



## STOP TRAINING OUR YOUTH TO BE FIGHTERS

### International Week of Action Against the Militarization of Youth 12-18 November 2018.

From birth till maturity, our young all over the world are conditioned to accept armed conflict as normal. An ability and readiness for fighting are fostered particularly in boys. In many countries, young men are required to serve time in the military. In some countries, such as Israel, females too are conscripted. In some armed conflicts even younger children are abducted into militias and forced to fight.

#### **Unique among European countries, the UK recruits 16-year olds into its armed forces.**

While not deployable until the age of 18, most of the army's 16 year old recruits join combat roles, especially the infantry where they learn to fight, handle weaponry and have their inhibitions to killing removed. These roles carry the highest long-term risks once soldiers turn 18 and can be sent to war, and with mental health risks like self-harm and suicide.

Even in states that do not conscript young people's bodies, government, arms dealers and other war profiteers pursue their vested interest by conscripting children's minds, indoctrinating them to admire the military and accept militarist policies. Often the idea is promoted of an 'enemy' from whom 'our' community or nation must be protected - particularly its 'women and children'. Cultural, social and commercial institutions foster a military mind-set. Think of the marketing of military-themed and violent films and video games, and the hyping of military styles in entertainment and fashion. These things lead young people to accept the military as normal, natural, uncontroversial.

Militarization is effected through activity of the Armed Forces such as parades, air shows and glorified commemoration of war dead. The Army Cadets (12-18 years) is the UK's largest and most successful youth organisation with 46,000 cadets and 8,500 adult volunteers in over 1,700 locations. Meanwhile, drastic local government spending cuts have closed down many civilian youth centres.

#### **Most insidiously, the military are permitted to enter schools and intervene in education.**

They feed materials into the curriculum, promote military careers, interview for pre-recruitment courses at armed forces bases, do activities in partnership with arms companies, and sometimes bring weaponry and military vehicles to display or demonstrate. Recent research found that the army visited 40% of London schools, disproportionately targeting schools in the most disadvantaged areas. Between 2012 and 2016 nearly £90 million of new funding was pledged to 'military ethos' and cadet projects. **Their documented aims are to influence 'future decision-makers' to support the military and its operations, and encourage young people to enlist.**

Understanding the psychological harm done to young people by exposure to violence, 16-year-olds are deemed too young to be permitted to play *Call of Duty* games, or watch graphic war films. How is it, then, that the military is permitted to participate in the education of a twelve-year-old school child? How is it that youths of sixteen may lock themselves into a contract to serve in the military for up to six years?

Find out more: <http://peace-education.org.uk/> [www.ppu.org.uk/](http://www.ppu.org.uk/) <http://forceswatch.net/>  
<http://childsoldiers.org> <http://woodcraft.org.uk> <https://antimili-youth.net/>

**To: Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Theresa May. With Women in Black, I call on the Government to:**

- Raise the minimum age of military recruitment in the UK to eighteen years;
- Cease engagement of the armed forces with schools and education authorities;
- Increase spending on civilian youth activities and facilities;
- Develop policy and practice in child-rearing, schooling and youth work to foster non-violence and diminish the attraction of fighting – particularly as an attribute of masculinity.

**Signed:..... Name:.....**

**Address:.....**

Women in Black hold vigils every Wednesday from 6-7 pm at the Edith Cavell Statue, opposite the National Portrait Gallery, St.Martin's Place, London WC2. Our vigils are silent, women-only, and if possible we wear black. Contact: <[wibinfo@gn.apc.org](mailto:wibinfo@gn.apc.org)>. [www.london.womeninblack.org](http://www.london.womeninblack.org)  
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