

The Coming Social Tsunami

As we enter the final months of 2022, the precarious state of the world will have an unprecedented impact on the daily lives of people who are already experiencing hardships in the wake of two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, growing global inequality, the breakdown of global supply chains, and environmental destruction. In 2022 alone, 250 million people slipped into the greatest poverty (according to an Oxfam Report) and nearly 1 billion people go to bed hungry. Likewise, 2 billion people live in conflict zones.

The war in Ukraine has only exacerbated the urgency of the situation; shortages not only in fuel, but also in grains and produce coming from Ukraine and Russia, have already caused fear and panic, with rising prices for every day products already felt around the world. At the same time, workers' rights are suppressed, wages in many industries stagnant, and more than two billion people work in informal sectors with little to no protections. March 2022 saw the largest jump in food prices since United Nations (UN) records began in 1990.

The effects of economic warfare are felt on a daily basis, and the lower people's incomes and wealth, the more dramatic. The Global South, and especially women, girls, and indigenous peoples, are once again the main sufferers of a crisis and war for which it is not responsible, as well as the immense capitalist speculation associated with it. The global economic and social crises also have winners: billionaires had a combined wealth of \$12.7 trillion - a real increase of \$3.78 trillion (42 percent) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The trend is set to continue and intensify in the coming months, becoming a *social tsunami* for billions of people on our planet. The global impact of the climate emergency will only exacerbate this social disaster. If it were not already clear enough, it is now becoming clearer: we urgently need a new social contract, based in global cooperation not ruinous international competition. We need a sustainable solution – one that addresses the anxieties of the moment and that develops tools to avoid the crises that have led us to this point. Redistribution is an inseparable part of justice.

A new social contract must include climate- and peace-friendly jobs with a just transition for workers from those sectors, guarantees for worker's rights and collective bargaining, racial and gender equality, a social protection fund for the least wealthy countries, and the inclusion of underrepresented voices in decision-making processes.

The International Peace Bureau has a long history of working with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and UNI Global Union. These relationships have underscored the intersection between peace and workers' rights, or more generally, the need for a new global peace and social architecture. The current situation reinforces our common call for a redefinition of security – governments cannot claim to protect their populations through militarization while they cannot afford their basic needs. Security is now only possible together and in mutual dependence and recognition of each other's security interests – in other words, through Common

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Security.

IPB's Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS) makes this case clear: military spending has continued to rise over the past two years, to an all-time high of over US\$ 2 trillion. Military spending has not helped prevent or end the dozens of wars and armed conflicts currently taking place – on the contrary, it has often made them worse. Increased spending came at the expense of investing in health care to save lives during the pandemic, and the same story will repeat itself as the cost of living rises.

It is not too late to prevent the social tsunami, but it will take political will and cooperation among world leaders. This means combatting the military industrial complex which enriches itself at the expense of the rest of the world. Rich nations must immediately allocate resources (from their military budgets) to support those in greatest need (through a social protection fund and greater funding of the SDGs including an environmentally sound and just transition) – and not just those in their own countries. A global architecture for peace rather than war will bring the resources needed for a peace dividend. The world can afford a social protection fund when resources are properly and responsibly allocated (<https://www.ituc-csi.org/global-social-protection-fund>).

Disarmament is the chain link of the shift to social justice.

A global ceasefire must be brought about to stop the devastation and reopen channels for supply chains and products. Negotiations should be initiated between the parties to the conflict to ease the increasingly urgent social situation on a global scale. In addition, the United Nations must take on the task of negotiating a new global social contract to develop a sustainable and peace-oriented socio-economic model that puts people first. This will not become a reality without confronting the power of corporations and the need for redistributing wealth. If we do not do this, the crises we face will only multiply and lead to greater global conflict.

What is needed are multiple actions for global justice - locally, regionally and internationally.

IPB supports these protests for life and a liveable future.

Written by Sean Conner, Reiner Braun, and Philip Jennings, 11 October 2022