

Conference on People's Foreign Policy

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5th and 6th October, 2006

Mumbai, India

Dear Friends,

Warm Greetings from Mumbai!

The All India preparatory meeting of Citizens Against War and Occupation held on 24th August 2006 in Mumbai unanimously reaffirmed the proposal to have a conference on India's Foreign Policy. It was felt that not only was there an urgent need to discuss and debate the contemporary shifts in India's Foreign Policy but it was important to deepen our understanding about what the Indian Foreign Policy should constitute and from which should emerge our vision for a "People's Foreign Policy". In response to the same, it gives us great pleasure to announce an international conference on "People's Foreign Policy" in Mumbai on 5th and 6th October 2006.

It has been reiterated in various discussions that there is an urgent need for all progressive forces to come together to examine and critique the perceptible shift in India's Foreign Policy marked by the Indian Prime Minister's visit to the USA (on 18th July 2005) and Britain. Both the Indo - US nuclear deal and India's stand vis-à-vis Iran as well as its increasing cooperation with the apartheid state of Israel epitomise a betrayal of India's claims of having a sovereign and independent foreign policy along with our long standing support to the Palestinian cause and their quest for an independent nation. India's increasing military ties with the USA, joint military exercises, and its emergence as the biggest arms purchaser from Israel will have serious ramifications not only on India's independent and sovereign status but also for all of Asia in terms of its security, trade and development. Last but not the least, this is a set back to the process of disarmament which had been initiated in the region too.

The group is of the unanimous opinion that there is a strong need to take stock of evolution of India's Foreign Policy so far and also to demystify and decode the concept of "Foreign Policy" so as to bring it into the domain of "people's politics". It is evident that the foreign policy of our country impacts the lives of ordinary people and hence, the need for a wider dissemination and debate on the issues concerned. This conference should not be an end in itself but a mere starting point. The idea is to have a series of meetings in many cities and regions within India preceding and succeeding this conference.

All those persons, political parties, socio-political movements, civil society organizations and groups that are in opposition to India's strategic alliance with Israel and the United States and therefore support their unconditional and immediate withdrawal from Central and West Asia will be welcome to attend and be a part of this conference. Hence, even political parties (worldwide) who prescribe to this criterion will be participating in this conference.

The main themes of the conference will comprise opposition to US hegemony (including discussions on WMDs and the Global War on Terror), crises in West and Central Asia, South Asian issues like nuclearisation, militarization and ongoing conflicts, economic dimensions of the Foreign Policy, evolution of India's Foreign Policy, etc. Apart from plenary sessions, the conference will have workshops focusing on issues like peace processes in South Asia, India's Foreign Policy vis-à-vis Israel, Indo - US nuclear treaty, among others. Citizens Against War and Occupation will organise a public meeting focusing on Occupation of and Solidarity with West and Central Asia on the previous evening (4th October, 2006) with comrades from West and Central Asia, and Venezuela, and representatives of political parties in the Indian Parliament speaking at the platform.

We expect around 300 participants from India and its neighbours. Our comrades from Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan as well as Israel, and other parts of Asia, Europe /USA and Venezuela and Cuba will also join us.

We wish to invite you to this conference, which will be the first of its kind (as peace and anti war organisations have never before organised a conference on an Alternative Foreign Policy). This will also be the first attempt on the part of the people's movement to forge a meaningful alliance with the political parties to rightfully stake their claim in formulating a people-oriented foreign policy for our country. We hope to have you amongst us on all 3 days and actively participate in the debates that ensue, thus providing the necessary intellectual and political impetus to the anti-war movement world over.

While we cannot provide travel support to participants, we are trying our best to organise modest accommodation for outstation participants. The details of venue, registration procedures and programme will be conveyed shortly. A line of your confirmed participation at the earliest would be greatly appreciated.

Warm regards,

Citizens Against War and Occupation

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Citizens against war and occupation

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