

Europe Third – World Center (CETIM)
Consultative Status (General Category)
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SURPRISED BY THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE ON NGOS TO SUSPEND ITS STATUTE FOR TWO YEARS, THE CETIM REQUESTS AN IMMEDIATE REVIEW OF ITS CASE

Turkey filed a complaint with the Committee on NGOs against CETIM (Europe – Third World Center) making extremely serious accusations: CETIM would have “a hidden agenda” aiming to attack “its territorial and political integrity”.

As the Committee on NGOs has recommended that ECOSOC suspend our (general category) consultative status for two years, we are obliged to defend ourselves because:

- These accusations are of course serious but unfounded. We can certify this.
- Confronted with an expeditious procedure, with no investigation to speak of, we have, until now, had no real way to defend ourselves, with any chance of proving our good faith, against these accusations.
- Finally, and especially, the accusation claiming that the CETIM has a “hidden agenda” that is contrary to the United Nations Charter projects an image that is the opposite of what has always constituted its practice and motivation; it cruelly injures all the persons who have worked with us. Moreover, by the enormity of the sanction requested, it risks becoming indirectly prejudicial to all the peoples and social movements that, placing their hope and trust in the United Nations, have sought the help and support of NGOs such as the CETIM to this purpose.

The CETIM and the United Nations

The CETIM does not recognize itself in these accusations. Indeed:

- Confronted with a profoundly bad developed world and with international relations often regulated by force, the CETIM has consistently presented the United Nations as the only international organization capable of realizing a democratic and egalitarian representation (imperfect but perfectible) in concert with all peoples and nations. The CETIM has always been convinced the most adequate way to a harmonious world and peaceful and democratic coexistence of peoples and States is through multilateralism..
- Further, in so far as its has had the ability and means, the CETIM has always worked to defend the UN against various campaigns aiming to discredit it.

Defense of national sovereignty, of the sovereign equality of States and promotion of human rights

The CETIM has always considered essential the principles of peace, of sovereign equality of States (including the principle of territorial integrity). It if turns out that the construction of the

States-Nations has occasionally been carried out to the detriment of some of its constituent populations, we promote a peaceful and democratic settlement of disputes, within the framework of the States concerned.

However, supporting national sovereignty does not mean giving a blank check to States. The protection of all human rights, including cultural rights and the minorities rights, is one of the goals of the UN, enshrined in the UN Charter. Consultation with NGOs is part of this process.

Aware of the tensions within countries, the CETIM, in particular through its Human Rights Program and owing to its consultative status, has firmly committed itself to the defense and the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) and to the right to development.

Thus, the CETIM has devoted its energies to:

- asserting the irreplaceable role of the UN in the elaboration of human rights norms;
- supporting the indivisibility, the inseparability, and the interdependence of all human rights.

The CETIM has also always urged the social movements of the entire world not avoid turning away from it and to include the rights it has elaborated in their daily struggles.

With this in mind, the CETIM

- trains leaders of social movements in Geneva and elsewhere;
- serves as an interface between certain UN bodies and organizations, individuals, etc. The latest example being the CETIM's close and longstanding work with the international social movement of small holder farmers, La Via Campesina, with a view to the drafting by the UN of an international convention on the rights of small holder farmers;
- consistently contributes to a better knowledge of the various contents and means of enforcement of human rights, and of issues as food sovereignty, cancellation of the Third World Debt, etc.;
- substantially contributes to the work of the UN human rights bodies in the drafting of norms such as the justiciability of ESCR, the creation of a legal framework at the international level for the activities of transnational corporations, etc.;
- conducts a public debate by organizing conferences about the UN, the necessity of promoting international law and the UN Charter.

Three questions and an answer that is patently obvious

1. How, with all the activities described above, and a team that currently comprises only three members, would the CETIM pursue this "hidden agenda"?
2. If, however, such is the case, how could we be able to commit the errors and missteps we are accused of, in such an outrageous way, knowing full well the sanctions that threaten us? Would it not have been reasonable for us to act less obviously?
3. Finally, if the CETIM supported the idea of the creation of "great Kurdistan", as Turkey seems to think, why would we have fought from 1991 against any idea of partition of Iraq of which the Kurds constitute nonetheless an important part of the population?

To ask these questions is to answer them.

Point by Point Examination of Turkey's allegations

- Between 1998 and 2010 (a period that saw three reports to the Committee on NGOs regarding our status), the CETIM submitted (individually or jointly with renown organizations) 24 statements concerning the human rights situation in Turkey – a tiny part of its activities and interventions. A detailed analysis of these statements shows that

they deal essentially with the denunciation of serious human rights violations of *all* Turkish citizens, denunciations based on reports of internationally acknowledged Turkish human rights organizations, and also on the reports of the special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council (and the former Commission), the Treaty bodies, etc.

- Turkey reproaches us for using the term “Turkish Kurdistan” and for thus attacking its territorial integrity. We do not deny having used this term, and if it offended Turkey, we regret this. However, we have used this term only to designate a geographic area where the Kurdish speaking people live or as a historical allusion, but never to refer to any legal or administrative entity. As a proof, we submit our use of other, alternating and innocuous terms such as “Kurdish provinces” or “Kurdish region”.
- Moreover, if the use of the term “Turkish Kurdistan” had implicitly represented for us any sort of support for separatism, how can it be that we have never made known or even suggested such a point of view in the recommendations that are common places in such statements? Why would we, on the contrary, recommend that solutions be found within the institutional framework of Turkey?
- We would emphasize that, since being informed (end of 2009) of Turkey’s unhappiness with this term, we decided, immediately, to refrain from using it, as you can see in the two most recent joint statements to the 13th session of the Human Rights Council (March 2010).

We have thus respected Turkey’s wishes, which attests to our good faith, to our concern to maintain good relationships with this country and to the absence of any “hidden agenda”.

In the complaint Turkey accuses us also of being “a propaganda vehicle of terror organization PKK”.

The following are our defense and our arguments with regard to this (complete information to be found at http://www.cetim.ch/en/cetim_ecosoc.php). **At the outset, we would like to emphasize that we have no relations with the PKK or any of its members.**

- In all the CETIM statements, we have used the term PKK in a neutral way to designate one of the parties to the conflict; using alternatively the terms “armed struggle”, “guerilla” and “combatants” as is customary usage with other human rights NGOs.
- We are of the opinion that it is not incumbent upon NGOs to characterize any group as being “terrorist”. Furthermore, the international human rights organizations and a UN expert use neutral terminology. We should have spoken of “non-State armed groups”, as do certain conventions.
- Finally, the propositions presented in our statements, always written in a constructive spirit, deal with respect of freedoms and rights of all citizens of Turkey, or the search for a “peaceful/democratic solution to the Kurdish question” or “the recognition of Kurdish identity”, and all this, again, with the purpose of constructing a peaceful democratic Turkish society:

Given the above, we deem that the CETIM has not violated ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 and has never attacked the territorial integrity of Turkey. The activities of the CETIM are based on the defense and the promotion of the United Nations Charter and international human rights norms as well as on the exercise of its right of freedom of expression, within the limits set by the spirit of these international instruments.

We repeat: the CETIM has no “hidden agenda”, on the contrary, it has an open agenda visible to everybody, that of promoting and defending ESCR and all human rights, and of supporting the United Nations in its mission of bringing peace to international relations.

The CETIM and the Committee on NGOs

The procedure followed by the Committee on NGOs to recommend the suspension of our status, has been, according to us, expeditious. Whereas the United Nations promotes democracy, respect of opinions, freedom of expression, transparency, the right to a fair defense and a fair trial, among other things, we can only deplore the way our case has been handled out. We had a mere 33 hours to react and we haven't been auditioned. Owing to this extremely tight deadline, we were unable to present a solid and detailed defense.

The expeditious procedure resorted to in the case against the CETIM leads us to ask the following questions.

- Should not the right to freedom of opinion and expression of NGOs within the United Nations be protected from political-diplomatic agendas such as are current between governments?
- Have we been judged on effective acts, and if yes, which ones, or on some vocabulary use?
- Have all the member States of the Committee on NGOs had the time to examine the accusations, serious but unjust, brought by Turkey?

Conclusion

As we have demonstrated, the complaint brought by Turkey is, according to us, without foundation. On 19 July 2010, the CETIM will do everything within its power, its means and the time allotted to it, to defend its rights and in order to the ECOSOC to pronounce for a reconsideration of this decision, that it considers unjust and totally disproportionate to any possible misstep committed, however one may be inclined to judge it.

The CETIM is of the opinion that:

1. the recommendation of the Committee on NGOs regarding the CETIM was adopted within the framework of a procedure, in this particular case, that did not observe the principles of fair treatment. This “case” could undermine the UN credibility;
2. the right to freedom of opinion and of expression, one of the pillars of human rights, must be respected and promoted within the UN that has decreed it. The NGOs must be able to fully play their role in conformity with Articles 3 and 2 of General Assembly resolution 60/251, Articles 1.3 and 71 of the United Nations Charter and ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.

Thus, we request the ECOSOC to send the CETIM case back for reconsideration by the Committee on NGOs and ask the Committee for a hearing.

**COMPLETE FILE ON CETIM DEFENCE IN RESPONSE TO THE
RECOMMENDATION MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON NGOs TO SUSPEND ITS
CONSULTATIVE STATUS ON :**

http://www.cetim.ch/en/cetim_ecosoc.php
