



Women in Black London

Don't cut aid Tax wealth

On 25 February, the UK Government announced its commitment to increase defence spending to 2.5% of GNI¹ by April 2027. However, this comes at the expense of the UK's aid budget. Rather than restoring this to 0.7% GNI, as promised in Labour's Manifesto, the Prime Minister is cutting the UK aid budget by 40% to 0.3% of GNI, the lowest level in a generation. He could have implemented a wealth tax to fund his increase in defence spending or shifted funding from nuclear to conventional weapons – instead he is making the poorest people in the world pay the price.

The Labour Government's decision to further slash the aid budget while increasing defence spending is a stark reinforcement of militarism at the expense of those most vulnerable. Despite claims that women and girls are at the heart of UK foreign policy, these cuts tell a different story – one where political will is directed towards militarisation rather than meaningful investment in peace, security and gender equality. You cannot build a safe and secure world simply through military spending.

Since the UK reduced its Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) commitment from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI, gender-focused funding has seen a disproportionate decline. CARE's recent report² revealed that UK aid for gender equality fell from £6.3bn in 2019 to £3.4bn in 2022 – the lowest on record since reporting began in 2014. With the latest round of cuts, this decline will only deepen.

At a time when the UK claims to be strengthening partnerships with the Global South, it is instead undermining them by diverting resources away from development and gender equality and into militarisation. This shift does not make the UK or the world safer – it makes conflict more likely. The UK's arms sales have already made it complicit in human rights violations by countries such as Israel and Saudi Arabia. An expanded defence budget, framed as a response to global insecurity, risks further entrenching cycles of violence rather than addressing their root causes.

To Sir Keir Starmer, Prime Minister, 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA

Labour's mission statement "to create a world free from poverty on a liveable planet" will not be achieved by cutting the overseas development budget. Britain needs to stand up for internationalism, contributing its fair share to tackling the world's common problems, not follow the lead of the USA in cutting back on support for the Global South.

We call on you to implement wealth taxes such as a 2% tax on those with more than £10m, as recommended by the Patriotic Millionaires, to fund your proposed increase in defence spending, and to ensure that aid budgets reach those people, particularly women and children living in poverty

Signed..... Date

Name:

Address



Women in Black hold vigils every Wednesday between 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. We welcome all women who support our call for an end to militarism and war.

Contact us: Twitter @WIB_London FB @womeninblack.london <http://london.womeninblack.org/>
Donations for leaflets most welcome March 2025

¹ Gross National Income

² <https://www.careinternational.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-advocacy/open-letter-women-and-girls/>