

The Marabá Declaration (Brazil) adopted at the International Conference of Agrarian Reform

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17 April : Day of Peasant's Struggle

International Conference of Agrarian Reform: Marabá Declaration

Who are we? People who struggle for territory

(Marabá, April 17 2016) We are more than 130 representatives of La Via Campesina member organizations and allies from four continents, 10 regions and 28 countries of the world. We are here in Marabá, Pará, Brazil, to analyze, reflect and continue our collective processes to develop our ideas, proposals, and alternative projects for confronting the offensive of global capital against the peoples and natural goods of the countryside, coasts and seas. More than anything, we come together to struggle for our territories, and for a different kind of society.

We are organizations of peasants, family farmers, indigenous peoples, landless, farm workers, herders, fisherfolk, collectors, forest dwellers, rural women and youth, as well as allied organizations from across the world. We are here to remember the massacre of rural workers in El Dorado dos Carajás, Pará, which took place exactly 20 years ago and led to the creation of the International Day of Peasant Struggle, celebrated every year on April 17th. We are also here to demand that the governments of the world follow through on their commitments to agrarian reform, made 10 years ago at the FAO's International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) in Porto Alegre, Brazil

The current situation: The offensive of Capital against our territories throughout the world and the attacks on democracy

We have listened to our brothers and sisters from our organizations in the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East, and we can see that everywhere we are facing the same enemy and the same problems. There are ever more cases of land-, forest- and water-grabbing, attacks against democracy and popular will, political prisoners, etc. in Latin America, Asia Africa, Europe and North America. In the current historical period, we are witnessing the emergence of an alliance between financial capital, transnational corporations, imperialism, broad sectors within national states (almost without regard to their purported ideology), particularly but not only judicial and public security institutions, the private sectors in industrial agriculture, fishing and food (including agribusiness and aquaculture), mining, construction, forestry and other extractive sectors, and the mainstream media. The members of this new alliance are promoting an avalanche of privatizations, grabbing and taking over the commons and public goods, such as land, water resources, forests, seeds, cattle raising, fisheries, glaciers and entire territories. In order to achieve their goals, they are using financialization to convert everything into commodities, free trade and investment agreements, the corruption of our politicians and leaders, control of the mass media and financial system, and mergers and acquisitions of companies.

Lately we have noted, with increasing alarm, how this alliance—and Capital in general—no longer tolerates the implementation by democratically elected governments of public policies that show the slightest independence, no matter how weak. This alliance has become the main force behind a wave of coup d'état attempts, many of which are taking place right now. These coups range from “soft,” “technical,” “parliamentary,” and “judicial” coups, to the most “hard-core,” military and violent coups, all of which disregard the law, constitutions and popular will. This is the case in Brazil, where we find ourselves together now. We add our voices to the voices of the Brazilian people, who struggle to defend democracy against an illegitimate coup attempt, and try to push forward the political reforms needed so that democracy can get out of the dead-end it is in today.

Why we struggle against agribusiness

The offensive of Capital is threatening rural life and our entire society, including our health, Mother Earth, the climate, biodiversity, and our peoples and cultures. Mass migration, the destruction of the social fabric of our communities, urban sprawl, insecurity, agrochemicals, GMOs, junk food, the homogenization of diets, global warming, the destruction of mangrove forests, the acidification of the sea, the depletion of fish stocks, and the loss of anything that resembles democracy, are all symptoms of what is taking place.

The emergence of this new alliance between financial capital, agribusiness, the State and mass media—and its capacity to dispute territories, public opinion and the State, even where the government is “progressive”—has forced us once again to carry out a process of reflection and reformulation of our concepts and proposals, as well as our strategies, forms and practices of struggle.

Here in Brazil, we have seen how financial capital has transformed the old enemy of peasants and landless workers—the unproductive large landholdings or latifúndios—into capitalized agribusinesses, mines, industrial fishing and aquaculture, and energy projects. In reality, all these so-called “productive” sectors are mostly “producing” extreme poverty and environmental devastation. In this transformation, capitalism no longer requires a “classical agrarian reform” to raise productivity in rural areas. In the past, the landless peasantry formed alliances in favour of this kind of agrarian reform, with factions inside the parts of the State that represented the interests of productive capital. But this change takes any alliance with a fraction of capital off the table, leaving future agrarian reform squarely in the domain of class struggle. It also reduces the usefulness of the old argument for agrarian reform, that so much land in the hands of people—who do not even use most of it—is an injustice in the face of so many more people with no land at all. But at the same time it creates the basis for a new call to all of society and to all working classes, both rural and urban, to question the very basis of the project of Capital for the countryside.

Any resistance by rural peoples is demonized by the mainstream media, as organizations, their leaders and supporters face repression, criminalization, persecution, assassinations, enforced disappearances, illegitimate jailing, administrative detentions, sexual harassment and rape. Laws are being changed to criminalize peasant and working class struggles even more, as well as granting total impunity to perpetrators of crimes against peasants, workers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and all rights defenders.

Facing this terrible panorama, rural peoples, and our organizations, movements, alliances and convergences, currently represent the best hope for humanity and Mother Earth. We are on the front lines of the territorial and political fight against this dark alliance. Our proposals for food sovereignty, popular agrarian reform, the building of agroecological food production territories, and peasant agriculture to cool the planet, represent real alternatives and solutions to the problems created by the capitalist system and by this barbaric alliance in particular.

What we defend and call for: Popular Agrarian Reform

In La Via Campesina and the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform we have more than 20 years of history in the struggle for land and the defense of land and territory. In 2012, in Bukit Tinggi, Indonesia, we took stock of this history, how it has evolved in the context of a changing world and our own accumulation of experiences and dialogues, and identified key elements of a common strategy for agrarian reform. But in 2012 we were only beginning to see the scope of the ascendance of financial capital and its growing dominance over other kinds of capital. This changes the nature of the game, and how we approach society on the question of rural territories.

Now we ask, which is better? Do we want a countryside without peasants, trees or biodiversity? Do we want a countryside full of monocultures and feedlots, agrochemicals and GMOs, producing exports and junk food, causing climate change and undermining the adaptive capacity of communities? Do we want pollution, illness, and massive migration to cities? Or do we want a countryside made up of the food producing territories of peasants, indigenous peoples, family farmers, artisanal fisherfolk, and other rural peoples, based on human dignity and diverse knowledges and cosmovisions, with trees, biodiversity, and the agroecological production of healthy food, which cool the planet, produce food sovereignty and take care of Mother Earth?

In this sense, we consider the proposal of our Brazilian comrades for a Popular Agrarian Reform, an agrarian reform not only for landless peasants, but for all of the working classes and for all of society. This agroecological and territorial approach to agrarian reform can only be won through class struggle and direct confrontation of the project of Capital, including its profits, media outlets and its national and international agents. This is an agrarian reform to maximize the potential of peasant agriculture, economy and territory.

Throughout the Americas, Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, our organizations, movements and convergences are putting forth similar proposals and territorial approaches in their dispute with the global project of Capital. These include the convergence among our diverse popular and traditional knowledges and ways of knowing the world in agroecology, artisanal fishing, traditional herding, and in our diverse strategies and ways of life. Our proposals, though similar, differ based on the nature of our different realities. In places where land is concentrated in few hands, we struggle for its redistribution. In some countries, we speak of an “agrarian revolution.” In places where our peoples still hold onto their lands and territories, we struggle to defend those territories, and prevent land and water grabbing. Meanwhile, in places where land was nationalized and is now being conceded to foreign entities by governments, we struggle for the return of ancestral land rights to our communities. The fisherfolk among us speak of the struggle for the recovery and defense of artisanal fishing territories. In Europe we have once again taken up the strategy of land occupations, and organized struggles against land use changes, making clear to all that the problems of land grabbing and concentration are also a growing problem in Northern countries. In Palestine we struggle against a brutal occupation and we call to boycott Israeli products. And everywhere, there are burning struggles by young people to access land and other resources.

We have achieved great victories, such as the massive agrarian reform carried out after peoples’ land occupations and recuperations in Zimbabwe, the “Education for and by the Countryside” policy in Brazil, the cancellations of mining concessions and plantations in many parts of Africa and Asia, and the permanence of Cuba’s agrarian reform and its successful “peasant-to-peasant” agroecology movement. We also have partial but promising victories, such as the possibility of a large scale agrarian reform in Indonesia, for which we must mobilize in order to make our governments follow through on their promises.

We have organized our struggles by providing political and agroecological training for both leaders

and grassroots members of our organizations. We have built training centers and peasant agroecology schools in all continents, and provided educational alternatives for our children. We have learned from the indigenous peoples of our movements that “the life of people and nature are one.” We have old and new tactics, such as occupation and recovery of land and territory, solidarity, caravans—such as in East Africa and in Bangladesh—as well as alternative media outlets, art and culture. We continue to develop our popular peasant feminist, humanist, environmentalist and socialist values, youth mobilization and creativity, new rural-urban alliances, the voluntary guidelines of the FAO, the Peasant Rights Charter, and other efforts. We need to continue to adjust and innovate new tactics, especially since the enemy quickly evolves new ways of taking our territories. We need new approaches and strategies, such as the construction of autonomous spaces and self-provisioning, as well as the scaling-up of peoples’ agroecology.

Our challenges

- We will transform the struggle for land into the struggle for territory, along with developing a new productive model for food sovereignty, based on a more “independent” agroecology by using our own local resources and inputs and recovering our ancestral knowledges.
- We will organize the struggle for public policies supporting peasant and small farmer production as well as health, education, culture and sports in our communities.
- We will carry out our political and ideological training on a mass scale, fortify our work with our membership and our work with the masses, in order to improve the internal structure and operation of our organizations, and progressively integrate the leadership and participation of woman and youth.
- We will confront the ways by which the mass media demonize our movements and promote the culture of consumption and the hollowing out of democracy. We will work hard to build our own media, which foster dialogues with our membership as well as with the working class and the entire society.
- We will oppose more effectively the criminalization and repression of our movements as well as militarization, and organize an international struggle in support of our political prisoners. We will organize an ongoing solidarity campaign that will be based on the principle of sharing what we have rather than on sharing only what we don’t need.
- We will continue to carry out our permanent task of building class alliances, without dependencies, between the country and the city, between food producers and consumers, and with progressive researchers, academics and support organisations that share our vision.
- We will denounce and oppose so-called “anti-terrorist” laws and their use against our legitimate struggles.
- We will increase our solidarity with the struggles of the Palestinian and Kurdish peoples as well as other peoples that are subjected to military aggression. We condemn military occupations and the militarisation of lands and territories.
- We will develop an analysis of the role played by drug trafficking in the destabilization of our territories with the complicity of capital and governments, as well as a strategy to fight this problem more effectively.
- We will take on corporate concentration in different sectors of the economy, especially agro-industrial farming, fishing and food, media and financial systems, as well as the frontal attacks

against democracy. We shall create forms of struggle that generate economic losses for capital, transnational corporations, banks and other agents of capital.

- We will build convergences and greater unity based on common objectives and our diversity (women and men, peasants, workers, fisherfolk, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, urban populations, consumers, etc.).
- We will oppose the ascendance of conservative and right-wing religious fundamentalism, racism and cultural discrimination. We will fight the new wave of neoliberal privatization laws and treaties.
- We will rethink the relation between our popular movements, the State, political parties and electoral processes, taking into account the specific history and context of each country, and fight the generalized undermining of international and national human rights mechanisms.
- We will fight against US imperialism, and while we recognize the importance of multi-polarity in the world, we sound the alert about the emergence of new economic, political and military imperialisms.
- Through our organizations, we will strive to build convergence movements around alternative popular projects developed through collective constructions; we will also work to improve the organization of production, such as cooperatives, promote small- and medium-sized agro-industries in order to add value to our products, and we will work to achieve more and improved short and medium marketing circuits, and promote cooperation.
- We will struggle to address the issue of credit: how to obtain more credit for the peasantry and at the same time produce without credit and with less debt.
- We will oppose the institutional tendency (for example by the World Bank, FAO, and some academia and NGOs) to try to dilute the content of concepts such as “agrarian reform” and “agroecology”, by launching “light” versions of these concepts, as in “access to land”, “corporate social responsibility” and “industrial organic” food production in monocultures, with the objective of green-washing agribusiness.
- We will struggle to achieve international mechanisms to defend and support our visions and strategies that are not “voluntary” but rather compulsory and actionable.
- We will stop the approval and proliferation of dangerous new technologies, such as “terminator” seeds and synthetic biology.
- We will strengthen the participation of women and youth in our social movements. We will develop mechanisms to increase the number of youth who remain in the countryside. We will struggle against the dominant model of patriarchy in the capitalist system, and demand the full rights of peasant and indigenous women to land, water and territory.
- We will carry out ever more unified international struggles to oppose our common enemies.

Defending the land and honouring life

On this 17th of April, International Day of Peasant Struggles, 20 years after the El Dorado dos Carajás massacre in the State of Pará, Brazil, we are meeting once again, inspired by the thousands of men and women who defend the right to life itself, who fight for a more just society through a permanent struggle for peoples’ rights to land and territory, for the promotion of food sovereignty and agroecological production, to end hunger and poverty.

Globalize the struggle! Globalize hope!

Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform of La Vía Campesina

Delegates from 4 continents and 10 regions, united to Defend Land and Honour Life

P.S.

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<http://www.viacampesina.org/en/index.php/actions-and-events-mainmenu-26/17-april--day-of-peasants-struggle-mainmenu-33/2041-international-conference-of-agrarian-reform-declaration-of-maraba1>