

Aid should be tied to military budgets, UN meeting told

Last Updated: Thursday, April 16, 2009 | 7:32 PM ET [Comments30](#)[Recommend15](#)

The Canadian Press

United Nations signatories ought to deny aid to countries whose military budgets exceed their health and education budgets, the world's first Muslim female Nobel Prize winner said Thursday.

Dr. Shirin Ebadi offered some radical suggestions for meeting the goals set out in 2000 for combating poverty, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, fighting AIDS and ensuring environmental sustainability.

"We have to come up with a convention for the eradication of poverty," she told some 3,000 anti-poverty advocates, world leaders and celebrity activists at the third annual Millennium Summit in Montreal.

"It should be ... passed by the UN General Assembly and countries should be encouraged to join the convention."

As part of the convention, she said, all countries should reduce their military budgets and financial aid should be extended only to those whose military budgets don't exceed those of health and education.

She also suggested countries with foreign debt that are unable to pay might have their debt forgiven if they agree to dissolve their militaries and rely strictly on police for security.

"What is the purpose of having a military, specifically for poor countries, and to spend the majority of resources on their militaries?" the Iranian lawyer and human rights activist said through a translator.

She also called for corruption to be treated as a "crime against humanity," punishable through the international criminal court.

"I know that in 2009 today, my words are like a dream," she said. "Our challenge here is [not just] to dream, but to take action."

UN deputy secretary-general Asha-Rose Migiro refused to comment on the idea, stressing instead the need for the international community to stay true to its "millennium development goals"— which set a deadline of 2015 — despite the global economic downturn.

Citing World Bank figures, she said 53 million people were pushed back into poverty last year, while another 46 million are expected to join them this year.

Another 51 million are losing their jobs and 40 million more are going hungry, she said, noting the global food crisis, volatile energy prices and climate change are exacerbating the problem.

"We cannot accept the notion that the crisis makes it more difficult to deliver on our aid commitments," she said.

"It should be the reverse. A crisis makes it more important to deliver on our aid commitments."

Investing in aid to developing nations, she added, will effectively spur the West's own economic recovery.

Millennium development goals campaign director Salil Shetty also slammed Canada for failing to meet its own goal, set out by former prime minister Lester B. Pearson nearly 40 years ago, to allot 0.7 per cent of its GDP to international development.

Canada's contribution currently stands at 0.32 per cent and has been going down rather than up, he said.

"Our leaders are very good at making promises, they're not very good at keeping them," he said.

Hollywood's Mia Farrow and Val Kilmer, as well as Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, were among the VIP speakers at the event.

Farrow, who's visited the volatile Darfur region of Sudan 11 times, said the situation there is dire and that it's time to push western governments to do more.

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[IrishPotHead](#) wrote:Posted 2009/04/18

at 4:06 PM ETI see the Islamic Jihad sympathizers have misread the report.

The first line reads:

United Nations signatories ought to deny aid to countries whose military budgets exceed their health and education budgets, the world's first Muslim female Nobel Prize winner said Thursday.

Let's see which countries (or Authorities or terrorists) get aid from the UN yet they can afford rockets.

hmmmmmmmm

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[SayItsNotTrue](#) wrote:Posted 2009/04/17

at 8:47 PM ETIsrael would go for this about as much as allowing UN nuclear inspectors: Zilch.

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[Raynaldo](#) wrote:Posted 2009/04/17

at 12:14 PM ETThose "celebrity activists" should consider putting their own money on the line.

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[1 Agree](#) [1 Disagree](#) [Policy](#) [Report abuse](#)**Mark in Kelowna** wrote: Posted 2009/04/17

at 11:37 AM ET This is a great idea but it will never happen. The dictators of the world need the military funding to stay in power to suppress and pilage their people. We will not solve these social issues until we have control of the power and corruption issues.

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[4 Agree](#) [0 Disagree](#) [Policy](#) [Report abuse](#)**Camilleri** wrote: Posted 2009/04/17

at 11:18 AM ET dr. abadi is not telling us anything we do not know to be true. however, it needs to be said again and again.

this planet is shrinking and along the way the abuses we are seeing are increasing, poverty is increasing, and the planet is being destroyed. kind of depressing, no? so what will change all this?

maybe having all nations endorse an international body like the u.n. where all nations are held accountable to the whole. if some little dictator who is committing human rights abuses is called upon to answer for his/her crimes, by the international body which is given some teeth by the entire international community, then just maybe, maybe, you would start to see some changes in the approaches the powerful nations take to issues within their borders. just maybe, with a higher standard set by the international body you would start to see the policies of GWB fade from active policies in other nations, because they surely do exist, all in the name of national security.

the truth of the matter is that nationalism is fading as an important force in the world. we have now seen the european union rise as a persuasive force on the planet. we are seeing the dawning of a new consciousness south of the border with obama and his crew who endorse more alignment with the international community, out of necessity, not out of any strategic set of moves to ensure more power to them. we are facing challenges like never before, isn't it a bit naive to think that a 'made in canada' solution as the neo-cons here think of is somehow superior to what the prevailing scientific thinking actually is?

so governing is complex. absolutely. but failure to be open and engage in dialogue infused with tolerance, respect, honesty and love, yes love, will result in disaster.

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