



Women in Black
London

**War is not the answer
Resist youth militarisation**

Antimilitarist International Week of Action for Military-free Education and Research. 25-31 October 2014.

From the moment we are born, children and young people all over the world are exposed to the military and military values around them. They are taught that **armed force and violence can solve problems**.

We call this the militarisation of youth.

In some countries, this militarisation is visible and obvious: young people (mainly, though not exclusively, young men) are forced to join the military through conscription. This might include forced recruitment, or recruitment of children.

In many more places, even where conscription has been suspended or abolished, governments, arms dealers and other war profiteers have a vested interest in indoctrinating young people to be positive about military actions, so that - now and in the future - they accept war, by taking part in it themselves, by voting for governments that undertake it, by allowing their taxes to be spent waging it. In these contexts, those with power do not conscript young peoples' bodies: **they conscript their minds and their money**.

Militarisation of young people includes overt recruitment by the state or non-state forces, so that individuals join armed forces in a seemingly voluntarily way. But it is much more than that.

Militarisation includes the presence and influence of the armed forces in education, social media, youth groups, public military events such as parades and memorials in the streets. It celebrates the strong, sacrificial masculine warrior, and relies on the idea of an enemy, who our communities (often identified as women and children), need protecting from.

It includes military-themed and violent video games, and a military-style and focus across entertainment and fashion. These are not necessarily coordinated by armed forces themselves, but undertaken by cultural and social institutions that play their own part in closing down criticism of organised violence.

These various forces lead young people to accept the military as normal, natural, uncontroversial.

As the head of the British's army's recruitment put it, "Our new model is about raising awareness, and that takes a ten-year span. It starts with a seven-year-old boy seeing a parachutist at an air show and thinking, 'That looks great.' From then the army is trying to build interest by drip, drip, drip."

Did you know....

- The UK is the only country in Europe to recruit 16 year olds into its armed forces,
- Recent research found that the army visited 40% of London schools, disproportionately targeting schools in the most disadvantaged areas most often. (*Dee and Goodman 2010*)
- Massive cut in local government youth budgets have closed youth centres and made youth workers redundant, but the Army Cadets (12-18s) is the UK's largest and most successful youth organisation with 46,000 cadets and 8,500 adult volunteers in over 1,700 locations
- The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the House of Commons/Lords Joint Committee on Human Rights have recommended raising the minimum age of recruitment to 18.

If we are to ever live in peaceful and just communities, we must break the cycle of teaching war to young people, generation after generation.

Find out more: <http://wri-irg.org/> <http://peace-education.org.uk/> www.ppu.org.uk/
<http://woodcraft.org.uk>

What you can do

Encourage your local school to have no army presence at school events, or presentations to recruit pupils. Support your local non-military youth facilities, and lobby your council for more. Write to your MP, The Ministry of Defence (raising the recruitment age), and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families (youth facilities). Sign the petition at tinyurl.com/peti1618

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>.

Donations welcome