

The Congress for Jobs 28th October – 2nd November 2009

Continued Swedish presence in Afghanistan

The debate on the Swedish troops in Afghanistan was long and intense. Several representatives considered that the forces should be taken home, but Congress gave its full support to the party executive's proposal. Jan Eliasson, moving for the executive argued for continued Swedish presence in Afghanistan.

Women's rights should be the focus of a Social Democratic foreign policy. This view was argued forcibly by Urban Ahlin when he spoke before Congress on Thursday evening. He further noted the grim fact that mass rape is the new weapon of mass destruction.

Urban Ahlin expressed strong criticism of Carl Bildt and the center-right government's lack of engagement in several areas of foreign policy. One example is that Sweden is now completely silent with regard to a ban on cluster bombs. Carl Bildt also shows an almost complete passive attitude with regard to stopping the systematic repression of women in war. He has not endorsed the Social Democrats' 12-point program for disarmament.

A social democratic policy will make a difference. On this Congress was united. On the other hand, there were divergent views on how support for the freedom of Western Sahara's freedom can best be provided. Several speakers emphasized the importance of Sweden recognizing Western Sahara. And Congress supported an amendment to the Guidelines committing the Social Democrats to work for this in line with several speakers including Jytte Guteland, president of the Social Democratic youth organization. Likewise Congress also supported the motions calling for an official recognition of the genocide in Seyfo and Al-Anfal.

The debate on the Swedish troops in Afghanistan was long and intense. Several representatives called for the troops to be withdrawn but Congress gave its full support to the executive's proposals. Moving for the executive Jan Eliasson, spoke warmly for a continued Swedish presence in Afghanistan, particularly with reference to the Taliban's extreme views on women and the burning of girls' schools and such like acts.

The decision means that Sweden will continue to participate in UN peacekeeping operations and that Congress wants to see a stronger Swedish commitment to a stronger United Nations.