



2015 FEMINIST CARAVAN

World March of Women

June 2015 Newsletter n.02



EDITORIAL

Three months on the road!

Since the 6th of June, the feminist caravan of the World March of Women in Europe completed three months on the road. During this time, we passed from what it is considered to be Eastern Europe to Western Europe. We went out from Kurdistan and Turkey to Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Austria, Switzerland and now we are in France.

The struggles of women that we met along this time confirm our vision as an anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalistic, anti-colonialist, anti-militarist movement in the international context. We heard testimonies from women who are experiencing how the militarization and the non conventional wars, with private or fundamentalist armies, create new artificial borders that separates their families and communities, take control of their natural resources, their working force and their bodies. We listened how lands, water and seeds are being land-grabbed in Turkey and in Austria to generate energy for an elite only working to maximize their own profits. We heard how the austerity, neoliberal, capitalist and individualist politics try to push the women into the private sphere in Greece, Bosnia or in Croatia, but also in Austria or in Switzerland.

In every country in which we have been, we heard how fascist groups and fundamentalists of different conservative religious groups try all the time to control the body, the work and the sexuality of women by imposing a heteronormative model of life, attacking our autonomy and right to abortion, and treating us as incubators of their nationalistic aspirations. We saw how this hegemonic model of society tries to confuse us convincing us that our struggle is not necessary and hiding that if there are a few women in positions of power, it is at the cost of so many oppressed women in the whole world.

In all those processes of control and setbacks, we met with women who resist and go on with alternatives, who create new ways of communication, cross artificial borders and linguistic barriers, creating solidarity networks and community links. They are fighting collectively against the every day violence they suffer, planting trees to take back their territories in front of mega projects, exchanging knowledge and seeds to say "No" to the commodification of nature, occupying the streets to claim the right to freely exercise their sexuality and their right to public space, practicing new ways of economy and community life, based on horizontality and solidarity, taking back the memory and making visible the violence women suffer during wars, rising up to denounce xenophobia, racism, antisemitism and fascism, fighting against male violence and showing solidarity with women all over the world.

During this trip, the Caravan has created links, connected struggles, making them stronger. Additionally, to all those resistances, the Caravan itself is an experience of self organized community life, resolution of conflicts, co-existences with different political cultures, but with the same aim: to end with this model that brings us death - capitalist, patriarchal, racist, colonialist - and founding a society truly egalitarian, fair, solidar and libertarian.

Finally, it becomes very clear that there is a "South" in the so-called most rich countries of the "North" and more than ever as feminists we have to recognize it and work to make stronger our struggles with all the women in Europe, from all generations. Meanwhile women will be oppressed, there will not be equality and we will not rest and that is why we say: we will be on the march until we are all free!



Our itinerary so far

Curdistan and Turkey, from 6th to 17th March

Stop overs in Nusaybin, Mardin, Amed (Diyarbakir), Antakya, Mersin, Antalya, Mugla, Didim, Izmir

Greece, from 17th to 27th March

Stop over in Thessaloniki

Romenia, from 28th to 31st March

Stop over in Bucarest

Bulgaria, from 1st to 4th April

Stop over in Sofia

Serbia 1, from 5th to 11th April

Stop over in Pirot

Kosovo, from 12th to 14th April

Stop overs in Pristina and Krusha

Serbia 2, from 15th to 21st April

Stop over in Belgrade

Bosnia-Herzegovina, from 21st and 22nd April

Stop over in Tuzla

Croacia, from 23th to 29th April

Stop over in Zagreb

Austria, from 29th April to 11th May

Stop overs in Vienna, Ebensee and Mauthausen

Switzerland, from 13th to 26th May

Stop overs in Chiasso, Lugano, Bellizona, Faido, Zug, Bern, Fribourg, Neuchâtel, Lausanne and Geneve

Photo Gallery: from Curdistan in Turkey to Switzerland!

7th March, Nusaybin (Kurdistan)



Second day in Kurdistan, we marched with hundreds of women along the militarized border separating Nusaybin from Syria ending to get to an open air space where a kurdisch resistance party demanding women's rights and against violence against women was taking place. There, we met women from Cizre Canton who were holding the same party on the other side of the border. The Turkish government had closed the borders, thus preventing people from crossing it and getting in contact with each other. People from both sides were waving their hands trying to communicate from the distance. This was a powerful and moving act of resistance showing the union of Kurdish people in spite of their separation by the borders. We were moved by the way their suffering was overcome by joy and transformed into music and struggle shouts.

12th March, Antalya (Turkey)

In Ahmetler village women are resisting against the construction of a hydroelectric powerplant that will destroy the access to water resources that 320 nomad people depend on. Women's struggle to protect the village and it's water resources lasted for two years and finally Ahmetler Village Culture and Solidarity Association was founded in 2010 to protect the nomadic culture from becoming extinct as well as the heritage of the village and to activate local women towards political and economical fields.





Greece



From 17th to 21th of March, we were hosted by activists of the Thessaloniki Women Solidarity Venue, part of the greek WMW coordination. This unique space was organised to support women in needs and to empower solidarity at local level. We made a feminist march in the city and a general assembly with the social movements on the firsts days. After, we went to Edessa to have a meeting with the feminist local movements, and a march through the city We stayed in Thessaloniki until the March 28th, and were able to meet local resistances groups and alternatives, as Vio.me factory, where the workers took over the control of the factory and decided to produce ecological products for cleaning. Read more about their struggle in <http://www.marchemondiale.org/actions/2015/europe/articles/viome/en>. During this days we were also hosted by people of IFANET squat, where we made presentation of the Caravan project in a informal and relaxed way.

Bulgaria, Sofia, 8th April

Here we've been hosted by ¡Adelante! Social Center, a free autonomous, self-managed, non-hierarchical and non-commercial space in the center of Sofia, founded in 2010 by a collective of activists committed to social change and creating sustainable alternatives to the capitalist system and hierarchical ways of organization. There, we had opportunity to share experiences with women from the city and discussing, among other things, the problematic towards women's access to abortion and reproductive rights in Bulgaria. There was also a performance presentation played by Beyond Borders (*photo at right*), a group of women from Turkey and Armenia working together to build solidarity and peace through storytelling and performance art, using body movement and non-verbal communication as a tool for building understanding among them. See the video here <https://www.facebook.com/LinkingOurStories/videos/661460377292750/?pnref=story>

Romania

We stayed in Bucharest the 29th and 30th of March, where we had different talks and activities in Centrul CLACA (Centru Independent Pentru Activități Comunitare), an independent center for communities activities, to organize political debates and critical education. We gathered with CLACA and feminist activists from FRONT, as well as three activists who told us their testimonies and experiences as Roma women and militants. We discussed about women's situation in Roma communities in Romania, about early marriages and Roma women grassroots activism work. We also met with Roma and non-Roma activists from FCDL (Common Front for the Right to Housing) who explained the recent and ongoing struggle to discuss about the difficulties for Roma People to have access to housing, due to the institutionalized racism and discrimination.





Serbia, Pirot

In Pirot, a medium city in south Serbia, we were hosted by the *Zene Juga* (Women from the South) organisation. For the coming of the Caravan, women organised a Feminist Fair, inviting women to sell their own production, such as handcraft, food or clothes. More than 25 women groups joined the Fair to sell their products and the big success of this event gave the idea to make it annual and continue to promote women economical autonomy. We bought a small sample of "Killim carpets" made by Roma Women in Pirot - Serbia to show in the Caravan Exhibition!



Kosovo



We went to the Women Cooperative "Krushe e Madhe", located between Prizren and Rahovec, southeast of Kosovo. Founded 10 years ago by widowed women that lost their husbands during the 1999's massacres (this was one of the parts of Kosovo where they occurred on a larger scale) this cooperative is known for its canned vegetables, mainly by the famous Ayvar. The Feminist Caravan had the opportunity to meet and interview Farhije Hoti, the founder of *Krushe and Madhe*. We brought us some delicious Ayvar bottles for resale elsewhere and to promote the product!

Serbia, Belgrade, Lesbian Spring, 16th- 19th April

Lesbian Spring took place between 16th and 19th April in Belgrade, with the goal to promote lesbian culture, discuss about various issues of lesbian existence and increase visibility of lesbians.

The aim of the event was to encourage and reinforce lesbian struggles, through uniting lesbians from different ages, social and cultural contexts and economical positions by exchanging experiences and knowledges.

The event gathered women from all parts of Serbia - including from small cities - countries of former Yugoslavia and other European countries. Participating in the event were also women from France, Portugal, Canada, Greece, Austria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia.

Based on the politics of women-only spaces, Lesbian Spring allowed women to promote and live lesbian culture, find their ways to resist heteronormative and patriarchal system, neoliberal politics and all forms of oppression against women. Discussions, workshops, parties and movie sessions took place, ending in the last day with the first Lesbian March in the history of the Balkans - a great step for the lesbian movement in Serbia celebrating this year 20 years of existence.





FEMINIST CARAVAN NEWSLETTER

Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Visit the Dita factory, 23th April

Feminist Caravan in Tuzla expressed support for workers of detergent factory Dita who are occupying and keeping all the equipment for more than two years, fighting against privatization, exploitation and pillage that is destroying industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Workers from this factory have not received their salaries for more than 40 months and their health and social insurance hasn't been paid for 60 months. They keep on struggling to get their jobs back. Every Wednesday, workers from Dita and other closed factories from Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with others who lost their jobs, protest in front of the Commercial Court, expressing their struggle against neo-liberal capitalist policies and austerity measures, against the stealing of their common goods.



Zagreb, Croatia, 24th April

In the form of interactive theater, Feminist Caravan did street action to remind of the tragedy that befell the textile workers Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh two years ago, where over 1,100 people were killed, mostly women, and 2,500 were injured. In addition, activists echoed the struggles of the textile workers passing in Croatia and the region, recalling the difficult and desperate situation through which the former employees of the Zagreb garment factories Kamensko and Tuzla factory Dita are going through.



Apart from Croatia, in support of the textile workers who work in difficult conditions, protest actions were held around the world in Bangladesh, Kenya, Mexico, Chile and many other countries. During the this day actions, lectures and demonstrations were also held in hundreds locations from Pakistan, Nepal, Tunisia and Turkey to the United States, Switzerland or Canada with a joint message - "We will not be slaves of capitalism." WMW call to action on the 24th April aimed to show that Rana Plaza is everywhere!

Viena, Austria, 1st May march



Our participation in the demonstration together with other women from Austria was to raise awareness about the inequalities that persist - funded in the patriarchal division among productive and reproductive work, which imposes precarity to the women and exploitation of their work. We reminded again the women workers from all over the world who are exploited in different sweatshops. We also marched with migrant workers especially from Kurdistan and Turkey, and participated in an anarchist party.

Mauthausen, Austria, 9th May

In Mathausen camp, one barrack in the camp "barrack 1" was used for prostitution of women inmates. Women were used by inmates, ordinary soldiers and high ranked SS officers. Feminists and lesbians are trying for many years to commemorate the suffering of women in this camp and to remind people from Austria and others what happened there, by putting a memorial plaque. However, the plaque only stays 24 hours or less before the administration of the camp removes it. Austria has never acknowledged these crimes against women prisoners, nor did it ever recognize them the status of civil victims of war.





Lugano, Switzerland, 14th May



Violence in its multiple forms - male violence against women, corporate violence, violence against migrants - was central in the actions carried out by the WMW in Switzerland. The Feminist Caravan women took part of parts of the four-days walk march from Chiasso, in the border with Italy, to Zug, a fiscal paradise city which hosts the headquarters of many world corporations who use its in order to avoid paying any kind of taxes who are usually what assures social services in many countries. It was the first time that women in the Italian part of Switzerland did a march like this. In each stop of the march, theatre was a support to the discussion about

violence. Solidarity and food sovereignty were affirmed as women's response to violence.

Read testimony on the march in Italian Switzerland (in French):

<http://www.marchemondiale.ch/index.php/fr/temoignages/173-une-des-180-marcheuses-au-tessin-raconte>

Geneve, Switzerland, 24th May, in solidarity with migrant women

The stop over in Geneve, from 23 to 24th May, was a key moment to discuss with women from all over the world the consequences of increasing militarization, terrorist attacks by extremist religious groups and the greed of transnational companies resulting in evictions, violence, pollution and landgrabbing of natural resources (land, water, seeds, biodiversity, minerals). We were able to share experiences and thoughts and to gain an understanding of the problems migrant women are facing, like discrimination, stigmatization as well as the effects of austerity policies and growing militarization and armed presences which bring violence into the lives of peoples and women in both the North and the South. We expressed our solidarity with migrant women living in Switzerland affirming: "They work here, they live here, they stay here. Regularization now!"

The debates counted with the participation of WMW International Committee members, who had their regular meeting right after the event. Click to read the political declaration issuing from the IC meeting in:

<http://www.marchemondiale.org/news/ICdeclaration2015/en>





Seeds and food sovereignty in action!



The links between food sovereignty, women's autonomy and landgrabbing of women's body and territory in face of capitalist crisis were discussed in different stop overs of the feminist caravan such as in Vienna. There, after exchanging on the topic, we watched together a video from La Via Campesina about food sovereignty as alternative model of production, distribution and consumption of food. See it in English in the link <https://vimeo.com/27473286>.



In Ebensee, Austria, women from Via Campesina shared their experiences and challenges in building awareness about food and seed sovereignty in the region. They do this through meeting and discussing directly with peasant workers in the grassroot level as in the curriculum of the agricultural schools the only model taught is the industrial agricultural one. They also gave us seeds from flowers of the region.



The 25th May in Geneve was a day dedicated to food sovereignty. We started it with the collective 'Les Artichauts' which organises a urban garden in the Parc Beaulieu. Then we marched in a tractor decorated with our messages until a field outside the city - the Champ des filles – a field which was occupied and cultivated by women from Via Campesina against financial especulation. There we had eaten together and planted sees of different vegetables such as potatoes, mangold and courgette.

Read more about this field (in French only) at: <http://www.forumcivique.org/fr/articles/suisse-le-champ-des-filles>



International Feminist Camp 2015: from 2 to 8 August, in Poland!

You are cordially invited to the International Feminist Camp (Polish: Lewicowy Obóz Feministyczny - LOF), which will take place in Wojtowice (113 km from Wrocław) between the 2nd and 8th of August 2015.

LOF will take place in Poland for the first time, and was born out of the need to act and support each other, as well as the need to tackle challenges faced today by feminist movements. The camp is being organized by an informal initiative group, comprised of people from several Polish cities. Its goal is to integrate people active in social movements, fighting for feminist alternatives to current forms of exploitation and oppression of people and nature.

LOF will be a space for discussing current feminist strategies of resistance against modern forms of limiting social and political freedoms, resistance against the diminishing of the material foundations of our lives: the access to land, housing or healthcare. It will also be a space for making new contacts and creating social networks and political friendships both on an international and regional level. Currently, in many places where the feminist movement used to be strong, today it is weak. These places need to support one another and make use of the experiences of new feminist movements. Because LOF is being organized in Poland, we want to pay particular attention to the situation of Central and Eastern Europe – the regional social struggles and condition of the feminist movement.

LOF has three principal goals, which will also be the main focus during the debates taking place at the camp:

- the situation of women during neo-liberal crisis (of both state and capital)
- the role of women in new social movements
- the current condition of feminist movements:

*the experiences of radical/left-wing feminist movements

*the development of the identity of radical feminist movements – whether we have common identities/goals

*synthesis and analysis in search of a common strategy of radical/left-wing feminist movements.

In particular LOF will be engaged in analyzing collective action:

1. against the growing power of transnational corporations,
2. against war,
3. for the alternatives towards commercialization and privatization of the health care system, and other social provisions

All participants are more than welcome to propose their own topics for the debates/workshops.

If the goals of the camp are close to your engagement in social movements, if you want to take a part in and expand discussions during the camp and share your experience – you should come to us and join LOF!

How to join LOF:

- 1) Read the practical information about the camp: <http://lofcamp.pl/practical-info/>
- 2) Go to <http://lofcamp.pl/pl/registration-form/>, fill-in the application form (it will be sent to us automatically).

Closing date for registration: **25 June 2015**

Information about the camp on website: <http://lofcamp.pl/>

On facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/LOFcamp?fref=ts>

Contact us: info@manifa.wroclaw.pl



How to Join Us in the Caravan!

If you are interested to join the Caravan here are some ways to do so:

- 1. Participate in your local action/event:** join the World March of Women group's preparatory events and planned actions. If there is no WMW National Coordination Body in your country, write to us and we will put you in contact with our participating groups.
- 2. Support our Action:** Spread the information about the Feminist Caravan events! Encourage and inform activist collectives around you by sharing the news of the Feminist Caravan.
- 3.** If you are located somewhere in the itinerary of the Feminist Caravan you can **support us materially** by contributing: solidarity accommodation or help us find a camping spot for our local stop-overs; camping materials; food support and research into local women food producers and distributors; provide us with help getting information on the local reality in case of need. Another possibility: send us in advance some basic and useful information about the local context, such as weather, legislation in terms of health, traffic, security or anything relevant for this kind of event.
- 4. Participate in one of the 3 big moments of the International Action:** The Opening for the 8th of March in Kurdistan, Turkey, the International Feminist Camp in Poland at the beginning of August, the Closing event in Lisbon, Portugal, from the 15th to 17th of October 2015

To know how to participate, to propose your ideas, to offer your support, write to us : femvan@marchemondiale.org

Follow us!

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/caravanafeminista>

4th International Action website: <http://www.wmw-2015.info/>

WMW International Website: <http://www.marchemondiale.org/actions/2015/europe/en/>

In your posts, use the hashtag: #FemVan

Women who contributed to this number of the **Feminist Caravan WMW Newsletter**: Alessandra Ceregatti, Carolina Moreira, Clara Carbunar, Ioana Pop, Jodie Roy, Marion Lafon, Mina Damnjanovic, Miona Piperski, Myriam Fougere, Natalija Laptosevic, Sarah Gerard. **Contact** for any inquiries: femvan@marchemondiale.org