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## [One of capitalism's false solutions to its crisis: strengthening patriarchy](#)

Today, we watch as the capitalist system undergoes a major restructuring in order to keep the current order of oppression and exploitation in place.

In the current accumulation process, known as “accumulation by dispossession,” [8] everything is turned into a commodity – water, air, forests, seeds and services like education and healthcare. Inequality and the concentration of wealth are on the rise, and the ones who are paying the price of capital's crisis are society's poor and middle classes. According to the ILO (International Labour Organization), in 2009, the worst year of the crisis so far, while unemployment rose more than 10% in relation to 2007, the rich (people with more than US\$1 million in investment capital) increased their total wealth by 18%).

Now, in view of the “crisis,” the system is making major adjustments to the relationship between capital and labor.

The transfer of the costs of capitalist production to women and to the reproductive work that they perform is part of this adjustment. Reproductive work is work done to take care of others – such as preparing food, cleaning, etc. - carried out mainly in the home and by women. Women are the ones who manage scarcity and instability in their homes. Thus, in most cases, they are the ones who take care of people when the number of beds is reduced, hospitals or daycare centers close or when lunches are not provided by schools.

The relocation of the production of goods is linked to the relocation of care work, as an enormous contingent of women from the South and poorer areas migrate to the North or richer regions to take care of children, the elderly and the sick, while no one takes care of them.

In countries where repression of the struggle for rights is more severe, working conditions are even more dramatic. Episodes like the fire and collapse of the garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh on April 24, 2013, which took the lives of 1,127 people, the majority of which were women, clearly illustrate this.

### **Control over women's bodies and their lives**

Patriarchy, combined with capitalism, not only attempts to appropriate women's work, but also the very source of women's ability to work: their bodies. During capitalism's initial phase (primitive or original accumulation), the system used not only the sexual division of labor but also control over sexuality for its own advancement. Heterosexual marriage and motherhood were established as the norm, with prostitution being encouraged at times, while at others, women in prostitution and those who knew of contraceptive practices were persecuted.

The market economy based on the exploitation of women's unpaid work corresponds to a market society that presupposes the organization of workers in nuclear families. We can prove that over the

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past two decades, there has been a steady increase in conservatism, which promotes women's role in the family in order to justify overloading them with work and make women believe that they alone have to assume the responsibility of providing care. At the same times, conservative groups are exerting increasing pressure to eliminate public policies providing support for social reproduction (in countries where such policies exist) or to stop these kinds of policies from being approved. At the same time, there is growing pressure to get women to leave the labor market, as a way of lowering the unemployment rate. The mechanisms currently in use include offering lower wages to women and imposing cuts in public services that result in both greater unemployment among women (who are the majority of public sector employees) and in women assuming additional care-giving functions at no cost to the State or the private sector.

The domination of women's bodies is more complex today - a time when contrasting images of the body, from burqa-covered to nude, may create the same sense of oppression. Is it the "body for itself" or the body as an object of desire for the other, the "other" typically being a male? When feminist discourse on the autonomy of women – expressed as the historical slogan, "My body belongs to me" – is co-opted by the system and converted into "My body is my business", it clearly transforms the body into a thing, into an object that can be bought and sold. In addition to the growing influence of religious institutions - be they Catholic, evangelical or Islamic - on the regulation of public life, we are also seeing the rejection or reversal of rights relating to women's autonomy and their emotional and reproductive life. At the same time, however, LGBT movements in many countries have succeeded in getting same-sex marriages legalized and winning adoption, inheritance and other rights. Yet these measures are facing strong resistance from conservative sectors that are becoming increasingly aggressive towards lesbians, gays and transgender people.

### **Militarization, criminalization and violence**

In 2001, the sales of the arms industry reached US\$ 410 trillion. 44 US-based corporations accounted for 60% of this amount, while 29% corresponds to 30 companies with head offices in Western Europe. Even the slightest decline in sales leads these corporations to begin employing strategies to move into Latin America, the Middle East and Asia and increase the use of technologies for social control, while creating an illusion of greater security. Militarism cannot be reduced to its economic dimension and extends the imposition of military values (belief in hierarchy, obedience, the resolution of conflicts by force, etc.) to all of society. These values are clearly patriarchal and their most grave expressions are the use of sexual violence and the increase of prostitution, including young girls, which is linked to the presence of the army.

The increasing level of control over society is made obvious by the growing criminalization of resistance, which often results in the distortion of the very instruments we create to defend justice, memory and respect for human rights. The reactions of Guatemala army officials to the sentencing of Rios Montt, the dictator responsible for genocide and sexual violence against the Ixil people, is one example of this. Military leaders responded by accusing historical activists of being "terrorists" and either taking legal action or inciting parts of the population to turn against them. All of this is part of a process to deny the defense of rights.

Women are also forced to contend with patriarchal violence. We know that violence against women is a tool used to control our lives and our bodies. Violence against women has been given greater visibility in recent years, particularly sexual violence committed in public places, and has rallied women – as well as men – to action. The past few years have been marked by images of the Egyptian police dragging a female activist along the street and by the gang rape and subsequent death of a young Indian woman. In both of these cases, the mainstream media was full of cultural

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explanations, while there was very little reflection on the structural causes of this type of violence. The rare analyses of the topic spoke of how the fact that women have won the right to occupy more space in public life – at the price of enormous personal and collective efforts – has triggered an extremely violent call to patriarchal order. Even though women’s unemployment is higher than men’s in most parts of the world, women are accused of “stealing” men’s jobs, just as we were at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

In face of this situation we, the World March of Women, envisage ourselves as a strong, permanent, feminist, anti-capitalist movement that is present in many more countries, that builds an internationalism rooted in local struggles and puts an end to the isolation of communities who directly suffer the impacts of militarisation and the advance of capital into all areas of life. A movement that acts in alliance with other mixed movements, which, in turn, commit themselves to fighting patriarchy both in their practices and discourse. A movement capable of building specific alliances with other women’s organisations, while constantly reaffirming our political positions. A movement that, by strengthening international solidarity, strengthens local struggles.

World March of

Women, [http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/index\\_html/en?set\\_language=en&cl=en](http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/index_html/en?set_language=en&cl=en) (article sent by Miriam Nobre, WMW, e-mail: [minobre@sof.org.br](mailto:minobre@sof.org.br))