

The role of veterans in the fight against terrorism

"None can speak more eloquently for peace, than those who fought in the war" - Ralph Bunche, Nobel Peace Prize 1950

A new era of unity for the peoples of Europe began when the Allies won the war, which was the foundation of the post-war European order, with the intent of ensuring that fascism and war never again rise from the German soil. This goal was achieved in spite of a rather turbulent period that followed in European history.

70 years ago we achieved military victory over fascism, but - especially these days - we are witnessing a failure to destroy the anti-human ideas that are being revived with the help of new methods and "dressed in new attire." They are manifest throughout the world, in the United States, the Baltic countries, in different ways in the Ukraine, Greece and France.

The problem of ensuring international peace and security took on a new form after the end of the "Cold War". Changes in the world and in international relations have not resulted in the prevention of threats to stability and security. Instead, the 1990's were characterized by a number of acute problems of local conflicts. There appeared to be very dangerous hotbeds of hatred generated by aggressive nationalism, ethnic, ideological and religious intolerance.

Economic and political changes, including the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact have resulted in deepening segregation among countries and peoples, regional disputes and conflicts, as well as in strengthening separatist tendencies resulting in terrorist activities. Armed conflicts that erupted in various regions pose a threat to the overall security of states and nations. Although great wars between states have been avoided since World War II, unfortunately, stable international peace and security has not been achieved.

Intolerance and barbarism is also occurring in a completely different way in the form of so-called Islamic extremism, posing a serious challenge to democratic states. Humanity is facing unprecedented new challenges, to which the only possible response is effective and cohesive joint forces, such as the collective security system (NATO) respecting human values and dignity. In this regard, the leadership of the World Veterans Federation and its member organizations, make strenuous efforts to protests against terrorism, and to respond in the best way to the new threats that endanger the democratic community.

In some countries, governments make concessions to the right-wing forces and thereby degrade parliamentary democracy. These methods include the glorification of military forces that fought on the side of Hitler's Germany, persons and groups that collaborated with the most evil SS unit, removal of public monuments dedicated to heroes of World War II or the elimination of their names from the same, and in some cases, erecting statues of fascist or racist personalities in these locations. Falsification of history is happening within some political parties and radical groups, as well as in school textbooks and in public life. The historical past of anti-fascist resistance and its participants is less mentioned in public education and the media, leading to a significant weakening of the ability to properly present the events of the past.

Fascist and neo-Nazi approaches are today manifested mainly in the form of exclusion, xenophobia, covered or undisguised racism, which is accompanied in many places with a blind extremism mixed with ethnocentric mentality and an ultra-nationalist mythical vision of history. All these attitudes should be isolated from democratic communities that are supposed to perform

consistent activity of clarification, especially among the younger generations, with the aim of presenting the true history of yesteryear. However, we should not forget that the holders of these harmful attitudes will act first, as we have previously experienced, which can pave the way for horrendous crimes and internal conflicts.

The concept of creating a younger membership in the World Veterans Federation should become one of the priorities of our activities. The importance of this aspect is determined due to the fact that one of the main sources of actions of extremist and terrorist organizations are actually young people, especially those who are not satisfied with their social and economic status, which is primarily caused by high unemployment. Young people, for whom maximalism is a typical manner of behavior, react very strongly to the current trend of further social stratification of society, injustice, etc., and therefore the role of youth in the preservation of social welfare of society, peace and security has always been crucial.

In recent years, terrorist networks have evolved, taking advantage of porous borders, the connected international finance system and communication, meaning that the transit-terrorist group can reach every corner of the globe. While some of them continue to focus on local or national political dynamics, others try to affect global change.

Other groups, however, work with their different objectives, beyond the traditional networks and hotspots. Europe and the United States are not immune to terrorism within its borders. This global diffusion of threats requires a comprehensive response that provides solutions on a national, regional and international level, not only to the methods, but also to the factors that can contribute to the spread of terrorism.

The challenge of illegal immigration.

Instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields, uncontrolled migration, the continuation of intense social stratification in society have now become a threat to peace and security, which leads to the augmentation of social and economic tensions in different regions of the world and threatens to create new conflicts and terrorist acts.

As a result of today's wars and local conflicts, the number of refugees in Europe has become an acute problem. This problem has become the largest and most sensitive challenge to the old continent, exceeding the international economic and financial crisis such as the situation in Greece. It is known that serious discussions take place within the European Union on how to treat this phenomenon, which has taken on a completely new dimension. Although a politically shaken European Union, or more exactly all EU Member States individually, should participate, together and in a humanitarian spirit in the management of this situation. Therefore there isn't more important task for all democratic forces in the world than joint action organized not only in order to stop terrorism but also to eradicate causes which serve its development and perpetuation (by changing the state of mind and spirit of those who stand for it). Also to integrate numerous refugees, who can be huge challenge for additional terrorist actions, more efficiently. Part of this activity should also be to take a firm stance against far-right populism and demagogy. Europe cannot be built on the foundations of hatred, religious and ethnic intolerance, but must be guided by openness and tolerance to the humanitarian crises of other countries. It is actually the anti-fascist coalition of 70 years ago that has shown that people of different views can join forces in achieving the most important goals.

The millions who participated in the anti-fascist resistance movement seven decades ago did not sacrifice their lives to see their successors calmly watch the emergence and strengthening of fascism and other anti-human ideas in our society.

The role of veterans.

The fight against terrorism requires vigorous implementation of all the institutions of government of each country.

In this regard, united, veterans should encourage establishing a system of international security, and support this role that belongs to the United Nations.

Our veterans and youth organizations confirm our commitment to the mission of encouraging efforts to build trust and strengthen friendly relations between veterans, as well as between peoples and countries with different social, economic, religious and political structures.

When it comes to terrorism, the following topics should be elaborated:

- the establishment and the role of a international and national anti-terrorist committees,
- power structures as a necessary condition for an effective response to terrorist threats and for the provision of inviolability of the constitutional system;
- the role of civil society in creating an atmosphere of intolerance towards extremism;
- increasing public vigilance due to the threat of terrorism;
- information and propaganda: resistance against extremism and terrorism, also including the Internet environment, international cooperation in the fight against terrorism, and the spread of terrorist ideologies and terrorist financing;
- countering religious political and ethnic extremism, the peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

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The federation currently consists of over 172 veterans organizations from 121 countries, representing some 45 million veterans worldwide.

The WVF's mission is to be the leading organization promoting wellbeing and providing assistance and aid to veterans and victims of war and assisting the international community in the promotion of international peace and security.

The WVF is the world's largest international veteran organization.

www.wvf-fmac.org



President

Mr. Dan-Viggo Bergtun

Norway

Dan-Viggo Bergtun was born in Harstad, in the North of Norway in 1956. After his Basic Business School in Marketing, he joined the Army in the North of Norway. At the same time he studied at BI Norwegian School of Management.

He started early to be involved in different organizations related to sport, politics, youth and religion. He has been actively involved in politics for more than 8 years in The Liberal Party of Norway.

In 1978 he took part in a UN mission to Lebanon, UNIFIL as one of the youngest in his mission.

Later, in 1982 he started a consulting company and has since then operated as specialist in the reorganization of companies and organizations nationally and internationally.

He has been an active veteran since 1978, as a member of the Norwegian Association for International Operations (NVIO) and other organizations. He has been President of Oslo UN and NATO Veteran Association for 2 years, Chaired NVIO Nedre Romerike for 2 years and have two terms as Vice President of NVIO.

He took further veteran education in the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and in the Barcelona International Peace Resource Center/International Transition in Community Based Reintegration and Security (CBRS) and has developed the Community Reintegration of Veterans Program (CRVP).

He have organized International veterans meetings in US, Russia, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Ukraine, Israel, South Sudan, Montenegro, Kasakhstan, Jordan, Lebanon, Taiwan, Norway, Finland, The Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Rep. Srpska, Malaysia, Denmark, Germany, Jordan, Portugal, Island, Bulgaria and has been a key note speaker in many events. .Since 2008 he has been a member of the WVF Working Group for the Veterans' Walk for Peace.

Mr. Bergtun was elected Chairman of the Standing Committee on European Affairs and Vice President of the WVF at the 26th General Assembly in Demark in 2009 and re-elected at the 27th General Assembly in Jordan in 2012. He has developed SCEA to be the leading area in WVF and based on this he has built plans to develop WVF to become a more powerful federation.

He has been an WVF Ambassador to the United Nations and Head og WVF Peace and Security Division.

He was elected President of the World Veterans Federation at the 28th General Assembly in Sopot (Poland) in 2015.

He is Member of the committee, International Round-The-World March of Veterans "Battle Brotherhood" and Member of The Advisory Board of Veteran Organizations from the Balkan Region.

His device is: "You are as important as you can help others."