

Report of the People's Parliament Alternative Social Forum

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by People's Parliament

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On behalf of People's Parliament

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Introduction:

On Friday 19th January, 2007 when it became certain that the organizers of the World Social Forum were not going to rescind, in good time, the decision to impose the exorbitant Kshs. 500 registration fee requisite for Kenyans, members of the People's Parliament held an emergency meeting to determine the way forward and it was decided that:

- People's Parliament wanted to be part and parcel of the World Social Forum and to the greatest extent possible members would participate in all WSF events that allowed Kenyans to participate for free. Thus, People's Parliament would attend the Opening Ceremony at Uhuru Park on Saturday, 2007 and commence its alternative social forum on Sunday 21, 2007. The alternative forum would run on Sunday January 21, 2007, Monday, January 22, 2007 and Tuesday January 23, 2007. Participants of the forum would then proceed to the World Social Forum on Wednesday January 24, 2007 for action and convergence day and submit the resolutions of the People's Parliament Social Forum and finally participate in the activities of the closing day on Thursday January 25, 2007 at Uhuru Park.
- People's Parliament would hold the alternative forum at the Jeevanjee Gardens alongside the Citizens Assembly who had scheduled a series of lectures at the same venue
- People's Parliament would have, separate from Citizen Assembly's lectures, a program of its own activities. The program (see attached flier) was developed and money raised to print 2,000 copies of the program for dissemination at Uhuru Park during the opening ceremony of the World Social Forum. Members volunteered to coordinate the printing and dissemination efforts. On Saturday January 20, 2007 at least 1500 copies of the program and 3000 copies of the People's Parliament flier were disseminated at Uhuru Park during the opening ceremony.
- People's Parliament would work jointly with any organization that supported the effort to make the social forum accessible to ordinary Kenyans. Discussions would be open, interactive and participatory, with no lecture sessions. Special consideration would, however, be made to allow participants from other countries to share their experiences. To the greatest extent possible the forum would endeavor to create an environment in which participants would be able to strengthen and create links, both national and international.

Participants would, therefore, be encouraged to socialize at a personal level and the program would create time for that every evening.

Attendance:

A conservative estimate of over 4, 000 participants took part in the People's Parliament Social Forum during the three days. These included many participants from various countries including France, Belgium, USA, UK, Iraq, Germany, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Somali, Sudan, South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Tunisia, Sweden, Morocco, Cote d'Ivoire, Venezuela, Spain, Italy, Pakistan, Netherlands, Palestine, India, Japan, Austria, Brazil, Korea and many other countries. Many of these visitors actively participated in the discussions and with their support information was translated for those that did not understand English or Kiswahili. As predicted, at least 70% of the participants were Kenyans who for one reason or another were unable to attend the World Social Forum at Kasarani.

Attendance on Sunday January 21, 2007 was slow, with most participants arriving in the afternoon and fewer than 700 total participants attending. Monday and Tuesday had significantly higher attendance at 1800-2000 participants on each day. In addition, discussions on both Monday and Tuesday were prolonged till 7pm.

Besides the individual participants the forum was attended by various representatives of organizations including Novox, APEIS, CADTM, ATTAC, Citizens Assembly, Alternatives International, El- Molo Rights & Development Forum, Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, Keep Left, Jubilee South, MIJARC, Kenya Land Alliance, Sustain Labour, Fourth International, ITRAP, NCDHR, Fuerza Unida, SWASH and Block G8 among others.

Security:

Throughout the forum there was minimal police presence as no arrangements had been made to have the police in the forum. Nonetheless, participants ably minded each other's welfare throughout the forum and no reports of loss of property or any incidences of insecurity were reported at Jeevanjee Gardens.

Members of People's Parliament took an active role in maintaining security and escorted visitors to their hotels and residences to ensure their safety.

Food & Water:

Jeevanjee Gardens is located in the central business district. There are a myriad of restaurants and hotels in its vicinity with reasonably priced food so participants had no problem getting food and water. At the same time, two women's groups from the Kamukunji slums prepared food and tea for participants at a price of Kshs. 50 for a plate of rice and Kshs. 10 for a cup of tea.

Documentation & the Media:

All participants who were interested in documenting their experience at the forum were allowed unrestricted access to all the processes.

More than 30 media institutions including the local media attended the forum and conducted various interviews with participants. As a result, there was extensive coverage, both locally and abroad, of the People's Parliament Alternative Social Forum.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL FORUM

CONVENED AT THE JEEVANJEE GARDENS, NAIROBI ON JANUARY 21-23, 2007.

We, the people, having convened at the Jeevanjee Gardens during the World Social Forum between January 21, 2007 and January 23, 2007, after extensive discussions and careful deliberations on land policy and ownership, squatterism and landlessness, privatization, globalization, international trade and treaties, Food Security, housing, social security, employment, natural resources, rights of minorities and indigenous populations and on Socialism, do hereby resolve as follows:

- 1) To increase our involvement and participation in the people's struggles, both locally and internationally;
- 2) To build and sustain lasting networks, links and or relationships with each other and with other organizations and social movements, both local and international, that share our objectives and vision;
- 3) To initiate and organize a sustained campaign that ensures equity and justice in the distribution of land to all for the benefit of all and specifically to:
 - a) Ensure that squatterism or tenancy-at-will is completely eradicated in Kenya and abroad;
 - b) Ensure that no land lays idle as long as there exists landless people;
 - c) Ensure that the culture of privatizing land to the exclusion of the greater majority of the population is eradicated through various actions including
 - (i) Nationalization and occupation, by the people for the people, of all idle land, private or otherwise, currently in the hands of a few privileged individuals or conglomerates
 - (ii) Advocacy to create awareness about land issues, local and international, especially highlighting the relationship between land ownership, or lack thereof, with poverty and the general decline in standards of living
 - (iii) Supporting, by any means necessary, the people's struggle to acquire land
 - d) We contend that landlessness, squatterism and tenancy-at-will have no place in today's world, and particularly owing to the relationship between land and food security resolve to ensure that all arable land is put to the most efficient use for the benefit of the people by:
 - (i) Ensuring that the needs of the people come BEFORE profit
 - (ii) Supporting all people's struggle for recognition of food as a basic human right
 - (iii) Advocating for better resource management to ensure that food is available to all at a reasonable price at all times.
- 4) Recognizing that housing /shelter is a basic need for all human beings, we resolve as follows:
 - a) To agitate for the inclusion of the right to housing in the bill of rights in the constitution
 - b) To resist evictions without prior arrangements for alternative housing for those affected
 - c) To advocate, not just for slum upgrading, but also for immediate slum eradication processes that are humane and take into account the humanity, community and social networks of slum-dwellers.
 - d) To support the occupation, by the people for the people, of vacant buildings.
 - e) To advocate and agitate for better and adequate facilities and for better planning to enhance safety and security for all.

5) Concerned by the exploitation of the people, the pillaging of national resources by a few private corporations and individuals for their own benefits and to the detriment of the people, occasioned by trade imbalances and unjust treaties, we resolve to:

a) Create awareness about punitive trade agreements and encourage active resistance by the people to the treaties

b) Support any initiative intended to correct trade imbalances including product boycotts

c) Create awareness about existing treaties and lobby for the nullification or avoidance of any treaty that is unfair, unjust or punitive.

d) To advocate and agitate for the immediate cancellation or repudiation of all debts owed by emerging and developing nations.

e) To advocate for restitution and reparations by developed nations to the developing nations for the pillaging before, during and after the colonial period, especially for slavery and the exploitation of raw materials.

6) Disturbed by the deteriorating conditions of workers, both within the formal and informal sectors, and concerned about the general decline in remuneration and workers' benefits, we resolve to work actively towards the creation of positive work environment where the rights and needs of workers come before profits and where the dignity and human rights of workers are respected.

7) Concerned that the global "war on terrorism" is increasingly encroaching on the people's right to self-determination and resistance, we resolve to support the struggle of all oppressed peoples of the world, and specifically express our solidarity with people living under occupation in Somalia, Palestine, Iraq, Darfur and Afghanistan among others.

8) We resolve to resist the tendency towards the labeling, by some nations, of freedom fighters as "terrorists" and resolve to actively resist the introduction of unjust laws aimed at curbing the people's right to resistance including the rejection of US sponsored anti-terrorism laws.

9) Nothing with concern the general tendency toward neo-liberal policies and governance around the world, we resolve to strengthen the people's social movements and networks, and to create sustained advocacy for leftist agendas by marshalling political support for leftist agendas.

10) Finally, we resolve to continue our support for the World Social Forum process and to encourage others to join in the initiative, to expand our networks and activities and to respond with vigor and enthusiasm in solidarity to any call for action. To wit, we resolve to do our part in promoting the principles of the World Social Forum.

Acknowledgements:

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Ahsante.

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Dawood from Iraq... thank you for presenting the other side- we are working on non-violent resistance a little more now.

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For all those whose names we have not mentioned, you gave us reason to believe that another world is happening. We are the better for having met you and we hope that you will not forget to remember us.