

Centre Europe - Tiers Monde

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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Item 11

Civil and political rights

Oral Statement

Mr. Chairman,

Violations of economic, social and cultural rights are, more often than not, accompanied by violations of civil and political rights and vice versa, as the human rights situation in many countries illustrate. This reality demonstrates the indivisibility of these rights.

The situation of millions peasant families, victims of forced evictions due in particular to armed conflicts, dam constructions and the construction of infrastructures for the tourist industry (hotels, golf courses, supermarkets, etc.) confirms this fact.

A great number of them are not only exploited but also suffer many forms of repression. The concentration of cultivable land in the hands of a minority and the increase of unjust trade treaties has had disastrous consequences for these peasants. Not only do they find themselves deprived of their land but also from access to local seeds and water not to mention the destruction of biodiversity due to modern agricultural techniques.

The right to life, as well as the rights to freedom of association, to dissent, opinion and expression are scorned at and ridiculed in the course of their protests and demonstrations. They are sometimes even criminalized, excluded from the democratic process and denied of basic social services such as education and health care.

Many peasant leaders face harassment and political persecution. Killings and death threats are part of a daily reality in many countries for members of peasant organizations struggling for their rights. In South Africa, 62 members of Landless People's Movement have been beaten, kicked and verbally abused during their peaceful protests. During the last 15 years, in the state of Piranha in Brazil, 759 rural workers and trade union leaders were killed; in Indonesia, 6 peasants were shot and killed by the police, 27 people were injured and many were arrested.

The fact that most peasants have very limited access to justice needs to be underscored. In India, 10'000 of them have committed suicide in the last two years alone.

The current situation has, thus, become absurd: those who produce food are starving, suffering from malnutrition and are deprived of their most fundamental rights.

In this regard, CETIM supports the demands of Via Campesina, the international movement of craft producers, peasants and their families, for the adoption of an International Convention on the Rights of Peasants which would guarantee, among others:

- The Right to life and an adequate standard of living
- The Right to agricultural resources;
- The Right to seeds and agriculture;
- The Right to capital and the means of production;
- The Right to information and access to agricultural technology;
- The Right to determine price and market access for agricultural goods;
- The Right to protection of agricultural values;
- The Right to biological diversity;
- The Right to environmental preservation;
- The Right to freedom of association.