PRESS RELEASE
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Global Militarization Index 2016 | Trends in militarization in Europe

With Armenia, Russia, Cyprus, Greece and Azerbaijan, five European countries are amongst the top 10 worldwide of the BICC Global Militarization Index (GMI) 2016. After the Russian annexation of Crimea and following the continuing tense situation in eastern Ukraine, eastern European countries show an increased level of militarization.

While Russia (2016: position 5) continues to be among the ten most militarized countries, the risen level of militarization of Ukraine has resulted in a change of position from number 23 in 2015 to position 15 in 2016. Not only Ukraine but Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, as well as the Baltic countries increased their military expenditures, showing a simultaneous drop in gross domestic product (GDP). "This leads to a generally higher ranking of eastern European countries in the Militarization Index, as the GMI puts the allocation of resources to the military in the context of the wider society, for example, military spending in relation to gross domestic product (GDP) and public spending on health (share of GDP)", the author Dr Max M. Mutschler explains.

In contrast to eastern Europe, no significant rise in militarization levels was observed in most western European countries. Germany is at position 100; yet the German government is planning to increase its defence spending by 6.2 per cent between 2015 and 2019. "It is to be expected that the future President of the United States, Donald Trump, will intensify the pressure on the European NATO countries to invest more in their military to reach the goal that they have set themselves of defence expenditures amounting to two per cent of the GDP", Max M. Mutschler adds.

Despite the fact that no other country spends as much money on its military as the United States does (2015: US $595 billion), it is only on position 31 of the GMI. "In the context with the GDP or the overall population, the high military expenditures and
the large number of military personnel in the United States are put in perspective as regards the ranking”, Mutschler explains. This explains conversely, why for years small countries such as Singapore, Armenia or Cyprus are to be found in the world’s top 10 in the GMI.

**Middle East**

Israel is still at the top of the Militarization Index. Here, in particular, the Israeli system of compulsory military service that leads to the very high number of military personnel (compared to the overall population) is reflected in the GMI. Against the background of protracted conflicts in the Middle East, the level of militarization of most countries there remains high. It will be interesting in the coming years to see how oil prices, which have sharply fallen since mid-2014, will affect the militarization of the Gulf States and their extensive weapons purchases. To date, however, there has been no indication that military spending will be reduced. "This is particularly true for Saudi Arabia (position 17). Defence spending in the kingdom makes up 13.7 per cent of GDP, which is extremely high even for the Middle East", stresses Mutschler.

**Militarization and hunger**

This year’s GMI compares the level of militarization with the Global Hunger Index 2016 published by Welthungerhilfe. This Index explains hunger not only in economic or climate change terms but also with regard to instability or violent conflict. The fact that most states in which the levels of hunger are serious also have comparatively low levels militarization shows that a low level of militarization often does not point to a peaceful society but rather to a weak security sector and the absence of a safe environment. “Examples for this are in particular former civil war countries, such as Sierra Leone (position 146) and Liberia (position 149) that belong to those countries that suffer from ’serious’ or even ’very serious’ hunger”, stresses Professor Dr Conrad Schetter, Director for Research at BICC and member of the Supervisory Board of the Deutsche Welthungerhilfe. Yet again, within the 20 states that suffer the most from hunger, there are also countries with a relatively high level of militarization. These are Chad (position 68), Namibia (46),
Pakistan (52) or Angola (37), the most militarized country in Sub-Saharan Africa. "There, high investment might be tied up in military resources that would otherwise be available to fight hunger or to invest in the health system", Conrad Schetter concludes.

The GMI

The Global Militarization Index presents on an annual basis the relative weight and importance of a country's military apparatus in relation to its society as a whole. It compares, for example, military expenditures with a country's gross domestic product (GDP) and its health expenditure (as share of its GDP). The GMI 2016 covers 152 states and is based on the latest available figures (in most cases data for 2015). The index project is financially supported by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).