

## CITIZEN

OPPOSING THE EUROPEAN UNION NOBEL PRIZE

# No Peace Prize for Our Time

Peace Prize Initiative 2012 / www.attac.org

**The Nobel peace prize is the world's most distinguished peace prize. With the EU as the recipient for 2012, the prize is given to an institution that encourages military rearmament.**

Proponents of this year's award have since the announcement from the Norwegian Nobel Committee 12 October, 2012, referred to the importance of acknowledging the historical role the EU has played in securing peace, reconciliation and stability in Europe. In this regard, we consent. In a historical perspective, the EU is a project of peace. The European Coal and Steel Community established in 1950, prevented German military rearmament following the Second World War and the EU eventually became a stabilizing supranational body that integrated Europe, both economically and politically. However, we find the argument on the EU's contribution to a more peaceful world today as troublesome. One needs to question the portrayal of the EU as a worthy laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize as well as the claim that the bestowment fulfills Alfred Nobel's demands.

Nobel's will says that the price is to be awarded in honor of disarmament and reduction of standing armies. This conforms ineptly with the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy. The Lisbon Treaty, which all EU member states have ratified and which entered into force on 1 December 2009, encourages each state to further develop its military capacities. The proposed argument claiming that the EU is disarming is therefore misleading. To the contrary, the EU is in a continuous military build-up process. This development is also evident and further manifested through the financial support provided by the EU through financial bail-outs to countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy, all given upon the condition that military budgets and arms imports are not to be reduced.

In 2010, the military spending of Greece amounted to 7.1 billion Euros, an increase from 6.24 billion Euros in 2007. The primary rationale for the extensive military budgets is founded upon a potential conflict with Turkey, even though Greece is not under any direct military threat. In light of Greece's massive debt, one would assume that it would be prudent to reduce military spending. However, as

it appears, this is not the case. While imposing cuts on virtually all other public sectors, one is safeguarding the least sensible public expenditure, in the form of preserving the military capacities. The conditions stipulated in the various bail-outs and the pressure exerted at for example Greece to not cut defense appropriations, thus involve the maintenance of an exceptionally large weapon import. Furthermore, this might entail that the country's excessive military spending is allowed to continue because of the debt crisis.

Currently the EU does not have any institutional standing army, but a collective defense and security policy, alongside a rhetorical discourse indicating that this might change. The EU has evolved to become a regional superpower with military ambitions that extend far beyond Europe. There are strong forces within the EU that call for the creation of a separate military army directed by the EU, independent of the EU and NATO. Over the past decade, the EU is seemingly increasingly keen on establishing itself as an alternative global security actor. Seeing the EU as an economic superpower is followed by ideas on a similar defense system, particularly in relation to legitimizing interventions in nearby areas. In a joint initiative from the Foreign and Defense ministers from five European countries; France, Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain, issued November 2012, potential military and civilian operations in countries such as Mali, Somalia, Libya, Georgia and Western Balkan are mentioned. It is pertinent to question whether the Norwegian Nobel Committee runs the embarrassing risk of having a Nobel laureate belly deep in military operations in the near future.

Several people in the debate over the legitimacy of awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to the EU have pointed out that it is not EU in its own right that is the agent for the formidable weapons export or the storage of nuclear weapons on European soil. However, such reasoning avoids demonstrating how the EU as a regional supranational body actually coheres to its member states' own interests. While the EU does not export weapons, this has little significant value when nothing is done at the institutional level to reduce or prevent the activity. What we see is an institutional facilitation for arms production and

export through the Intra-Community Transfer directive. This entails that the arms industry largely is incorporated as part of the EU's internal market, which in turn both stimulates the activity and furthermore, expedite the process for each member state to circumvent their respective regulations relating to the manufacture and export of arms, through the relocation of businesses to countries with more liberal laws.

A number of international parties and former Nobel Peace Prize laureates have taken a critical stance to this year's award. In Norway, the debate has branched out between the political left and right, manifested along the long-established discussion

on Norwegian membership to the EU. The fact that neither the Norwegian media, MPs nor ministers of the Cabinet have managed to advance the debate over positions for or against Norwegian EU cooperation, but rather reinforced it, bears witness that we are ready for changes in the administration of the Nobel Peace Prize. This experience highlights the Norwegian Peace Council's proposal that the Norwegian Parliament should consider the appointment of a new committee that includes competent peace researchers and activists with a much greater focus, more experience and deeper expertise on focal international peace issues.

The Peace Prize Initiative 2012 is a coalition of civil society organizations, institutions and individuals who opposes EU receiving the peace prize. They had organized a demonstration against this year's award, Sunday December 9th, in Oslo.

## Le prix Nobel de l'austérité !

(Attac France) - De nombreux chefs d'Etat ou de gouvernement et des représentants des institutions européennes se félicitent du prix Nobel de la paix qui vient d'être remis à l'Union européenne. Mais Attac ne s'en félicite pas : il est complètement déplacé de récompenser l'Union européenne, alors même que ses institutions et gouvernements imposent de vastes plans d'austérité sociale dans le dos des peuples, renforcent les capacités militaires de l'UE, la chasse aux migrants et mènent une politique commerciale agressive.

Attac Norvège a participé à l'organisation des manifestations qui se sont déroulées dimanche dernier à Oslo et porté le message du réseau des Attac d'Europe : Plutôt qu'un prix Nobel de la paix, c'est un prix Nobel de l'austérité qu'il faut décerner à l'Union européenne !

M. Barroso, président de la Commission européenne, justifie l'attribution du prix Nobel en déclarant que l'Union européenne porte les valeurs de « liberté, de démocratie, de l'Etat de droit et du respect des droits de l'Homme ». Ces valeurs sont pourtant à mille lieues des orientations des traités européens.

Comment donner le prix Nobel de la paix à une Union européenne forteresse qui mène une politique de fermeture de ses frontières faisant des milliers de victimes ? Une Union qui s'engage à « améliorer progressivement ses capacités militaires » (art. 42.3 du TUE) et qui reconnaît la suprématie de l'OTAN ? Quel message pour les peuples qui subissent sa stratégie d'exportation commerciale agressive par la signature d'Accords de partenariat économique qui laminent, par la libéralisation des marchés, des secteurs économiques entiers dans les pays du Sud ? Enfin, quel message pour les millions de citoyens qui se mobilisent depuis deux ans, sur les places publiques en Grèce, en Espagne ou au Portugal, contre la destruction de leurs droits sociaux et les décisions de la Troïka, Commission et Banque centrale en tête ? Attac Norvège rappelle qu'actuellement « ceux qui manifestent contre les politiques néolibérales de l'Union européenne et les plans d'austérité subissent une répression policière brutale ».

Les politiques d'austérité mises en oeuvre depuis deux ans n'ont fait qu'aggraver la situation des pays qui les subissent. Elles creusent ainsi l'écart entre les pays « du centre » et ceux « de la périphérie ». Elles renforcent les nationalismes ambiants et accentuent la guerre économique, en mettant grandement en danger la construction d'une Europe de solidarité et de coopération, qu'Attac France défend, avec tous les autres Attac d'Europe.