

# Ireland's Peace and Neutrality In Jeopardy: Activists call on a NO vote in "Seanad" [Senate] Abolition Referendum

By [Global Research News](#)

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*In a letter issued to national newspapers today the group warns of the negative impact Seanad {Ireland's Senate} abolition could have for the peace and neutrality agenda.*

Abolition of Seanad could pose increased dangers for Peace & Neutrality issues say campaigners

Irish neutrality is once again a referendum issue as a number of prominent Peace and Neutrality campaigners come together to call for No vote on the amendment to abolish the Seanad.

The group includes retired Army Commandant ,Edward Horgan, UCD lecture and peace campaigner, Dr.John Lannon of Shannonwatch, Professor John Maguire of UCC, Galway Councillor Catherine Connolly, Shannonwatch activist Niall Farrell and former Green Party MEP Patricia McKenna. In a letter issued to national newspapers today the group warns of the negative impact Seanad abolition could have for the peace and neutrality agenda.

Dr. Lannon of Shannon Watch warned that the abolition of the Seanad will make the adoption of EU decisions and legislation easier for a government that is determined to do so, even if those decisions are inconsistent with the stated views of the Irish people. Edward Horgan stressed that abolishing the Seanad would eliminate the chance of ever establishing a reformed institution that could scrutinise future EU military issues and will make it less problematic for Enda Kenny and his successors to pass controversial legislation.

Professor Maguire pointed out that, with the EU pushing for more militarization there is a need to increase scrutiny and accountability not support a decision that will allow for the easier passage of such decisions. Compared to Scandinavian countries, Germany and many of the new member states, Ireland's has one of the least effective scrutiny systems of EU legislation. A reformed Seanad could provide real potential to correct this weakness in Ireland's oversight of EU policy making particularly on military issues.

The former Green MEP, Patricia McKenna supported this view by highlighting the recent European Parliament session in Strasbourg, which approved by a large majority a report on 'EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects,' demonstrates that the further erosion of Irish Neutrality and the continued militarization of the EU are on the EU and Government agenda and will be made easier by the removing the threat of a reformed Seanad. She said it was alarming that all Fine Gael MEPs – the party that wants the Seanad abolished instead of reformed – supported this report.

Niall Farrell pointed out that just because the Seanad has failed to promote peace and neutrality issues in the past is not a justifiable reason to support its permanent abolition. The failures of the Seanad are the direct result of the failure and refusal of the political parties to reform it.

Councillor Catherine Connolly urged voters to recognize that this vote, to abolish the Seanad, is really a vote to remove the danger that there could ever be a reformed Seanad in the future, which could function as a real body capable of scrutinising future military and foreign policy decision as well as EU developments.

#### TEXT OF LETTER

Letter to the Editor

1/10/2013

Dear Sir/Madam

As long time activists and campaigners on the issues of peace, demilitarization and Irish neutrality, we the undersigned are appealing to voters to vote 'No' to the proposal constitutional amendment to abolish the Seanad. We believe that the abolition of the Seanad will make the adoption of EU decisions and legislation easier for a government that is determined to do so, even if those decisions are inconsistent with the stated views of the Irish people. Abolishing the Seanad will eliminate the chance of ever establishing a reformed institution that could scrutinise future EU military issues and will make it less problematic for Enda Kenny and his successors to pass controversial legislation.

With the EU pushing for more militarization there is a need to increase scrutiny and accountability not support a decision that will allow for the easier passage of such decisions. Compared to Scandinavian courtiers, Germany and many of the new member states, Ireland's has one of the least effective scrutiny systems of EU legislation. A reformed Seanad could provide real potential to correct this weakness in Ireland's oversight of EU policy making particularly on military issues.

The recent European Parliament session in Strasbourg, which approved by a large majority a report on *'EU's military structures: state of play and future prospects,'* demonstrates that the further erosion of Irish Neutrality and the continued militarization of the EU are on the EU and Government agenda and will be made easier by the removing the threat of a reformed Seanad.

This report, aimed at boosting efforts to further militarize the European Union calls for the creation of a fully-fledged EU military headquarters, for the strengthening of EU battle groups, for more money to be spent on arm production and research, and for an ever-closer relationship with NATO.

While the report is non-binding it clearly sets the agenda for the forthcoming EU Council meeting in December where further EU militarization and increased support for arms production and research will be discussed. It is most disturbing to note that all Fine Gael MEPs - the party that wants the Seanad abolished instead of reformed - supported this report and only one Irish MEP, Paul Murphy, Socialist Party MEP voted against it.

Just because the Seanad has failed to promote peace and neutrality issues in the past is not

a justifiable reason to support its permanent abolition. The failures of the Seanad are the direct result of the failure and refusal of the political parties to reform it.

We urge voters to recognize that this vote, to abolish the Seanad, is really a vote to remove the danger that there could ever be a reformed Seanad in the future, which could function as a real body capable of scrutinising future military and foreign policy decision as well as EU developments.

It seems that the Government's strategy is to 'to get rid of the Seanad quickly' before there is a chance to reform it in a way that would make any future Government's task of passing controversial legislation more difficult.

While we all agree with the criticism of the current Seanad and the undemocratic procedure for allocating seats we believe that once abolished there is no going back. Because if abolished it can never be reinstated without a referendum and the only body that can propose such a referendum on constitutional change is the Government itself. Thus it's unlikely that the institution that wants the Seanad abolished will ever propose its reinstatement.

Yours etc.

- Dr. Edward Horgan, retired Army Commandant and UN Military peacekeeper
- Dr. John Lannon, University of Limerick and Shannonwatch co-ordinator
- Catherine Connolly, Galway City Councillor
- Niall Farrell, Shannonwatch activist
- Patricia McKenna, former Green Party MEP and Peace & Neutrality activist
- Professor John Maguire, Professor of Sociology, UCC

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