Climate change, poverty and the environment in Malawi*, argues that women are affected most by climate change because they have multiple roles as farmers, providers of food, water and firewood, and child carers. It also points out that women in Malawian society have no say in decision making and that climate change exacerbates existing inequalities. It further argues that there is a danger that deepening poverty will pressure women to sell sex for food and that this will further exacerbate the spread of HIV/AIDS. The spread of HIV/AIDS will further weaken the ability of the population to resist climate chaos.

In 2008 the level of global malnutrition grew by 800,000 to reach more than 1 billion people and, at the same time, diseases such as cholera that we have long known how to eliminate are now re-occurring as part of this crisis of civilisation.

The fight for women's access to decent free public education and health care, including access to abortion, contraception, and sex education, is an essential element of combating the climate crisis especially in the south. Women are often at the forefront of campaigns to defend and extend these essentials.

The neo-Malthusian answer to the climate crisis arguing that there are too many people on the planet seeks to further limit women's right to control our own bodies and is racist in that the rate of population growth is greater in the countries of the south. Our first response is to fight for the extension of women's fertility control, as well as for the eradication of poverty which means that there is less pressure on communities to provide more people. We also fight against capitalist consumerism which means that so much of what is produced has no use value and is deeply environmentally wasteful.

The growing impact of agribusiness, production of biofuels and the continuing sell-off of land to multinationals for the continued extraction of oil and other resources has resulted and will continue to result in the loss of land and of autonomy for small producers, the majority of whom are women, many from indigenous communities. Pesticides destroy organic crops of small producers.

Indigenous women and women landless farmers play a central role in defending forest ecosystems from governments who want to sell them to the highest bidder and multinationals who want use them for the production of biofuels and to extract other resources including water, tropical hardwoods (which take hundreds of years to grow a few inches) as well as oil and other minerals. The action by Via Campesina women in Brazil, who destroyed the Aracruz Celulosa substitution for eucalyptus, was a victorious example of women playing a leading role in defending the biosphere. Women of many indigenous communities are also central to the defence of ancestral lands.

\* Diminishing energy consumption by ending wasteful production including the arms industry, nuclear industry, advertising and the explosion of air transport

\* For localisation of production, including agriculture

\* End the use of harmful energy sources and expand sustainable energy

\* Free and adequate public transport

# Women and the Economic Crisis

Neoliberal globalisation has resulted in a vast expansion of insecure jobs with short-term contracts and the massive extension of part-time work. At the same time, the informal economy has spread from the countries of the south to parts of the north and to sectors that were previously part of the formal economy.

The majority of those who work in the informal economy are women and children. For example, 1-2% of the urban populations of the world make some sort of living from collecting and reselling waste on landfill sites. The majority of these are women and children. The demand from industry for recycled paper, especially from China, has already begun to fall as a result of the recession, which means the price for these products is falling significantly, and therefore so is the ability of those sectors of the population who live by collecting and reselling them to survive.

In a recession, informal sector jobs are lost at the same time that some previously in the formal sector move into the informal sector. In the south some export-oriented industries like textiles where large numbers of women have been employed have grown rapidly: in Africa for example 100,000 new jobs were created over the last 7 years. But demand has reduced as a result of the economic crisis. In the Philippines, 42,000 jobs in textiles, semiconductor and conductor industries, where a majority of workers are women, were lost in one day (Oxfam report, Paying the Price for the Economic Crisis, March 2009).

Export manufacturing is, of course, an area where workers have virtually no rights, so most of the women who have lost their jobs in this sector have received no redundancy pay or social security benefits. Even where there is supposedly a legal right to them, where there is no worker's organisation to ensure that this happens, the bosses ignore their legal obligations.

The growth of microcredit has been important in allowing some economic independence for growing numbers of women in the south. But the recession means that its availability is severely reduced, which will have a negative impact on women's economic and therefore social and political independence.

In terms of job losses in the formal sector, the crisis has so far impacted differently on women in different countries. The motor industry "where it exists, one of the hardest hit sectors" is generally male-dominated. In some places, generally those countries of the advanced capitalist world where the recession has already hit deeply, we have already seen big job losses in the service sector where a majority of workers are women. In countries where this has not yet happened, the service sector will be next.

Though statistics on global rates of unemployment for women and men are difficult to find, it seems that so far the differential rate of unemployment has not increased; it will, however, as the crisis has more impact on the service sector. Oxfam says the majority of jobs lost in the south are women's, while in the US, female unemployment rose faster than male in May 2009 (5.6% for women, 4.1% for men - Womenstake.org)

Despite legal protection in most advanced capitalist countries, women workers have continued to suffer particular discrimination when they become pregnant. Indeed the assumed possibility that they will get pregnant lies behind much discrimination against women of child-bearing age. But there is evidence in Britain at least that this is getting worse in the recession. The Alliance against Pregnancy Discrimination in Britain, a coalition of different groups who

have come together to campaign on this issue, says:

"There has been an alarming increase in the number of pregnant women and new mothers who are being made redundant. It appears that some employers are using the recession as an excuse to break the law on discrimination. With the economic downturn has come a rise in the number of calls to our organisations from women facing maternity or pregnancy discrimination. We have examples of pregnant women being singled out for redundancy and of women returning from maternity leave to find their jobs have gone.

"Even before the recession, the Equal Opportunities Commission had already estimated that 30,000 women lose their jobs each year as a result of being pregnant, and this figure looks set to rise. This shocking impact of the recession is not only morally wrong and deeply damaging to workplace gender equality - it is illegal" (<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/AllianceAgainstPregnancyDiscrimination.pdf>).

The sub-prime crisis in the US, the first visible sign of today's crisis, has taken a higher toll on women - especially women of colour. Thirty-two percent of women mortgage holders have sub-prime mortgages vs. 24% of men; and African American and Latino homeowners were 30% more likely to have received sub-prime loans (Ms Foundation for Women).

And of course poverty rates increase during economic downturns; with the increasing costs of even basic necessities like food, transportation, and energy, the number of poor families is growing. And once a family has fallen into it, poverty is difficult to escape. An estimated 60% of families in the bottom fifth of income levels remain there a decade later (Ms Foundation for Women).

And, as is historically the case, when women are faced with no current or future prospects for job opportunities, even in the informal sector, already strained by its swelling ranks, they often turn to considering marriage and child-rearing as their only "acceptable" alternative. Still others try to keep a roof over their and their children's heads by selling their bodies for sex.

- \* Nationalise the banks under popular control, extend provision of microcredits, and increase government aid especially to women
- \* For shorter working week/day with no loss of pay
- \* For the ending of temporary contracts. Full rights for all workers
- \* Against discrimination including at work on the basis of gender, marital status, age or sexual orientation
- \* For the creation of new jobs open to women and men
- \* No discrimination in pensions or state benefits

## Women and Public Services

The defence of basic services "most fundamentally water, but also electricity, housing and transport"

as publicly controlled and affordable "preferably free" is essential. Women have very often played a leading role in the campaigns to defend and extend these basic services, from the successful battle against the privatisation of water wars in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2000, to the struggle against privatisation of railways and cotton and rice cultivation in Mali.

The economic crisis we face now will not see any let-up in the neo-liberal policies that privatise and starve public services of resources, affecting women both as the majority of workers in this sector and as those most dependent on the services provided. In many European countries, cuts in health services are a constant example. In France the drive to privatise pre-school care in private kindergartens rather than in nursery schools in the public school system will reduce public sector jobs and make childcare more expensive. In Mexico, state outsourcing of an increasing number of childcare centres to private manager-owners has led to a severe decline in the quality of service; the cruellest result of this so far has been the death of 48 children in a June 2009 flash fire at a childcare centre in Hermosillo, Sonora, owned by relatives of high-level government officials, operating under the same roof as a warehouse. Public horror at the corruption and impunity for those responsible distilled into a movement that cost the ruling party the governorship, but the guilty parties have yet to be brought to trial.

In countries where abortion is legal (within limited conditions), cuts in public health services are already impacting on women's access to abortion and contraception. Rape crisis centres and other services for women who have been on the receiving end of violence have also lost funding. These services will be seen by many providers as optional extras, while others will be happy to cut projects that they never supported in the first place under the guise of economic necessity.

Personal social services are increasingly being privatised in different European countries: France, Sweden, Belgium, and Britain at least. Primarily women workers are employed to do house work (cleaning of house and clothes, cooking, childcare and in some cases care of elderly or disabled people) in the homes of professional families (sometimes by the state, sometimes by private companies). They work maybe 5 or more jobs a week with a small number of hours spent at each and almost as much time travelling between jobs as working. The status of these jobs is very low and unprotected, and the extension of these services is used as an argument for reducing public services, in the retirement home sector for example.

Together with very low hourly wage rates, this means poverty for the women working there. And given that "reform" of social security systems mean that in many countries people are forced to take any job or lose benefits, it is harder for workers to refuse to take these jobs, while the bosses are provided with a pool of cheap labour. These types of developments also result in deepening divisions between women where those with more social and economic power become the employers of those "mainly black and migrant women" who do not.

\* For the defence and expansion of public services under workers' and users' control

\* For the extension of high quality childcare services

## Migration

Over the past four decades, total numbers of international migrants have more than doubled, but the percentage of the world population migrating has remained fairly constant. There are now 175 million international migrants worldwide or approximately 3.5 per cent of the global population. About half this number is women, despite the common misconception that migrants are men. Most migration takes place to adjacent countries, and some takes place within countries as well as across continental borders.

In many countries of the south, remittances sent back by migrant workers play a crucial role in the economy. For the Philippines in 2008, annual remittances amounted to US\$16.4 billion and in March 2009 alone, total remittances were US\$1.47 billion. In seven Latin American and Caribbean countries, remittances even account for more than 10% of GDP and exceed the dollar flows for the largest export product.

As the crisis deepens, women's migration will increase further for a number of reasons: women moving to work abroad because they cannot sell their labour power at home, or if they can, they cannot sustain their families on the income offered. For example, 4.5 million families in the Philippines cannot meet the minimum requirement for food.

In some situations, in fact, the majority of migrants are women: for example, from the Philippines 70% are women, employed mainly as undocumented domestic workers. The RMPP (Philippines section of the Fourth International) works in Europe to organise Filipina migrants and to try to win rights for undocumented workers.

Filipina women, like other women from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe, working as domestic workers are part of the global domestic care chain, where women in first world countries who want to be liberated from their domestic functions and pursue fulfilment in the public space by working have to find someone to replace them in their domestic functions. So, migration of domestic workers is a form of demand-based migration founded on the gender division of labour in receiving countries. This demand is met by Filipina women, many of whom have children of their own in the Philippines. Given the gendered division of labour in Philippine households, they cannot expect their husbands to take on their domestic workload in their absence. Furthermore, the husbands might themselves be migrant workers elsewhere (mainly in construction).

For migrant women, the solution to this problem is to in turn employ live-in domestic workers to care for their family while they are gone. In the non-migrant family, the absence of the mother creates a demand for care for her own children. Since they cannot afford to pay a domestic worker, this work is taken on by an elder daughter while the mother is at work.

At the end of the global care chain, this daughter assumes the role of mothering for her younger siblings, giving her less time to play, study, or work outside the home. Alternatively, the migrant's mother cares for her children. Such grandparent fostering is a common constellation in societies of emigration. It takes pressure off the eldest children, but means that grandmothers can experience forty or fifty years of continuous child-rearing responsibility. While every woman in the chain feels she is doing the right thing for her family, hidden costs are passed along and eventually end up with the older daughter in the non-migrant household. As childcare work is passed down the chain, it diminishes in value and becomes unpaid at the end.

Migrant families are deprived of their mothers' personal affection and care since they are already commoditized in the global market and traded internationally. This "new commodity" in the global market is well promoted and supported by the state. For example, the two women presidents of the Philippines (Aquino and Arroyo) made these migrant women "heroines" because they sacrifice their families in order for the Philippine nation to progress through remittances. President Arroyo promised the Middle East countries to send efficient and reliable domestic workers. They both called the migrant women workers the "new heroes" to pacify them in the face of the emotional distress of separation and exploitation.

The migrant women and their families are the sacrificial lambs of this neoliberal globalization. During global financial crisis, women migrants working in the domestic households are directly affected and cannot even claim severance pay when they lose their jobs because they are mostly undocumented.

Governments like that of the Philippines ignore their own legal obligations to protect migrant workers from their

country (Republic Act 8042 (Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Act of 1995). For example, since 2002, six Filipino migrant workers have been executed in Saudi Arabia including one woman, and a number of others have been held on death row for crimes they clearly did not commit. The violence (beatings, rapes, forced detention) meted out to women migrant domestic workers from Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the receiving countries has been well-documented.

Of course not all those who migrate become migrant workers. Men, women, and children are displaced in huge numbers as a result of wars "including civil wars" and by climate change, which makes the places they were living uninhabitable. People try to escape political persecution by leaving their country of origin. Women may run from violence within the family or from forced marriages. Many of these flee as refugees, hoping for a place of safety in the country to which they run. Unfortunately the lot of the majority is to be treated as outcasts and scroungers.

Trafficking in women has also increased. The most publicised form has been trafficking for sexual exploitation of women, particularly from Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia to Western Europe, creating a huge network of forced sex workers. But there is also an increase in women being sold within their own countries as domestic slaves: recently, Peruvian feminists' research showed that the largest number of women in their country subjected to trafficking were actually indigenous women kidnapped and sent to work as servants in other towns inside Peru. This is a sign of deepening inequality within countries.

Women who are refugees and/or subject to trafficking have even fewer rights than migrant women workers. The majority of refugees remain within other countries of the south. The conditions of refugees in the advanced capitalist countries has become worse over recent years with the "development" of more repressive measures in North America, Europe, and Australasia to keep out refugees as much as possible. This has taken a number of different forms, from making it harder for people to cross borders in the first place, imprisoning many of those "including pregnant women and children of all ages" who do so in barbaric conditions, and making access to what welfare provision still exists in the "host" countries more and more difficult.

Not only the far right, but increasingly mainstream politicians scapegoat refugees for the economic crisis. In Italy, the passage of an emergency law on rape in February 2009 was a cynical attempt by Berlusconi to scapegoat refugees, particularly Roma, for violence against women, while at the same time giving the state more power in general.

\* Against the informal economy. For the regularisation of migrant workers' status

## Ideology

The crisis of civilisation is also the motor for the growth of reactionary ideas. Berlusconi's policy of blaming immigrants for all the effects of the crisis and using this as an excuse to introduce strong "security" "that is, anti-immigrant" laws is just an extreme example.

Religion has an increasing hold on greater sections of the population, and fundamentalism within all major religions continues to be a threat. Women's bodies are seen as a key terrain of struggle for all fundamentalists.

A striking example is the way in which the reactionary elements of the Catholic Church in Ireland used the threat that the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union would force Ireland to legalise abortion to build support for their reactionary opposition to the Treaty, despite the fact that it contains no such provision. This forced the EU to give a formal



guarantee that adoption of the treaty would not mandate Ireland to legalise abortion, as it had also been forced to do on the question of preserving Irish neutrality.

The collusion between right-wing governments and religious hierarchies continues from Italy to Iran, even if there has been a change in the US, where this is no longer the case. One important consequence of the latter is the overturning of the Bush government ban on funding for projects that gave even contraceptive advice "let alone abortion services" to women. This opening will potentially have a positive impact on women's rights, especially in Africa. However, the murder of Dr. Tiller, one of the few physicians in the US openly prepared to perform late-term abortions, reminds us that fundamentalism is still alive and well in the US itself.

Further, the Bush regime's fundamentalist doctrine had a profoundly negative impact on the fight against HIV/AIDs, especially in Africa, that has destroyed the lives of so many women. Sixty-one percent of those with the disease in sub-Saharan Africa are women. But in some countries there, infection rates among young women far surpass those of their male peers. For example, in Swaziland, four times as many females aged 15-24 are infected as males. Lack of access to accurate information about how the disease spreads, as well as pharmaceutical companies' greed, which has severely limited the availability of anti-retrovirals in the communities that most need them, have been the most important causes of this devastation.

In Nicaragua, the Sandinistas ditched their political principles on the question of abortion in 2008, apparently in order to win the election, although there was no real indication that in fact this would increase their vote. But they not only abandoned their own position, they also decided to actively attack the women's movement, bringing criminal charges against nine prominent feminists in the case of a therapeutic abortion given to a nine-year-old rape victim. It just so happened that most of these nine women had also been involved in supporting President Ortega's step-daughter in her case against him for sexual abuse.

In Mexico we have seen collusion between the right wing PAN government and the PRI to introduce "right to life" legislation in 13 states - making the extension of the right to abortion up to 12 weeks which the PRD introduced in Mexico City more difficult. Such developments were possible because the gains in Mexico City, while positive, took place at the level of the superstructure and were not achieved through mass mobilisations, with the resulting change in mass consciousness that this would have involved.

In Brazil, the Lula government has continued to compromise with the Vatican to the point of considering the possibility of putting religious education on the school curriculum. At the end of 2008, Congress chairman MP Arlindo Chinaglia created a Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into abortion with as a mandate for no less than the institutionalisation of criminalisation of women who defend legalisation of abortion and those who are obliged to carry it out. Moreover, the Judiciary of the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, in the town of Campo Grande, which cited more than 10,000 women for practising abortion, using as proof the medical records requisitioned in a clandestine clinic. Out of these women, some 1,200 are facing trial.

In Afghanistan, one of only three countries in the world where women die earlier than men, we have had the grotesque spectacle of the passage of a law legalising rape within marriage and debate of a clause that would allow a man to legally starve his wife if she refused to have sex with him. This is the country where those who have waged war against it since 9/11 have cynically claimed to do so in defence of women's rights, but where the government they installed is just as reactionary and as in hock to Islamic fundamentalists as their predecessors (who, anyway, were a creation of US imperialism).

The new Afghan constitution allows a separate "family code" for the Shia population and it is under this provision that the current debates are taking place "in the run up to a general election. In this context, as in many others, women's lives and bodies are instrumentalised. Afghan women have organised against this "with at least

moral support from feminists elsewhereâEuros" however their protests have been viciously attacked by fundamentalists.

As feminists we also face an ideological attack from a different direction: post feminism and masculinist ideas. Starting from the idea that feminism has "gone too far," these currents use differentialist theory to attack women's individual rights to abortion, divorce and protection against violence.

\* For full separation of religion from state, an end to religious influence in the framing of laws and the operation of the legal, health or education services.

\* For the right to free abortion, contraception and sex education

## Violence

The crisis of civilisation is marked by an increase in violence at all levels of society as alienation deepens.

Whether in the private or public spheres, women are victims of violence: in France one woman dies every three days from conjugal violence. At work masculine domination leads to widespread physical/psychological/sexual violence and the increasing tension in workplaces as the crisis deepens can only deepen this phenomenon.

War is of course the most obvious and brutal (and brutalising) example of violence. War in the late 20th and 21st century has become a phenomenon in which it is routine for massive casualties to take place amongst civilian populations, therefore affecting huge numbers of women and children.

From the time of the wars in the Balkans and then again in the wars in the Great Lakes in Africa, we have seen the increasing use of rape as a weapon of war.

Evidence of the extent of rape in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 by Serb forces in particular forced the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to deal openly with these abuses, and in 1996, for the first time, rape was recognised as a war crime. According to the Women's Group Tresnjevka, more than 35,000 women and children were held in Serb-run "rape camps" in which Muslim and Croatian women were held captive, raped and deliberately made pregnant. This occurred in the context of a patrilineal society, in which children inherit their father's ethnicity, hence the "rape camps" aimed at the birth of a new generation of Serb children âEuros"and the continuation of ethnic cleansing by another means.

Similar horrors have also been experienced by women in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Their bodies have become battlegrounds because women are seen only as vehicles through which new generations are produced; and, in ethnic warfare, preventing the enemy from reproducing equates to the ultimate prize. Against this background, sexual violence has become a deliberate and effective war-time strategy in the region.

Violent sexual acts directed toward women to brutalise and instil fear in them and the general population do not discriminate by age, with girls as young as four months and women as old as 84 suffering the same fate. UN agencies working in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) estimate that approximately 50,000 women were raped in the region between 1996 and 2002, and close to 55% of women have experienced sexual violence during the conflict in South Kivu. An estimated 250,000 women were raped during the Rwandan genocide.

In Haiti, an Amnesty International report (November 2008) said a trend has emerged involving groups of armed men assaulting girls, the legacy of rape as a political weapon that emerged during the armed rebellion that ousted Aristide in 2004. Rape became a political weapon by armed insurgents to spread fear and to punish women believed to have supported the democratic government. "Rape has now become a common practice among criminal gangs," said the report. Of 105 rape cases reported by November 2008, 55 percent involved girls under age 18. In 2007, 238 rapes were recorded; 140 of these involved girls between 19 months and 18 years of age. All this is taking place despite the fact that UN troops have been in Haiti since 2004.

Women in Palestine and particularly in Gaza continue to suffer brutally as a result of the Israeli occupation. Pregnant women beginning labour or needing medical attention at earlier stages of their pregnancies are routinely refused passage through the check points into the Israeli state, at the same time that hospitals in Gaza are denied medical supplies, even when they are brought by aid convoys. Countless women have miscarried or died themselves as a result of this barbarity. 192 women died in the Israeli bombardment of Gaza at the beginning of 2009. And the siege of the area continues to impact extremely negatively on the whole society including on the physical and mental health of women and children.

In other places we have seen the impact of increasing militarisation of societies usually resulting in the criminalisation of civil society and violent repression by the state apparatus. Sexual violence including rape has been increasingly used as a tool. In Atenco, Mexico in 2006 the police launched a brutal attack on the social movements resulting in two dead and 26 women being sexually assaulted. The war on drugs, especially in Latin America, and the war on terror are two sides of the same coin here.

We have also seen the use of horrendous forms of sexual torture by US forces "including women" in Abu Graib and in Guantanamo. These abuses, used mainly against male detainees who are presumed to be religious, are clearly intended as much to humiliate the victims as to physically assault them.

We further see that prejudices "racism, anti-semitism, homophobia and sexism where these had been rolled back by the gains of the movement" are again on the increase, together with the spread of Islamophobia. At the same time these prejudices are expressed more violently so we see a marked increase in murders as a result of these brutal beliefs.

In the case of women, we have the grotesque phenomena of femicide, which first came to light around the case of Juárez City in the state of Chihuahua in Mexico from the early 1990s and continues to this day. What became clear as women organised and fought back around this issue however, is that the murder of hundreds of women just because they are women is not unique to this one Mexican city. Rather the phenomenon is pervasive throughout the national territory of Mexico and in other Latin American countries including Guatemala, Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina and also in Spain. Femicide has to be understood as the (il)logical extension and normalization of other forms of violence against women, and like other such crimes is carried out by men in a number of different relationships to the women involved.

\* For full and free support systems for women victims or potential victims of violence, such as women's centres, the independent right to benefits and housing, adequate training of social work, police and justice departments.

*submitted after the international women's seminar by Hall (Appeals Commission, Britain) and Philomena (IC, France)*