Final report

5th Global Day of Action on Military Spending
Introduction

This year’s Day of Action came at a time of increasing tensions in several regions, and signs of political pressure to spend more from the public purse on the military and to sell yet more weapons both at home and abroad. At the same time governments and the UN are urging greater financial commitments both to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and to efforts to tackle the climate change crisis. The Day of Action provided, once again, an opportunity for citizens in all parts of the world to express in their own ways the view that priorities have to change.

GDAMS partners from the faith-based, labour, peace and disarmament, academics, women, economic justice, decent housing, environment and climate change, human rights, conscientious objectors, artists and students communities organised 127 events in 20 countries including various campaigns on social media.

Aside from actions like leafletting, penny polls, banners display, press releases, and demonstrations, the creative and resourceful GDAMS partners organised and conducted a kite-flying event, a street meditation, a night light action, a blockade of military establishments, writing a poem, rapping and a video clip by a band which metamorphosed into a concert tour with disarmament as the theme. There are also individuals who did their own GDAMS initiative for the social good.

On social media, the Thunderclaps, the selfies, and online surveys brought to the fore local issues while linking them to global ones. It was the team’s conscious decision that this year, social media platforms will be optimized by utilizing them not only as « bulletin boards » or as a « megaphone » to broadcast and disseminate information. We invested in using social media primarily as a means to cultivate and deepen our engagement and networking on a common issue which is military spending. Military spending as it relates to our partners' advocacy concerns like climate change, nuclear disarmament, social development, etc.

It was the fifth edition of GDAMS and majority of the events were held on 13 April. The GDAMS U.S. was organised on 15 April (U.S. Tax Day) to highlight people's opinions on where they want to invest their tax money.
The International Peace Bureau served as the International Coordinator and Mary Zerker of the American Friends Service Committee / Wage Peace as the U.S. Coordinator. GDAMS was again scheduled to correspond with the release of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) 2014 data on military expenditure.

We wish to convey our sincerest gratitude to the GDAMS 2015 organisers, participants and supporters. All of their actions express the global movement’s commitment to persuade governments to reallocate the global military spending and move the money to urgent human needs.

This report highlights some actions organized for GDAMS 2015. Please visit our website or Flickr page to see all the photos from our partners.

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The International Peace Bureau held its traditional GDAMS seminar. Pieter Wezeman, Senior Researcher with the SIPRI, presented the new SIPRI data on military spending for 2014. Colin Archer, IPB Secretary-General, introduced the GDAMS and addressed the question: «Which priorities for public investment: military, development, climate?». In his wide-ranging talk he challenged the idea that investments in the military are an effective way of assuring security. He made reference to the financing of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Green Climate Fund, which could be achieved if a substantial reallocation were made from the global military spending ($1776bn). The meeting was chaired by Jarmo Sareva, Director, UN Institute for Disarmament Research. He concluded with a final set of remarks.

The IPB-GDAMS Team was also really active on social media in order to organize and report on GDAMS, with the slogan «Free our $1.75 Trillion!» and the hashtag «#MoveTheMoney». A Thunderclap campaign was launched, entitled «GDAMS 2015: #Move the Money!», reaching 172, 996 people on Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr.
Kenya

The Coalition for Constitution Implementation in conjunction with GCOMS Kenya held a seminar and released the 2015 Military Spending Survey Report entitled « I Would Plant Trees to Combat Climate Change ». The title was a quotation from a survey respondent who said that if he had his way, he would reallocate money to plant trees to combat climate change instead of spending the money on the military. Then the group proceeded to Freedom Corner for a tree-planting activity. They also mourned victims of the recent terrorist attack around their graves.

Nigeria

The birth of GCOMS West Africa and Nigeria chapter was launched by Trees on Earth Development Foundation, a national non-governmental organization operating to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, environmental pollution and poverty through sustainable development practices in the communities of in Nigeria and Africa. Part of the plan is to establish GCOMS Clubs in schools in Edo and Kogi states. Local participants and visitors from Lagos, Abuja, Lokoja, Edo state staged dramas and a debate for students on the topic: « #MOVE THE MONEY! From Warfare to Education (Support or Against) ». The students debated on the subject matter either in support or against moderated by their teachers.
Australia

The band named DRAW released the video clip of their song «Wave Rider Blues» which contains footages from the nuclear weapon test called Operation Tumbler-Snapper which was launched by the U.S. in the 1950s. It is the musician’s response to «the threat of nuclear war» and a call to «work together to stop nuclear proliferation and protect life on this planet from annihilation». The video clip is linked to the Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR). The band also launched their «Disarmament Tour».

Korea

A joint statement was issued by parliamentarians and civil society in South Korea entitled «Welfare not Warfare». Fifteen MPs and 32 NGOs endorsed this statement and had a joint press conference in front of the Parliament building. It was significant given that this year was the 70th anniversary of the partition of the Korean peninsula and the anniversary of the Sewol Ferry tragedy. The press conference suggested the way toward the safety of the citizens, not national security and toward peace and cooperation not military expansion.
Philippines

The Stop the War! Coalition Philippines organized a kite-flying event in northern Philippines. It was such a success that it attracted television coverage. They made a video-report called «Kite-flying for peace».

Helped by Zone One Tondo Organization, Stop the War! Coalition also co-organized the «Youth Leaders Forum-workshop on military spending» and a mural painting for youth and students in an urban poor community.

Other actions

- Just Peace Queensland screened a documentary produced by David Bradbury called «Waging Peace» (Brisbane, Australia)

- MP Terri Butler’s wrote a media release called «New Military Spending Data a Reminder of the Importance of Peace» (Australia)

- The Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) condemned the arrival of the US Marines in Darwin. (Darwin, Australia)

- The People for Nuclear Disarmament hand out almost 300 leaflets and managed signatures for their letter to Julie Bishop, the Australian Foreign Minister (Perth, Australia)

- Film showing of a Guinness Book of Record attempt at holding the most demonstrations on the one day in Canberra (28!). The day after, the «Pacing for Peace» demonstration was held. (Sydney, Australia)

- The delegation of Hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) set off to sail on Peace Boat’s 87th Global Voyage.

- The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) Northeast Asia issued a statement expressing concerns about the increase in military spending and ongoing military buildup in the region.

- In Ganjeong village, activists and villagers conducted campaign with same slogan «Welfare Not Warfare». (Jeju Island, South Korea)

- Peace Movement Aotearoa published a press release: «Global military spending remains shockingly high». Global and national military spending was one of the topics of the opening presentation of their National Peace Workshops. (Wellington, New Zealand)
Europe

Belgium

Agir Pour la Paix posted 1,500 letters from a pseudo-government agency called « Department of National Expenditure ». In the letter, the « agency » demanded money for the purchase of fighter planes from the people of Brussels. The activists then interviewed the recipients of the letter asking whether they would respond with a donation to the « agency's » appeal and most of them answered « no » and that they would prefer to spend money on social needs instead.

Cyprus

Demilitarised Nicosia organised a meeting to highlight the strong militarization of the country and the role of military spending in causing and perpetuating Cyprus’ economic crisis.

Ireland

Members of the Triratna Buddhist Community and AFRI, Action from Ireland held a street meditation to raise awareness about how vast military spending makes the world a more dangerous place as well as diverting resources away from tackling real issues such as poverty, health care and environment. Street meditation demonstrates that there is a more radical way to deal with conflict which is simple, mindful and peaceful.
Italy

La Rete italiana per il disarmo created a powerful « Un “bellissimo” F-35 oppure…» video series to promote the campaign « Taglia le ali alle armi » (roughly translated as « Cut the wings of weapons » ).

Norway

A breakfast meeting was organized with the media at the Peace house in Oslo with the title: « Excessive military spending. Why do we not talk about it? » Ny Tid presented the same day a feature article by Ingeborg Breines on the same topic. Alexander Harang had made a fact sheet for the occasion showing recent developments in military costs.

Other actions

- Belgium - Pax Christi Vlaanderen issued a statement of support for GDAMS.

- Finland - War Resisters' International affiliates and Rauhanliitto-Peace Union of Finland came together to display a banner which read, « If we had $1.8 trillion, we’d #movethemo- ney to education, renewable energy, healthcare » in multiple languages.

- France - The Mouvement de la Paix issued a press release entitled « Un fardeau insupportable et inadmissible pour les peuples! » (An unbearable and unacceptable burden for the people!) and distributed flyers.

- Germany - The International Association of Lawyers against Nuclear Arms, the World Future Council, and the International Peace Bureau circulated an « Appeal to Members of the German Bundestag: Stop the new arms race – disarmament for a sustainable future! »

- Ireland - Pete Mullineaux wrote the poem, « The Wave », « in response to GDAMS' call to 'wave goodbye to weapons' ».

- Norway - The Grandmothers for Peace made a GDAMS-flyer that they distributed outside the Parliament.

- Spain - The Red Antimilitarista y Noviolenta de Andalucia made a media release / Drawings and infographics from Centro Delàs comparing military with social spendings.
They also conducted an online survey and asked the same question: «How would you spend £38 billion for a safer world?». £38 billion represents the annual figure spent by the UK on the military.

Pax Christi UK and the Quakers ran a «Give peace a budget» ballot where people were requested to vote for their spending ‘priorities’ to make the world a safer place. Results: Health & education (115); Tackling climate change (81); International cooperation and development (61); and Military spending (14) as the least important.

The Scrap Trident Coalition’s «Bairns Not Bombs» action followed a blockade of the Faslane Naval Base on the Clyde, which is home to the UK’s Trident nuclear weapons system. The demonstrators aimed to shut down the base for the day and succeeded.

Other actions

- Abingdon - The Abingdon Peace Group decided to do a «People’s Ballot: NHS Not TRIDENT» poll as a choice of how the Trident money could be otherwise spent.

- Basildon - The Campaign Against Arms Trade called on government to invest in public services rather than spend on the military. The South Essex Campaign Against the Arms Trade held a people’s ballot, asking to vote on how should public money spent.

- Penzance - More than two dozen people linked arms to show solidarity for the blockade of the Faslane Nuclear Weapons base in Scotland.

- Leeds - The Yorkshire Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament activists held up banners outside the office of Jacobs UK (involved in production and maintenance of British nukes).

- London - Women in Black organized their Wednesday Vigil, which was anti-Trident and nuclear weapons. They gave out about 250 of their Trident leaflets.
Chile

The regional teams of Servicio e Paz converged in the streets of Arica and consulted the public asking them to choose where they wish to spend their taxes. If the activity was symbolic, it aimed to generate debates and reflection on the Chilean government's excessive spending on arms as opposed to social spending.

Colombia

Mujeres pro la Paz, a platform of more than 100 women organizations that work for peace in the country, organized a gathering in Bogotá against military spending and the US military bases in Colombia. They set up blank banners that people could fill with their words for peace.
North America

73 events - 2 countries

The Thunderclap campaign

AFSC Wage Peace, our counterpart in the U.S. launched a Thunderclap campaign for GDAMS U.S-Tax Day and reached more than double its target:

- Goal: 100 supporters
- Total supporters: 266
- Social reach: 242,646 people

Halifax, Canada

Nova Scotia Voice of Women for Peace took to the streets to conduct the survey—“What would you do with the $1.75 trillion being spent globally each year on the military?”

San Francisco, CA

Over 110 volunteers from 37 different organizations distributed around 15,000 SIPRI brochures at 32 subway stations in five neighborhoods. CODEPINK and New Priorities Campaign Coalition organized an event with music in front of Senator Feinsteins office.

Colorado Springs, CO

National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee (NWTRCC) members displayed a banner and passed out leaflets at the post office; the Colorado Springs Gazette ran a photo of the demonstrators on April 16th.
Portland, OR

Friends in Portland had their annual Redirection program « re-route » thousands of dollars to five different groups including St. Luke’s Veteran’s Bridge Fund, which helps returning veterans.

Austin, TX

CODEPINK Austin reprised their Human Penny Poll in the entertainment district, dressing in costumes representing five of the government spending categories and performing a street theatre scene in which the categories clamored for more funding. Participants engaged in spirited conversation about the current budgetary setup and how or why it is so contrary to public wishes.

Dallas, TX

CODEPINK and North Texas Veterans for Peace demonstrated after dark using a light display which read « Pentagon Waste ≠ Security ». They were accosted by a police officer who bullied them to leave and attempted to physically take the light displays until a postal inspector calmly explained that they were legally allowed to demonstrate in front of the post office.

Washington, DC

Youth working with the American Friends Service Committee made 14 different visits on Capitol Hill to deliver the SIPRI report. They wore shirts color-coded to represent the current discretionary budget distribution, with ~60% in red shirts denoting military spending. With their backs to passersby, the shirts spelled out MILITARY BUDGET ≠ SECURITY. Then they turned to face the crowd and the message changed to reveal things that they think do equal security: peace, equality, unity,...
Other actions

- Toronto, Canada - Canadian Voice of Women for Peace took action in Yonge and Dundas.
- Tucson, AZ - Activists, including members of Veterans for Peace and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom vigiled outside of the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.
- Moraga, CA - CODEPINK and the NPCC took action at St. Mary’s College Peace Pole.
- Southern California - On the day of its 70th birthday, Jerry Coffin of the NWTRCC passed out leaflets of the WRL pie charts, alongside war tax forms in post offices and libraries.
- Denver, CO - The NWRTCC and Warm Cookies of the Revolution organized a Tax Day Carnival and held a Penny Poll to ask participants what they felt needed more funding.
- Iowa City, IA - Peace activists including AFSC gathered in front of the post office.
- Ellsworth, ME - Frank Donnelly (NWTRCC) passed out 150 flyers at the local post office.
- Portage, MI - About 20 members from Kalamazoo Nonviolent Opponents of War gathered on South Westnedge Avenue calling for government to invest in human needs rather than war.
- Princeton, NJ - Coalition for Peace Action conducted a penny poll in front of the post office.
- New York - People from War Resisters League, Raging Grannies, Mennonites and Peace Action gathered with banners, charts and signs in front of the new IRS location near City Hall in Manhattan and made a long line of people awaiting entry to the building.
- Eugene, OR - Lane County Taxes for Peace not War, Community Alliance of Lane County, Women’s Action for New Directions and Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network gathered at the downtown post office to hold a Penny Poll and pass out signs proclaiming « I’d rather pay for ___ than war », which participants could fill. Raging Grannies followed with a rally redirecting taxes in the form of personal checks to about 25 groups. One was from the Wellspring Friends School, from which a student performed a song about homelessness.
- Philadelphia, PA - Paul Sheldon (NWTRCC) handed out pie charts denoting the federal budget allocation to military spending in front of the post office / AFSC and others held a penny Poll outside of a post office in a busy pedestrian place. Over 300 people participated.
- Providence, RI - AFSC marched to several locations on wage theft and minimum wage increase, while also making a few stops to discuss tax day and military spending.
- Dallas, TX - Veterans For Peace members were threatened with arrest by 5 police officers and 3 Dallas squad cars while calling for better budget priorities at the main post office.
- Brattleboro, VT - Pioneer Valley War Tax Resisters played live music while passing out information on refusing war taxes in front of the Brattleboro Food Coop.
- Seattle, WA - People from Veterans for Peace vigiled at the downtown post office passing War Resisters League Flyers, covered by Channel 13 Fox News.
A word of Thanks

GDAMS 2015 – International Steering Committee (ISC)
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--- and In Memoriam: Prof. Kingsley Price, USA

Important note: IPB is urgently in need of securing funding for this important work. Suggestions, offers, contacts are most welcome! Please contact secgen@ipb.org

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The Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) is an opportunity to encourage organizations and individuals all over the world to raise awareness about global military spending figures through mobilizations, advocacy and educational projects. GDAMS has been organized every year since 2011. It is now the annual highlight of the Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS).