

# European Liaison Committee

## "Against War – Against Social War"

Based on the *European call Biden, Scholz, Macron, Sunak, Meloni, ...We say NO to your wars! You are responsible for the massacres and wars*, which is supported by numerous colleagues, members and organisations of the peace movement from 20 countries, as well as other political and trade union organisations,

the *German Coordination of the European Liaison Committee "Against War - Against Social War"* is **organising a European conference in Berlin on 2 November 2024** together with the *International Peace Bureau (IPB)*. A hybrid form of the conference is planned.

This conference is co-organised by the Norwegian party FOR (Peace and Justice). The 1st Balkan Anti-War Conference in Belgrade has supported the conference. Other organisations that see themselves in the framework of the ECC, as well as others, are invited to participate in the preparations.

**Friday 1 November** should be the day of arrival and a first joint meeting should take place in the evening. The conference will take place on **Saturday 2 November**.

A meeting of the European Liaison Committee is planned for **Sunday 3 November**.

The German coordination of the European Liaison Committee is calling for support for the **major demonstration of the "Never again war - Lay down your arms" initiative on 3 October 2024, 1 p.m., Brandenburger Tor**, with greetings and participation from other European countries. The call for the demonstration is enclosed.



### No to war and armament! Yes to peace and international solidarity

The situation in Europe and the Middle East is developing dangerously in the direction of a major war. Instead of working for peace, the West - including the German government - is supplying more and more weapons and accelerating the escalation by authorising their use against Russian territory. Nuclear weapons are being made operational again. The German government is arming itself like never before. We are all to be made fit for war. A "new" conscription threatens. The money for the arms build-up is lacking in hospitals and care, pensions and social benefits, education and day-care centres, railways and local transport. Global challenges that can only be solved together worldwide in order to preserve a world worth living in for the generations that follow us are not being tackled.

### Win the peace - now or never!

#### Therefore:

Negotiations to end the war in Ukraine and Gaza immediately!

No arms deliveries to Ukraine, Israel and all over the world!

Get nuclear weapons out of Germany and sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons!

No modernisation of nuclear weapons and no nuclear sharing!

Peace education in schools and upholding the civil clause at universities and colleges!

No Bundeswehr in schools and no "new" compulsory military service!

Right to conscientious objection everywhere!

No forced recruitment!

Disarmament! Invest money in education, healthcare, climate protection and infrastructure, expand the welfare state!

No billions in armaments!

Promote a democratic exchange of opinions, enable factual reporting!

No restrictions on freedom of opinion and assembly!

Peace and security can only be achieved together.

### It's almost 12 o'clock! Resistance and protest - now!

Take to the streets, form initiatives, fight back, be creative, resist the beginnings that have long since ceased to exist!!!

### Come to the nationwide peace demonstration on 3 October at 1 pm in Berlin!!!!

#### It's up to us!

#### Initiative "Never again war - Lay down your weapons"

Yusuf As, Reiner Braun, Wiebke Diehl, Andreas Grünwald, Rita-Sybille Heinrich, Jutta Kausch-Henken, Ralf Krämer, Willi van Ooyen, Christof Ostheimer, Peter Wahl

Translated with [www.DeepL.com/Translator](http://www.DeepL.com/Translator) (free version)

#### Further information about the appeal and the conferences

<https://gegendenkrieg-gegendsocialenkrieg.info/> Contact us: [GotthardKrupp@t-online.de](mailto:GotthardKrupp@t-online.de)

## Serbia: Interview with Milena Repajić

President of the Party of Radical Left Serbia  
(Partija radikalne levice, PRL)



**What are your first impressions of the Balkan anti-war conference in Belgrade which was held from the 5th to 7th July?**

I was glad to see a common understanding of a rising European anti-war movement. We find ourselves in different socio-economic and political situations – we had comrades from Georgia to Germany – but we understand that Europe is on the brink of a total war. We must do everything we can to stop it.

**You are the president of the party of the radical left in Serbia and you are participating at the comity against war and imperialism in Serbia. Can you tell us the reason why?**

Serbia, like other former socialist countries, went through a period of counterrevolution, euphemistically called "transition" (from socialism to capitalism). That process ruined the economy, impoverished the nation, and left the workers jobless and powerless. It also generally led to regression in society, as we lost many of our vested rights. I started participating in various social movements that tried to fight the consequences of the counterrevolution, and I still do. However, I realized that we cannot expect bourgeois political parties to put our agenda to the table. Therefore, we created the Party of the Radical Left, which became the political wing of various left and progressive social movements.

In former Yugoslavia, we saw how war is used to accumulate capital and for imperial exploitation. Since then, imperialism has waged dozens of wars and enslaved and ruined entire countries, until it once again brought the war back to Europe. That is why I, as well as many others, joined the Committee Against War and Imperialism, to fight war, that brings nothing but poverty, misery, and destruction.

**Since 4th of May an European Appeal against war is launched. In November will be held a European conference in Berlin on the base of this appeal. What do you think about this initiative?**

I believe there can never be too many voices against war. This is especially the case when the entire politi-

cal class of Europe, and particularly the leadership of the EU and its most powerful countries, is warmongering. I am only worried that the opposition to the war is not strong enough, which is why we need to strengthen it through international initiatives such as these and be adamant about it. Opposing the war is presented as this outlandish and radical idea, and we have to show that it is in the common interest to stop it.

**Can you explain in a few words to our readers the main activities and goals of the party of the radical left?**

At this moment our first goal is to build a left organization whose politics are rooted in class struggle. We are an antiimperialist and antifascist left organization with the main goal of establishing a socialist society. In that sense, we lead several struggles most relevant to the working class in Serbia today. We lead an anti-eviction movement, and we help workers' struggles as much as possible. We also have a strong anti-imperialist orientation, because we see imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism, and the biggest threat to humanity at this point. That is why we, alongside other comrades, organized several protests in support of Palestine, and why I and other members of the Party are also participating in the Committee Against War and Imperialism.

### Summary of the Oslo Anti-War Conference organised by Fred og Rettferdighet - FOR in association with the European Liaison Committee "Against the War – Against the Social War"

On Saturday, June 22, 2024, the new Norwegian party Fred og Rettferdighet - FOR and the European Liaison Committee Against the War, Against the Social War organised a full day conference with speakers from Norway, France, Sweden, and Germany.

#### Speakers:

Marinette Leraas - Chairperson Fred og Rettferdighet - FOR  
Yan Le Goff, peace activist, French journalist and member of the of the French Independent Workers' Party leadership.

Gotthard Knapp, founder of "Against War – Against Social War"

Mario Künze - Workers' Representative at Vivantes, Germany's largest public hospitals

Marcus Carlstedt faculty representative of the Swedish academic trade union with over 200,000 members

Tomas Magnusson Campaign leader of No to US Bases in Sweden

Ole Tunander, professor emeritus at Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Glenn Diesen, professor at the University of South Eastern Norway



After a formal introduction by FOR board member Peter Steinstein and FOR Chairperson Marinette Leraas, the conference began with a presentation from

Yan Le Goff.

Le Goff spoke of the situation for workers in France and the divisions created between different left-leaning organisations, some of which have now taken positions

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### STATEMENT FROM THE FIRST BALKAN ANTIWAR CONFERENCE (Belgrade, Serbia 5-7 July 2024)

During three days comrades from the Balkans, with our friends from European Committee against the war and from the Caucasus, have participated in the first Balkan antiwar conference organized by the Serbian Committee against the war and imperialism. Together we have engaged in the discussions on various topics, presenting situation in our countries, sharing experiences and actual problems, with the intention of building antiwar network in our region and forming foundations for the regional movement that could stand up to the war that is coming. We do not have doubt that the ruling classes are pushing us towards new global war.

Militarisation of the economies around the world, return of the mandatory military service in whole Europe and in

will engage in different activities and direct actions to try to prevent the war and militarization. And while we feel that the participants in the movement that we are building should not shy away from preventing radical critique to the system that is creating war



## Georgia: Interview with Sopo Japaridze

**Can you briefly introduce yourself? What does your union do?**

My name is Sopo Japaridze. I am the chair of the independent Health and Care Worker Union, Solidarity Network. I am also a writer and researcher of social and labor issues in Georgia.

Our union organizes nurses, health workers, social welfare workers, service sector workers and transnational care worker migrants.

**At the conference in Belgrade you reported that the West is trying to force the Georgian government to open a second front with Russia. Can you explain this a little?**

Direct calls to open a second front came from Ukrainians, not so much directly from the West. The Georgian government has stated that there were attempts to overthrow the government and assassinate billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, founder and financier of Georgian Dream, the ruling party, by former officials. An ongoing investigation is underway. The Georgia-Ukraine relationship is even more complicated because many former Georgian officials are now in the Ukrainian government. Additionally, the Georgian Legion, a militia group fighting in Ukraine, is headed by the former Georgian president's security guard. Online harassers who target anyone they perceive as critical of Ukraine, including those calling for peace, are collectively known as NAFO. They began by earning their "NAFO" status through donations to the Georgian Legion.

Many in the Georgian opposition believe that Georgia has not taken a hawkish stance like the Baltic countries. Georgia has not sanctioned Russia, although it has complied with financial sanctions via banks, and it maintains economic relations with Russia. Additionally, it has not been as rhetorically categorical towards Russia. In 2023, the former Prime Minister of Georgian Dream stated that "one of the main reasons Russia started a war with Ukraine is because of NATO." This statement was heavily criticized, as the narrative that this war is partly due to NATO expansion has become taboo, and anyone who expresses this view is often labeled as pro-Russian by default.

The Georgian government also perceives US actions as heavily favoring the opposition party agenda. A significant example is the US sanctioning of four judges based on intelligence from opposition NGOs and parties, alleging they were corrupt. This occurred despite the European Court of Human Rights exonerating one of the judges' decisions this year in a media dispute. The government criticized these "unfair" sanctions on Georgian judges, alleging they were used as an excuse by domestic opposition and NGOs to attack the judiciary.

Another point of contention is that former Georgian government officials, now representing Ukraine internationally, are not being extradited but instead are given legitimacy by the West. One example is the former Prosecutor General of

Georgia, Adeishvili, under the previous United National Movement Government, who represented Ukraine in official visits to The Hague. The Georgian Prosecutor's Office has requested Dutch authorities to arrest and extradite Adeishvili. This request followed reports of Adeishvili's participation in an official Ukrainian delegation attending an international conference titled "Restoring Justice for Ukraine."

**You pointed out that the government has not yet agreed to this? What political goal is it pursuing with this?**

One of the main platforms for Georgian Dream when it won in 2012, following the 2008 war under the previous government, was to restore peace. Their platform also aimed to normalize relations with Russia. Despite this, Georgian Dream has maintained a pro-Western stance, taking all necessary steps to secure an EU association agreement. However, the invasion of Ukraine has disrupted this pro-Western path, as the EU and the US have adopted more hawkish positions and have become less tolerant of deviations. Recently, the US halted aid to Georgia, with the US ambassador citing anti-Western rhetoric as one of the reasons.

Georgia has experienced three wars in 30 years, leading to a strong aversion to further conflict. It is a small, poor country with high unemployment and low wages, causing many people to emigrate. The country has an aging population, with the last census from ten years ago showing a population of 3.7 million. Georgia has no EU or NATO guarantees and has two disputed territories de facto under Russian control. Entering another war would be seen as an act of absolute suicide.

**You have characterized the current protests as a new Maidan. Why and what political consequences does this have?**

Georgia has experienced its own "Maidan" in terms of large-scale mobilization against the government, notably during the Rose Revolution in the early 2000s. From the dissolution of the Soviet Union, to the overthrow of the first president, to the overthrow of the second president, to the large-scale protests and scandal against the third president, and the push to overthrow the fourth government, Georgia is no stranger to ousting governments.

The recent mobilization against the "foreign influence law" had both similarities and differences compared to Ukraine's Maidan. Similarities include the large-scale mobilization against a draft law widely regarded as a "Russian law" that was seen as threatening to take Georgia away from the EU. This characterization of the law as "Russian" was largely driven by major NGOs, which had been building up opposition to the Georgian Dream government for years, accusing it of being captured by Russian interests. The draft law was ultimately withdrawn last year due to intense civil society and youth mobilization, brought back again this year, and

ultimately passed.

Civil society and NGOs in Georgia have become notably political and interventionist, shaping public discourse and fueling ongoing protests. The youth have been particularly active, mirroring the Maidan narrative of a struggle between the West and Russia, a geopolitical framework.

The largest protests have included attempts to breach the parliament, reflecting the intense mobilization around these issues. EU and US politicians have been highly interventionist, publicly aligning with the NGO-driven narratives. They have criticized the Georgian government and used diplomatic pressure, directly saying that if Georgians continue to elect this government, their prospects for EU accession could be jeopardized. Notably, EU politicians, including a member of the German SPD, have spoken at rallies, further emphasizing their involvement in the protests.

In Georgia, there were no camps set up like those in Maidan, and there was no organized far-right presence similar to what was seen in Ukraine. The Georgian far-right militants are currently engaged in the war in Ukraine. The level of political violence from the government was relatively moderate compared to Maidan, and it's not for certain government ordered beatings of select opposition members. There were instances of targeted beatings, as well as posters and graffiti against politicians and some prominent NGO activists. Additionally, it seemed unlikely that the US would fully support the overthrow of the current government.

In the end, all the energy of the protests is being channeled into the upcoming elections in a few months. What will happen during the elections, especially if the Georgian Dream party wins and the US embassy contests the results, remains unclear. There is a possibility of another "Maidan"-style upheaval if tensions escalate.

### **What role do NGOs play? What relationship does the population have with the NGOs?**

The term "NGOs" is broad and can be easily manipulated to suit various narratives. In discussions about the Georgian government, "NGOs" often refers to well-funded, influential think tanks and policy centers that wield significant power in shaping agendas and driving protests. In contrast, when the opposition talks about NGOs, they lead with organizations like dog shelters in order to obfuscate.

However, "foreign influence law" is quite broad, encompassing all NGOs that receive 20% or more of their funding from foreign sources. This wide scope makes it easy to perceive the law as an attack on all NGOs rather than targeting just the few organizations with significant access to Western politicians and funding that shape agendas.

Many post-Soviet civil societies are often described as "organizations without citizens," where democracy has been converted into a project, and civil society has become synonymous with NGOs. This phenomenon is especially evident in Georgia. Here, most NGOs are predominantly funded by foreign donors such as international organizations, foreign governments, and global foundations. Local financial support is minimal, and crowdfunding initiatives are rare, making it

difficult for these organizations to gain genuine grassroots support.

Ironically, since the law on foreign funding was introduced, NGOs started crowdfunding for fines and other needs during the protests.

Volunteer groups, which could signify a robust civil society, are largely unaccounted for and probably exist in small numbers. The concentration of NGOs in the capital city of Tbilisi further exacerbates the disconnect between these organizations and the broader population. This centralization means that the activities and initiatives of NGOs often do not reflect the needs and concerns of citizens in other parts of the country.

According to CRRG 2024 polling, only 3% of respondents reported taking part in anything organized by NGOs, and only 22% of Georgians expressed trust in NGOs. If this poll and self-reporting are close to reality, it shows that most people are not connected to or benefitting from NGOs in a direct way, and that more people distrust NGOs (32%) than trust them. Furthermore, the same poll, conducted from April to May 13th during protests against the foreign influence law, revealed that 92% of those surveyed had not participated in the protests.

Being heavily reliant on foreign funding, these NGOs often feel compelled to align their agendas with the priorities of their donors or some big NGOs are connected to opposition parties and align their agendas with the political party. This can lead to a focus on policy changes and reforms that may not always resonate with or benefit the local populace. Consequently, while these organizations play a role in shaping the country's policies and reforms, their lack of local engagement and support can result in a civil society that appears more like a project driven by external interests rather than a genuine representation of citizen-driven democratic participation.

Moreover, the heavy influence of foreign funding can lead to skepticism and mistrust among the local population. The landscape of civil society in Georgia is characterized by a predominance of foreign-funded NGOs, a scarcity of local financial support and volunteerism, and a centralization of NGO activities in Tbilisi. This dynamic leads to a perception of democracy as a project managed by external interests, rather than a homegrown, citizen-driven movement.

### **Question: What impression did you take home with you from the Belgrade conference? Will you continue to be associated with the activities of the conference and the Committee against War and Imperialism?**

What I took from Belgrade is that there are people out there who genuinely want peace, but we need to do more to reach a broader audience. I hope to participate more actively in anti-war efforts. Yes hopefully I will be able to continue to be associated with Committee against War and Imperialism.