



Women in Black

London

**WOMEN SAY "NO TO NATO"**

The British armed forces do not act autonomously. They are tied firmly into the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance. It is as part of a NATO force that British troops are fighting in Afghanistan. Our struggle to demilitarize the UK, to keep Britain out of overseas war adventures, to get rid of the UK nuclear 'deterrent' and divert military spending to social ends, has to include a struggle to get Britain out of NATO – and to close NATO down.

NATO should have disbanded at the end of the Cold War. Instead its ambitions have grown, and member states' military budgets with them. Now it seeks the membership of more and more countries in an effort to encircle Russia and control the Middle East. NATO's "out of area" wars, first in the Balkans, now in Afghanistan/Pakistan, and indeed its very existence today, contravene the United Nations charter, just as NATO states' nuclear arsenal contravenes Article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

**Women in Black groups in NATO member-states** are protesting against the alliance's many bases, installations and production facilities, surrounded by barbed wire and security checkpoints, which deform their local economies, pollute the environment and result in increased prostitution and violence against women. In the UK we are pitting ourselves against the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system that is not just "ours", but rather a key component in NATO's arsenal.

### **The feminist antimilitarist case against NATO**

**...as an international actor.** Its 'bloc mentality' of 'us and them', its emphasis on nation states and frontiers, its assertion of the alliance's 'interests' are rampant patriarchalism. Women do not find their own interests represented in this belligerent rhetoric, nor in paternalist 'protector' stance of the USA.

**...against its military bases and installations** in our countries. National and US bases turn large areas into deserts, they pollute, radiate and contaminate. They are a health hazard to women, men and children. Their military personnel exploit women for sex and engage in trafficking.

**...against the militarization of everyday life and culture.** In our militarized societies the ideal man is seen as the soldier, boys are encouraged to identify with the military and glorify weapons. Popular culture responds with computer games, videos and films that celebrate male violence.

**... against NATO as a perpetrator of wars.** Take Afghanistan. Despite the Western rhetoric of protecting women's rights, a recent Womankind Worldwide study found the position of women deteriorating on many counts in the circumstances of NATO-inflicted war.

### **We call on the British Government to:**

- ?? Resign from NATO and use its influence to campaign at international level for the disbanding of NATO.
- ?? Take steps to dismantle the UK's nuclear weapons system and call for other NATO member states to do likewise.
- ?? Take a position in the European Union against the militarization of the Union.
- ?? Engage with all countries of the world in their diversity on a basis of dialogue, equality and inclusion.

*Women in Black holds vigils every Wednesday between 6-7 pm at the Edith Cavell Statue, opposite the door of the National Portrait Gallery, St.Martin's Place, London WC2. The vigils are silent, women-only and if possible we wear black. Women in Black, c/o The Maypole Fund, PO Box 14072, London N16 5WB. Tel 020 7813 2019 [www.womeninblack.org.uk](http://www.womeninblack.org.uk)*