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CETIM Rue J.-C. Amat 6
1202 Genève - Suisse
Phone: +41(0)22 731 59 63
www.cetim.ch
contact@cetim.ch



“ There is not one developed world
and one underdeveloped world
just one maldeveloped world ”

EDITORIAL

Just a few months ago, European peasants (including Swiss farmers) took to the streets. They blocked roads and other transport links to express that they have had enough and to express their distress over agrifood policies. Some of their demands include remunerative prices for their products, a reduction of the administrative burden which has become time consuming, a fair distribution of subsidies and a reform of property law to protect arable land, biodiversity and to facilitate setting up young peasants.

Despite their appeasing discourse to calm the farmer protest, governments do not seem to have considered the extent of the issues. They continue to offer colossal subsidies for the digitalisation of the agrifood sector, for new plant engineering techniques (a new name for GMOs) and for the carbon ‘markets’. This shows their lack of vision to find a solution to the deadlock of industrial agri-food production.

Some peasants who fell into the trap of getting involved in industrial production, which is harmful for the environment and food quality, are opposing this

system, whose limitations they see on a daily basis. Worse still, each year, thousands of farmers around the world are dying by suicide as a result of despair.

There are solutions to move towards agroecological agricultural models, food security and the sustainable use of natural resources. The participation of family farmers, fishers and other small-scale livestock breeders is vital in this regard. On this point, the UN Declaration on the rights of peasants is a roadmap on which governments and other public bodies can rely to overcome this deadlock. This document recognises the vital role of family farmers in producing food, preserving biodiversity and protecting the environment.

The recently created UN expert working group is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the aforementioned Declaration. For this reason, it could create a new dynamic to support public bodies in drafting policies and programmes to support family farmers who, should it be pointed out, produce two thirds of the food consumed by humanity.

PEASANTS' RIGHTS

UN: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PEASANTS' RIGHTS

In October 2023, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution¹ setting up a new UN special procedure on the rights of peasants. This is yet another historic achievement for the international peasant movement and for peasants around the world. The task of the new Working Group will be to ensure the implementation and promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, which serves as a political and legal lever for holders of these rights. On 5th April 2024, at its 55th session, the UN Human Rights Council elected five experts to form part of the aforementioned Working Group.



The experts elected to head up the mechanism are Ms Shalmali GUTTAL (India) for the states of the Asia-Pacific region, Ms Geneviève SAVIGNY (France) for Western Europe and other states, Ms Uche Ewelukwa OFODILE (Nigeria) for the African States, Mr Carlos DUARTE (Colombia) for Latin American and Caribbean States and Mr Davit HAKOBYAN (Armenia) for the Eastern European States. It should be stressed that Ms Savigny, as a member of the Confédération Paysanne in France and is a representative of La Via Campesina, has participated actively in the negotiation process of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants. The presence of a representative of the international peasant movement is particularly important as it will enable the voice and perspectives of those at the forefront of the struggle for food sovereignty to be heard and channelled.

The Working Group will play an important role in identifying shortcomings and obstacles to the implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants, at regional, national and international level, while making recommendations to overcome these problems. It will also support states in developing public policies in this area (legislative changes, adoption of programs, etc.). The Working Group will also be a forum for exchanging experiences and best practices.

While participating at this 55th session of the Human Rights Council, CETIM, La Via Campesina and their partners (from civil society and allied governments) also organised a side event to discuss the objectives, opportunities and challenges of the working group. Representatives of La Via Campesina from Haiti, France and Niger were able to take part in the discussions, sharing their real-world experiences and their demands for the functioning of the mechanism. That is to say: bolstering local struggles for peasants' rights; developing knowledge and case law in this area; supporting competent authorities in implementing the provisions and premises of the Declaration; addressing violations and challenges posed by the dominant agri-food business sector, particularly in terms of land and seed policies.

The inability of family farmers to support themselves in the context of a discriminatory economic system also plays an important role in the peasant agenda. The full participation of peasant and rural organisations in the activities of the Working Group will be paramount if it is to be considered a legitimate mechanism which benefits the communities concerned and often affected by violations of their rights.

Therefore, from now on, peasant organisations must take ownership of the space provided by the Working Group, feed into it and make it a strategic work stream, in order to strengthen and give greater visibility to their local and national struggles through the decisions taken by the international mechanism.

Download our factsheet on the UNDROP Working Group: https://www.cetim.ch/wp-content/uploads/web-english_revised-Factsheet_sd-1.pdf

¹ https://www.cetim.ch/wp-content/uploads/Resolution-54_9_English.pdf

THE SUFFOCATION OF HAITI: NEOCOLONIALISM, VIOLENCE AND FOREIGN INTERFERENCE

Since its independence, Haiti's way forward has been obstructed by repeated interventions by foreign powers as well as by recurrent crises. Neocolonialism and flagrant human rights violations have plunged the country into unprecedented poverty, and the peasants, the pillars of the island's economy, have been cast into oblivion and misery.

During the Human Rights Council's 55th session, the CETIM spoke in defense of the promotion of human rights in Haiti, in particular the rights of the Haitian peasants, analysing the deep-seated causes of the serious and systematic violations of such rights throughout the country.

Following its declaration of independence in 1804, Haiti not only was forced to pay "reparations" to its former French colonial power (150 million francs in gold), but also underwent a long period of isolation by the colonial powers. Also, there followed numerous foreign military interventions (by the United States, among others), for the colonial system saw itself threatened by the world's first independent black republic to have abolished slavery. Strangled from birth by a colossal debt, permanently threatened and isolated, the country has been unable to realize its economic potential and has dealt with a multidimensional systemic crisis where human rights are violated on huge scale.

For several decades, criminal gangs have held sway in Haiti even as they have been manipulated by the political power brokers. Today, these gangs control the national highways as well as 60% to 80% of the capital. Murder, rape and pillage are the marching orders of these gangs, plunging the country into terror and poverty. In 2023, several thousand persons were killed and/or kidnapped, 130 000 persons were displaced in the greater Port-au-Prince area, and almost half of the Haitian population was suffering from food insecurity. The economic and social structures are broken as small businesses and schools close, aggravating unemployment and de-schooling. At the same time, the people's access to vital services is thwarted.

In this context, the peasants are among the primary victims of human rights violations. Although family peasantry is the most promising solution to social and economic problems, it is ignored, its basic needs unmet, for it has no access to clean water, to electricity, to health care, to technical assistance, and to agricultural infrastructure. It suffers from malnutrition whereas it supplies its products to the country.



The marketing of agricultural products has become impossible in the current climate of terror.

Moreover, peasants' lands are being confiscated by foreign industrial interests whose ambition is to make "Haiti a capitalist country, a platform for exports to the American market". Peasants have been arrested and tortured for trying to oppose these land-grabs.

For the past decades, the many interventions carried out under cover of the United Nations, to "end human rights violations" and "aid" Haiti achieve stability, have been a resounding failure and have left irreparable aftereffects. The country is under the guardianship of the "Core Group", created in 2004 and comprising, among others, the United States, Canada, France, Germany and Spain. This guardianship violates the Haitian people's right to self-determination, their right to life and their right to live in dignity. The CETIM calls upon the states involved in this guardianship to cease their interventions, to respect the independence of Haiti and the human rights of its people, to facilitate a democratic transition, and to support agricultural production by protecting the rural populations.

Read CETIM's full written statement in English:

<https://vu.fr/ofBzK>

Read CETIM's oral statement in French:

<https://vu.fr/BbGeU>

Watch the video of CETIM's oral declaration subtitled in English: <https://vu.fr/lelPF>

HUMAN RIGHTS

AT THE NAIROBI CONFERENCE, THE LOBBIES HAVE THE FLOOR

The United Nations Summit of the Future will be held in New York next September with the goal of “reinforcing cooperation” and “bridging the gaps in world governance”. To prepare and support this summit, the United Nations convened a civil society conference on the 9th and 10th of last May in Nairobi (Kenya). Participating in this conference, the CETIM and the Rosa Luxembourg-Geneva Foundation (RLS), with the support of various local organizations, organized a workshop parallel to it.

The Nairobi conference’s aim was “to give civil society an opportunity to participate in the preparation process” of the upcoming United Nations Summit of the Future. As this area has long been a major focus of the CETIM’s commitments and activities, it supports whole-heartedly the concerns expressed by various organizations in an [open letter](#) regarding the Summit’s content and the ability of grassroots organizations to really influence its results. Given these concerns, it is imperative to denounce the corporate capture of the process.

It is noteworthy that, throughout the conference, it was mostly the European states’ representatives (European Union, Denmark and Germany) and lobbyists linked to Western transnational corporations that had the floor. Having substantial means and also sometimes being donors, they exerted considerable influence on the decision-making as well as on the financing of programs.

The United Nations Civil Society Conference was a heterogeneous gathering bringing together hundreds of independent organizations from civil society and authentic activists from social movements. The latter, who questioned the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose failure is programmed, as well as the growing inequality and the expansion of war economy, were compelled to listen to the governmental and non-governmental influence-peddlers of the Global North. In spite of their rhetoric on sustainability, these parties had no thought for challenges

such as food sovereignty, health and education for all, the right to decolonized development, and the climate debt owed to the peoples of the Global South.



These crucial matters were treated during the off-site workshop co-organized by the CETIM and the RLS after the conference’s closing session, under the theme “Moving Beyond the Asymmetric Configuration – Toward an Equitable Participation by Communities in the Summit of the Future”. The

event, attended by 45 local and international organizations, provided an opportunity to discuss the exclusion during the conference of any critical vision of “multistakeholderism”. There was also the subject of corporate capture of the next summit, promoted by diplomats from Northern countries.

Published on 14 May 2024, the Conference’s final draft declaration contains only empty words and no mention of the deep underlying causes of the failure of the SDGs, nor of the absence of the implementation of economic, cultural and social rights, including the right to development, nor of the growing social and economic inequality between countries and within countries. The draft declaration repeats uncritically the claim that the current world trade system is a motor of sustainable development, without taking into account the implications of the international financial architecture. In other words, it lays bare the extent to which the objective of the New York summit to provide “multilateral solutions for a brighter future” seems compromised.

INSECURITY IN ECUADOR: SHIFTING TOWARDS VIOLENCE AND MASSIVE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Until 2017, the Republic of Ecuador was among the safest countries in Latin America. However, data from January 2024 reveals a sad reality: the country has become the most violent in the region.



During the 55th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the CETIM denounced the neoliberal policies of the Ecuadorian government which aim to dismantle public policies and severely attack the rights of the most vulnerable. In fact, since 2017, the Ecuadorian people have experienced an accelerated erosion of their cultural, social and economic rights.

The abolition of public policies and drastic budget cuts in the social sphere, as well as the dismantling of state structures in the security sphere, have resulted in a dramatic increase in poverty and unemployment, drawing more young people in disadvantaged areas into the web of criminal networks and at the same time, encouraging an increase in organised crime.

The insecurity that is taking hold in Ecuador today, stems from a series of complementary and complex factors. Although organised crime plays an undeniable role, domestic shortcomings also play just as decisive a role. Between 2017 and 2024, the country underwent a rapid shift towards a radical neoliberal model, characterised by rampant privatisation, economic deregulation, and the degradation of public services. This neoliberal drift goes hand in hand with endemic corruption, the criminal groups' stranglehold on prison management and legislation that encourages laundering of dirty money. A recent study pointed the finger at the Ecuadorian financial system, which is presumed to be complicit with laundering 3.5 billion dollars' worth of illegal assets. At the same time, investment protection agreements paved the way for unfettered exploitation by the oil and mining industry giants, to the detriment of the local populations.

Facing this crisis that is taking root, Ecuador finds itself at a crucial turning point: a firm and targeted governmental reaction is required in order to re-establish security and protect the fundamental

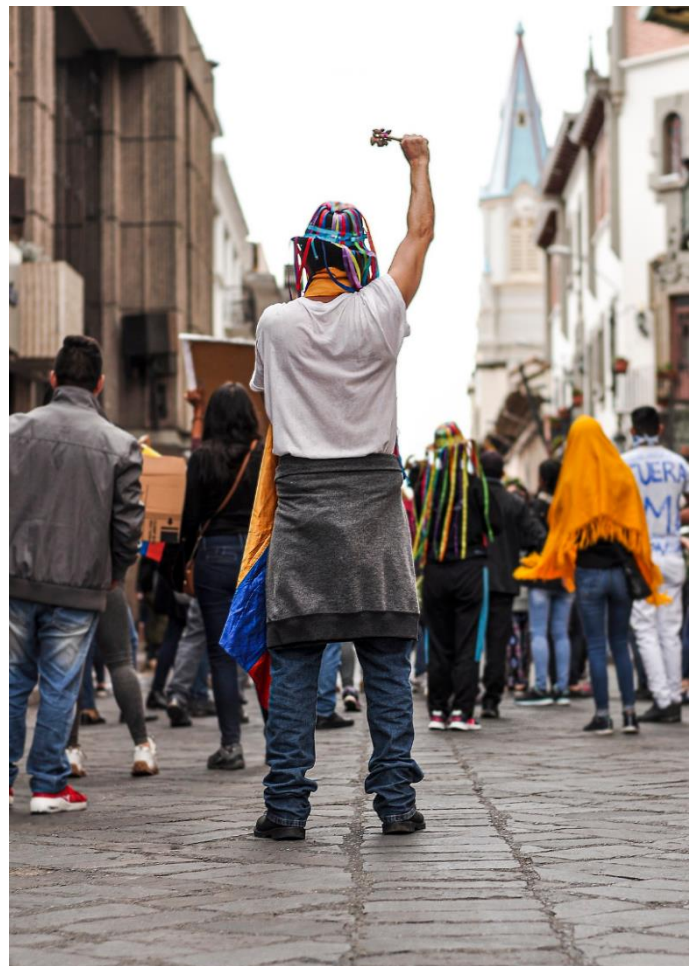
rights of citizens, in line with international commitments. The Ecuadorian government must, as a priority, abandon the 'services' of criminal groups, stop dismantling state prerogatives and put an end to the privatisation of public services, while also regulating the activities of transnational companies.

In this respect, the CETIM has called on the Human Rights Council to activate all pertinent bodies and mechanisms to closely monitor the situation in Ecuador in order to protect the human rights of its population.

Read CETIM's declaration in Spanish :

https://www.cetim.ch/wp-content/uploads/Dec_e_Ecuador-1.pdf

See the video of the declaration with English subtitles : <https://vu.fr/toISX>





HUMAN RIGHTS

PALESTINE: ANATOMY OF A GENOCIDE

The human rights situation of Palestinians was at the heart of the 55th session of the Human Rights Council. The report by the Special Rapporteur, Francesca Albanese, was highly noticed.

Entitled *The Anatomy of a Genocide*¹, this well-documented report analyses the ongoing war in Gaza. According to the Rapporteur, “historical patterns of genocide demonstrate that persecution, discrimination and other preliminary stages prepare the ground for the annihilation stage of genocide. In Palestine, displacing and erasing the Indigenous Arab presence has been an inevitable part of the forming of Israel as a ‘Jewish state’.”

The Rapporteur deplores the humanitarian camouflage used to justify the Israeli army’s targeting of civilians and infrastructure in Gaza, pointing out that Israel has intensified its “de-civilianization of Palestinians” policy and “has used IHL [international humanitarian law] terminology to justify its systematic use of lethal violence against Palestinian civilians as a group and the extensive destruction of life-sustaining infrastructures.” This distortion of the concepts of humanitarian law aims to empty them of their normative content, thus “subverting their protective purpose and ultimately eroding the distinction between civilians and combatants in Israeli actions in Gaza.”

For the Rapporteur, considering Gaza as a total military objective, “Israel has thus de facto abolished the distinction between civilian objects and military

objectives”, leading to the mass destruction of entire neighbourhoods in Gaza. According to her, “This strategy reasonably and solely infers a genocidal policy”, especially as this policy was “approved and implemented by Israeli senior military and government officials.”

The Israeli narrative concerning the indiscriminate killing of civilians, considered as “collateral damage”, does not stand up to the Rapporteur’s analysis. Indeed, Israel has violated the legal requirements of proportionality “by defining military advantage, in each attack, in relation to the destruction of the whole Hamas organization both politically and militarily.”

The Israeli description of civilians as “human shields” does not stand up to the Rapporteur’s analysis either, as she states that Israel has used the concept of human shields to justify its attacks on Palestinian civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza. However, independent investigations and human rights organisations have often questioned these allegations, going so far as to conclude that “evidence of human shields had been fabricated”.

The “medical shields” mentioned by the Israeli army seem to serve the same purpose: “Israeli army reportedly rearranged weaponry at the Al Shifa

¹ *The Anatomy of a Genocide*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, [A/HRC/55/73](#), 25 March 2024.

before news crews visits". This reinforced suspicions that evidence had been fabricated "after the Israeli army had claimed that a 'list of terrorists' it had found in another Gaza hospital – the Al Rantisi – turned out to be a calendar of the days of the week in Arabic."

For the Rapporteur, the targeting of fleeing civilians in the "humanitarian corridors" appears to have been used as a genocidal tool to achieve ethnic cleansing.

The Special Rapporteur considers that the context, facts and analysis presented in her report "leads to the conclusion that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating Israel's commission of genocide is met." Even worse, these elements "also indicate that Israel's actions have been driven by a genocidal logic integral to its settler-colonial project in Palestine, signalling a tragedy foretold."

In her recommendations, the Special Rapporteur urges, among other things, for:

- an arms embargo on Israel
- an immediate and durable ceasefire
- the reconstitution of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid to deal comprehensively with the situation in Palestine
- an international protection presence to limit the violence
- adequate funding for UNRWA to enable it to meet the increased needs of Palestinians in Gaza.

She also stresses that "Israel and the States that were complicit in what can reasonably be considered genocide must be held accountable and provide reparations commensurate with the destruction, death and harm inflicted on the Palestinian people".

She further demands that "Israel, as well as States who have been complicit in the Gaza genocide, acknowledge the colossal harm done, commit to non-repetition, with measures for prevention, full reparations, including the full cost of the reconstruction of Gaza."

In its resolution² adopted at the end of its deliberations on this issue, the Human Rights Council

expressed, among other things, its "grave concern at statements by Israeli officials amounting to incitement to genocide", and demanded that "Israel uphold its legal responsibility to prevent genocide and fully abide by the provisional measures issued by the International Court of Justice on 26 January 2024." It condemned "the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in Gaza, the unlawful denial of humanitarian access, wilful impediment to relief supplies and deprivation of objects indispensable to the survival of civilians, including food, water, electricity, fuel and telecommunications, by Israel, the occupying Power." It further affirmed that no State shall recognise as lawful a serious violation of international law, or render aid or assistance in maintaining that situation, and that all States must cooperate to put an end to it.



As part of the 55th session of the Human Rights Council, CETIM gave the floor to Ms Yasmeen El-Hasan, representative of the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (a Palestinian peasant organisation and member of La Via Campesina), who spoke about the situation in Gaza where access to food, water and healthcare is used as a weapon by the Israeli army.

Read the article "Palestine: no food sovereignty without national sovereignty" on our website :

<https://vu.fr/wBQbR>

Watch the video of the oral statement :

<https://vu.fr/EtZmZ>

² [A/HRC/RES/55/28](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/fr/resolutions/55-28), adopted on 5 april 2024 by 28 votes in favour, 6 against (Argentina, Bulgaria, Germany, Malawi, Paraguay, United States) and 13 abstentions (Albania, Benin, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, France, Georgia, India, Japan, Lithuania, Montenegro, Netherlands, Romania).

PUBLICATIONS

MALDEVELOPMENT: CLAIMS AND PROPOSALS, A FIRST DRAFT FOR A ROADMAP BY AND FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS FOR BREAKING WITH MALDEVELOPMENT



This didactic booklet presents the demands and proposals of social movements and other grassroots organisations in different countries for a way out of the current multidimensional crisis (economic, health, climate, social, political, etc.).

Gathered during the first worldwide confinements linked to Covid-19, many of these claims focus on health and development issues. They also address other issues such as peasant farming, the defence of the environment and climate justice, working conditions and the fight against inequality, the responsibility of transnational corporations, discrimination against women, etc.

Faced with a politically and militarily hyper-organised oligarchy, this booklet simply aims to spread the will of the people to change the system through a popular

perspective, based on social justice and the regeneration of ecosystems.

These demands and proposals provide guidelines for social movements and other grassroots organisations to help them change the balance of power vis-à-vis the neoliberal oligarchy.

The list of claims and proposals is taken from the book *“Une pandémie révélatrice d’un mal-développement généralisé”*, Murad Akincilar, published by CETIM, Geneva, 2023 www.cetim.ch/product/une-pandemie-revelatrice-dun-maldeveloppement-generalise

Download the digital version for free: <https://vu.fr/rJQmH>

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