



Rosanna Morris - rosannamorris.com

## editorial

# food sovereignty in an era of authoritarian and fascist resurgence

In every region of the world, we are seeing the rise and consolidation of social, political and cultural forces that are racist, xenophobic, misogynist, male chauvinist, homo-lesbo-transphobic, anti-pacifist, antidemocratic and totalitarian. Various called fascist, authoritarian populist, dictatorships and even democracies, these forces are identifiable by their opposition to pluralism, racial, religious and cultural diversity, social equality, gender autonomy, and secularism. They sway and control public opinion through discourses that are made up of bits of information cleverly stitched together to portray their own versions of reality. They demonize inconvenient truths as “fake news” and make up their own facts based not on objective reality, but on the ideological values of their respective movements. All political regimes are authoritarian in varying degrees.

However, the authoritarian/fascist regimes that have risen over the past decade are notably dangerous because of the support they have from astonishingly large cross sections of their populations and transnational capital, giving them the power to polarize and fracture societies, and reverse important, hard won gains in human rights, civil liberties, and secular, democratic governance.

In this edition of the Nyéléni newsletter, we examine the implications of these political-social configurations for the food sovereignty movement. We especially highlight how food sovereignty is itself a strategy of resistance against the dangerous wave of extreme authoritarianism sweeping the world.

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## who we are

In the last years hundreds of organisations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organisations were present in the *International Nyéléni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader **Food Sovereignty Movement**, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organisations involved: AFSA, Bröt für die Welt, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for Food Sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, More and Better Network, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, TNI, VSFJusticia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger, World Forum of Fisher People.

now is time for  
food sovereignty!

# in the spotlight

## A brief look at contemporary political trends

*“Whether one calls them fascist, authoritarian populist, or counter-revolutionary, there is no doubt that angry movements contemptuous of liberal democratic ideas and practices and espousing the use of force to resolve deep-seated social conflicts are on the rise globally.”*

Walden Bello, *Counter Revolution, the Global Rise of the Far Right*, Page 3. Fernwood Publishing, 2019.

Facing down, resisting and living under extreme authoritarian, violent regimes are not new to most of us: the histories of many societies/nations are scarred by periods when political leaders used a combination of personal charisma, religious fervour, economic insecurity, fear of “others,” and promises to restore (usually imagined) glorious legacies, to impose political regimes that privilege particular classes, faiths and social groups while clamping down on the fundamental rights, freedoms and dignity of others. At numerous moments in colonial, apartheid, fascist, military, dictatorial and even democratic regimes, we have witnessed how the toxic synergy of interests driven by class, culture, religion and ideology can produce oppression, extreme violence and terror.

More recently, we have seen the rise of authoritarian regimes that seem to be consequences of the structural crises created by neoliberal capitalism and paradoxically, of the response by left forces and progressive peoples’ movements against the onslaught of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism and corporate-led globalisation not only failed in delivering social and economic well-being for the majority, but also destroyed the environment, weakened workers’ and small-scale food producers’ rights, undermined working class organisations, entrenched inequality, and increased hunger and malnutrition. Lower and middle classes saw their savings devalue and debts increase because of financial deregulation and prioritization of corporate over public interests. People mobilized to demand change, but two important trends enabled right wing forces to hijack these demands: 1) left political forces in many countries made uneasy alliances with ruling powers to gain footholds in the political system; 2) right wing forces used their resources to build the Post-truth era, where reality is deliberately distorted to influence public opinion and social behaviours, and strengthen the power of national-global elites.

Allied with ruling forces, left political forces were unable to show how their own programmes and visions for change were different. This left political and ideological fields open to capture by right wing forces who harnessed the anxiety, disillusionment, anger and desperation of the millions of people battered by the recurring financial-economic crises that have become hallmarks of global capitalism and corporate globalisation.

Although right wing forces presented themselves as deeply critical of the prevailing system, they shifted the blame for economic and social crises away from neoliberalism, towards particular sectors of society, naming them by economic class,

social grouping and religion. This helped them to gather support from a wide swathe of classes and social groups—including the middle and wealthy classes—and build movements around prejudice and hate, while leaving the capitalist economic system unchanged. Although each regime is a product of particular historical conditions in its region, the above characteristics appear in varying degrees and nuances across them.

Despite rhetoric about addressing worsening social-economic conditions, these regimes remain committed to capitalism and neoliberalism. Since assuming political power, the conditions of rural and urban working classes have not improved, and the promised savings, incomes and jobs have not materialized. But, corporations and elites close to the ruling regimes have continued to win contracts for resource extraction, large infrastructure projects, industrial agriculture and property development.

Many right wing forces came to power through elections and claim democratic mandates to enact policies and laws that serve their agendas. However, they are opposed to liberal democracy, where all citizens, regardless of class, culture or religion enjoy the same rights, liberties and equality before law, and where robust oppositions provide checks and balances. Threats of political opposition from parties and social organisations are neutralized by dissolving some parties and making opportunistic alliances with others, and persecuting dissenters in the media and/or legally. Democratic procedures are used to build majoritarian societies where those identified as minorities face increasing disenfranchisement, marginalization and insecurity.

The reinvention of truth and facts - through the construction of narratives that present fictitious realities - are crucial strategies for the new regimes. These include: the decline of the nation and need for strong leaders to return it to greatness; racial, religious and gender superiority; threats to national security, identity and sovereignty; improvement in economic-social conditions, etc. These narratives are crucial for fascist regimes to be able to consolidate power, and are presented to the public through mainstream news, social media, text books, films, entertainment and public service programmes. They provide rationales for criminalizing and unleashing violence on those who are presented as enemies/threats (particular communities, migrants, rights activists, lawyers, journalists, movement leaders, etc.), and keep the populace in a state of uncertainty and anxiety, justifying the need for a “strong hand” to hold the nation together.

Authoritarian/fascist regimes threaten food sovereignty by their opposition to peoples’ rights, equality, diversity, local autonomy, cooperation and solidarity. They support the appropriation and control of lands, water, seeds, natural wealth, public resources and food systems by transnational capital. They rob local communities of their agency, and suppress voices and actions attempting to build peoples’ democracies from the ground up.

More info on the situation in Asia here: <https://focusweb.org/publications/the-rise-of-populist-authoritarianisms-in-asia/>

## box 1

### Violence and capitalism

Violence and capitalism are no strangers to each other. Indeed, they are twins. The necessary conditions for the emergence of capitalism in the 15th to the 16th centuries were the violent expulsion of peasants from common lands in Europe and colonial plunder, genocide, and enslavement in the global South. This toxic brew resulted in what Marx called the “primitive accumulation” of wealth that produced capitalism.

Today, in what has been described as “accumulation by dispossession,” the drive for profit globally is witnessing the deployment of force to turn into commodities the commonly held lands and resources that have long resisted the process. Whether they are indigenous people in the Amazons, smallholders in Honduras, the Maasai people protecting their lands from government-sponsored land-grabbing in the Serengeti in Tanzania, or the millions of Adivasis or tribal people defending forest lands in India, the devastating combination of capitalist expansion and state action in support of it is displacing millions of people.

The prominent use of force does not only occur when capitalism expands and needs to throw out smallholders and indigenous people that are in the way. When people are able to use democratic institutions to achieve reforms peacefully, the capitalist and state elites often resort to extra-constitutional means to reverse the process and preserve their economic and political hegemony. The outcome is often a massacre, as in Indonesia in 1965-66, where efforts at land reform and peaceful parliamentary change provoked the elites, led by the military, to slaughter from 500,000 to one million people. In Chile, the military drowned the Popular Unity’s peaceful road to socialism in blood in the seventies, killing thousands of people. While the violence in Chile and Indonesia was terrible in both urban and rural areas, it was especially vicious in the countryside and, in Chile, especially so against the indigenous Mapuches, who were defending their communal lands.

Today, capitalist expansion, commodification, and the preservation of systems of capitalist political hegemony are combining to promote a new wave of global violence. In the Philippines, drug users are being used as a scapegoat for the country’s ills stemming from the marriage of neoliberal economics and extreme agrarian inequality, with some 27,000 of them having been subjected to extra-judicial execution in the three and a half years that the Duterte government has been in power. In India, Muslims have been singled out as the “enemies” of “Hindu civilization” by the BJP, which has wed neoliberal economics to Hindu nationalism, leading to mob violence against them, including gruesome cases of lynching.

It is unfortunate that large numbers of the middle classes have bought into the scapegoating rhetoric and ideology of right-wing forces. This middle-class—and even working class—support for right-wing racist forces is also becoming prominent in the global North, where it is being directed at migrants who are being scapegoated for the loss of jobs, inequality, and poverty created by corporate-driven globalization. There is the very serious danger that anti-migrant mass sentiment might be transformed by demagogues like Donald Trump, the Brexiteers, Marine Le Pen in France, and Viktor Orban in Hungary into movements like those of classical fascism that ravaged Europe in the 1930’s.

More than ever, the demands of justice and peace necessitate the creation of the broadest possible front against capitalist and fascist violence.

## box 2

### Against conservatism! We live to resist, we march to transform!

Conservatism is essential for the rise of the extreme right. Authoritarian governments around the world promote the ideal of the heteropatriarchal family to reinforce the sexual division of labor and the responsibility of women in the reproductive work of life. Far-right forces attack the right to abortion, pursue dissident sexualities, promote violence and harassment against women, and institutionalize racism. It is an anti-feminist agenda that, in some countries and territories, is associated with anti-western discourse. In others, it classifies as “disorder” the actions of women organized in grassroots movements. What these regimes have in common is that they exercise brutal violence against women who lead resistance processes.

Capitalism advances on women’s bodies, on their work and on nature, strengthening corporate power and expanding militarization. In many parts of the world, women are at the front line of resistance. They have demonstrated a great capacity for mobilization: the challenge is to expand permanent and popular organization. This requires confronting authoritarian capitalism and building processes capable of reorganizing the economy, putting the sustainability of life at the center. And to confront nationalism with internationalism and solidarity among peoples.

For women who are under attack today, building alliances is more important than ever. For neoliberalism is diverse, fragmenting identities and depoliticizing historical struggles. Feminism is not for the few, it is a project of equality, freedom and autonomy for all, which will only be possible with a systemic transformation, with sovereignty and self-determination of peoples. Women are recognized in the resistance that saves lives and guarantees a collective community. Therefore, the motto of the World March of Women in the 5th International Action, in this 2020, is Live to resist, we march to transform!

**one does not sell  
the earth upon which  
the people walk**

Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877

# On the front line



*These interviews were made with the special support of Real World Radio*

## 1 - Food Sovereignty resists the rise of fascism because it allows us to organize life in a different way

“By organizing life in a different way — questioning how and what we eat, supporting small farmers, and sharing domestic chores so that they are not only in the hands of women — Food Sovereignty helps us to resist the rise of fascism,” said Miriam Nobre, agronomist and feminist activist with the World March of Women in Brazil.

Among the key threats facing Food Sovereignty, she highlighted: attacks on indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities whose territories are looted; persecution and physical violence against women considered “witches”; and criticism from neopentecostal religious figures against the community rituals that allow for knowledge to be passed down between generations, for instance, when sowing maize.

“Attempts by conservative sectors to return to the patriarchal family model are added to the dismantling of public policies that promote young people staying in the countryside, and the alliance between agribusiness, drug trafficking and militarization as constant threats to communities. We must fight for the right of young generations to be farmers and for them to be able to practice agroecology,” said Nobre.

Full piece at: <https://rwr.fm/news/patriarchy-food-sovereignty-world-march-of-women-fascism/>

## 2 - The fight for Food Sovereignty: a battle against the fascist offensive

Peasant leader Carlos Marentes, a long-standing leader from La Vía Campesina International, tells Real World Radio about the challenges in the struggle for food sovereignty “in these political times of oligarchy and increasingly extreme conservatism, of States leaning to the far-right wing with terrible neofascist positions such as in the US.”

Marentes is member of the organization “Border Agricultural Workers Project” located at the border between US city of El Paso, Texas, and Mexican city Juárez, Chihuahua State. The organization is part of La Vía Campesina International.

The leader explained that his organization works to organize rural workers to fight for food sovereignty. Marentes considered that this struggle takes place in two ways: the work against “this war led by (US President ) Donald Trump and the most regressive sectors experienced in the different countries,” and the rebuilding of peasant economies and the economies of rural and indigenous communities so as to avoid the displacement of human beings.

Full piece at: <https://rwr.fm/news/a-battle-against-fascist-offensive-via-campesina-migration/>

## 3 - Controversial Citizenship Law in India brings new wave of mobilizations against the far-right

A new Citizenship Law that discriminates against Muslims and the poorest sectors of society in India has given way to a wave of massive protests that challenge the far-right wing and that are key in the struggle for land rights.

“They don’t want Muslims, they don’t want tribal (communities), they don’t want Dalits (the “untouchables”, the poorest and most discriminated people in the Indian caste system), they don’t want the poor or working class.

All this nationalism, controlling the power in a few hands, needs to be challenged,” said activist Roma Malik, from the organization

All India Union of Forest Working People, in an interview with Real World Radio. “And I feel that the land struggle is the fundamental struggle, and women are at the forefront, they are already challenging the fascist government,” she stressed.

The leader believes that the struggle for food sovereignty carried out by peasant organizations must ensure that those who grow food have the right to land and ownership over the means of production.

Full piece at: <https://rwr.fm/news/india-right-to-land-capitalist-system-fascism-food-sovereignty/>

## 4 - Fascist/nationalist discourses are taking advantage of the crisis in the European countryside to promote neoliberal policies

Andoni García, a farmer from the Basque Country and member of the Coordination Committee of La Vía Campesina Europe (ECVC) warned in an interview with Real World Radio about the use of “nationalist sentiment” in right-wing political discourse as a feature of the rising conservatism and fascism on the continent.

Contrary to other European countries, “the Spanish government does not hide the fact that they are neoliberal or that they do not support public policies, but they take advantage of the feeling of abandonment and impotence in the countryside and the lack of responses to the crisis to co-opt farmers and build xenophobic discourse against migrants that come to Europe to work”, said García.

The ECVC also warns about the criminalization suffered by farmers (especially cattle farmers) by some animal welfare movements and announced that the conflicts between urban and rural areas will be addressed in the next assembly of LVC Europe, planned for April this year.

To resist the rise of fascism, García said that we must raise awareness of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and that the left wing parties must think about how to address peasant problems because they are not giving an adequate response.

Full piece at: <https://rwr.fm/news/fascism-via-campesina-europe-food-sovereignty-migration/>

## 5 - The Right to Say NO

Rural women across Southern African are resisting against the patriarchal advance of militia groups and dictatorial governments in some countries of the region, says activist Mercia Andrews, regional coordinator for the Rural Women’s Assembly.

“The Rural Women’s Assembly joins hands with farmers’ movements, with peasant movements, and we have joined campaigns that say we have the right to say NO: We have the right to determine the nature of development in these areas. We have the right to say NO to mining, NO to agroindustry. We have the right to say NO to the way in which forests are being cut down,” stressed Andrews.

The actions of the Rural Women’s Assembly focus on defending the commons, against the invasion of multinational corporations, and land/resource grabbing. The defense of food sovereignty and native seeds is at the center of their struggles and campaigns.

Full piece at: <https://rwr.fm/interviews/the-right-to-say-no-africa-women-neofascist-right-wing-feminism-food-sovereignty/>

# Voices from the field

## 1 – Women play a critical role

*Evangeline Gonzales, Progressive Alliance of Fisherfolk in the Philippines (PANGISDA-Women), Philippines*

The neoliberal policies of President Duterte's administration undermine the right to food by pushing for demolition, reclamation, and privatization of land and water. These policies (1) rob us of our right to produce our food, (2) favour importation as the primary approach to meet local food needs, and (3) encourage the monopoly of a few corporations over food production, which gives them the power to dictate prices that in most cases cannot be afforded by the poor. The deprivation of peoples of their right to food is a violation of their right to life. Women are most severely affected by these policies because they have primary responsibility for providing food for their families.

At present, a third of farmers (34.3%) and fisherfolk (34%) are considered poor. This situation is further aggravated by the authoritarianism of the Duterte administration. The government physically, emotionally, and mentally abuses those who oppose Duterte's policies, as is evidenced by the number of grassroots leaders who have been killed, tortured, criminalized, and intimidated under this administration.

## 2 – Walking popular unity to resist conservatism and build food sovereignty

*Francisca "Pancha" Rodriguez, ANAMURI, Chile*

For decades The National Association of Rural and Indigenous Women of Chile (ANAMURI) has been part of the first line of resistance to neoliberalism, but has also been articulating a social and popular struggle to advance towards the sovereignty of its people. Decades of building an organization and movement, through political training and the deepening of proposals in alliance with various popular sectors in order to reverse the disasters of the Chilean "miracle".

Today's "Chile Awakens" cannot be explained without a process of popular articulation that has taken place over the last decade. Since the student mobilizations of 2011, passing through the platform of resistance to the TPP which communicated to the common people the implications of the TPP in our right to food and therefore an understanding that defending our Food Sovereignty is not only a matter for the peasantry but for all peoples.

The strong popular reaction to oppression is the daughter of that process of political accumulation and Food Sovereignty, as an anti-systemic project that confronts cultural, political and religious conservatism, is a central tool to be able to work on popular sovereignty from a specific place and make a difference for the majority.

The suppression of our right to food, our right to freedom of speech and expression, and our right to a peaceful life reflects the fascism of the Duterte administration.

We need to overcome the fear created by the tyrannical rule of the current government. Women play a critical role. They have the ability, wisdom, and strength to contribute to the struggle against authoritarianism and fascism. Under the Marcos dictatorship, people overcame their fear and united in the struggle to topple the fascist government. Many were killed, jailed, and forcibly disappeared. In order to fight against the Marcos dictatorship, we needed to do patient, diligent, prudent, and determined community organizing and conscientization to build solidarity and resistance.

We need to foster solidarity and resistance against anti-people laws and policies that exacerbate the poverty and hardships we experience. A concrete action to defend food sovereignty is to resist policies like the Rice Tariffication Law and so-called development projects like the Manila Bay Reclamation. We should also share and popularize peoples' knowledge, practices, and systems on natural resource management. We should support local production and help enrich food sovereignty values and principles. We firmly believe that women will stand up, fight, and struggle for food on the table for their families, for food for their communities, for the peoples' right to food, for food sovereignty, and for the future.



## 3 – Principles of democracy underpin peoples' rights to food

*Suraphon Songruk, Organization: Southern Peasant's Federation of Thailand (SPFT) - Surat Thani, Thailand*

Principles of democracy underpin peoples' rights to food. On the contrary, if a country is ruled by an authoritarian regime, people are deprived of political and civil liberties as well as economic, social and cultural rights, including their right to food. In this context, political and economic powers are concentrated in the hands of an authoritarian or oligarchic regime that upholds monopoly over food productions and systems. Authoritarianism corrodes peoples' rights and control over their land, forest and water as sources of food. People then lose their rights to access food and define their own food systems.

Food sovereignty promotes human rights and dignity. Peoples' movements can legitimately use this concept as a means, strategy and goal to assemble like-minded people and movements to extend their negotiating power. People can use food sovereignty to protect their territories and resources as sources of food production. It is a progressive concept that strengthens people's struggles. It ensures that people have safe food and creates an environmentally friendly system.

Food sovereignty is the foundational principle of people's sovereignty. Building food sovereignty is the starting point for people to liberate themselves from the corporate control of food. Ultimately, food sovereignty empowers people's movements and small-scale farmers to resist authoritarianism.

## Voice 4 Private companies and the military are working together

Mr. Suon Som, Ou Kansaeng village, Samraong commune, Samraong municipality, Oddar Meanchey province, Cambodia

The political dictatorship has implemented an order that allows the military to be based inside our community forests, using the Thai-Khmer border conflict as justification. The military are clearing the forests and selling the lands to powerful high-ranking officials from the government, private companies and other privileged groups. These people steal the forest, water resources and local food systems from communities, undermining their rights to food. In Cambodia's governance structure, central power and control rest with the military and it is very difficult for people to stand up against the military. Communities' problems and issues are ignored by the government and peoples' rights to food, land, water and natural resources are violated.

Private companies and the military are working together: companies give money to the military; the military protects the companies. If we remain dependent on these companies, we will face disaster. Food sovereignty is important to support and strengthen our communities, and resist what the military and companies are imposing. Companies are selling agricultural products that are unsafe, including fertilizers, seeds and other inputs. We need to go back to natural and ecological ways of farming. If we do not support the companies, they will not have profits and will not be able to support the military. We can start small, build community solidarity and sharing, and contribute to changing the system starting from our communities. Cambodian civil society and communities may find "sovereignty" a complicated term to understand at first, but popular education, training, sharing knowledge, and discussions on the principles and values of food sovereignty will bring more people into the movement.

## Voice 5 Agriculture in Palestine: Pillar of steadfastness and sovereignty

Joseph Schechla and Murad al-Husani, HLRN Housing and Land Rights Network, Palestine

The Palestinian farmer is the first line of resistance against occupation and colonization, far more effective than meagre negotiation. Notably, the majority of Palestine's West Bank agricultural land (67%) is classified as "C" areas, according to the Oslo Accords. These lands fall under the military occupation's direct control. The occupiers seek to concentrate the Palestinians in urban centers in the so-called "A" areas (the rump of the Palestinian state) to prevent their presence on the lands. Israeli forces issue military orders that replace sovereign law—violating The Hague Convention (Article 43)—and impede all aspects of the agricultural sector, preventing Palestinians access to and cultivation of their lands. This causes desertion and degradation of agricultural lands, whereupon Israel imposes the "legal" pretext that the land is "unexploited." This legal Catch 22 triggers the devolution of land ownership to the (occupying) "state." The following statistics show the magnitude and ferocity of the Israeli occupation's attack against indigenous agriculture:

The components of the agricultural sector targeted by the Israeli assault								
Year	Structures and facilities		Agricultural wells		Agricultural roads		Fruit trees	Agricultural lands
	Destruction	Threat	Destruction	Threat	Destruction	Threat	Attacks on trees	Assaults on cultivated lands
2012	148	388	61	60	4	3	64,000	7,484
2013	229	362	28	58	30	5	23,581	7,891
2014	197	215	79	39	3	9	22,511	4,452
2015	190	165	38	47	5	14	37,896	11,255
2016	324	238	68	29	2	12	9,566	2,292
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,088</b>	<b>1,368</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>157,554</b>	<b>33,374</b>

Source: Direct field research by Israeli Violation Monitoring Division, Land Research Center, 2012–2016.

This clearly indicates the occupation's strategy to suppress agriculture as an effective means of resistance against colonization. It is the steadfast hands of farmers who plant the iconic olives in the occupied land Palestine, and their feet that give the land its fertility. The farmers' breath gives shine and flavor to its fruits, as the Palestinian farmer's symbiotic link to the land has bestowed its indelible identity.

## box 3

### Social networks: Promoting hate, maximising profit and social control

Fake news, data manipulation, hate speech, racism and misogyny. It is increasingly evident that the uses and abuses of the extreme right in digital social networks are part of their power strategy. Not only to win elections, but also to promote the normalization of violence that authoritarian capitalism needs to prevail in order to destroy democratic values.

Those uses and abuses take place in corporate infrastructure to which a significant part of the population is connected, such as Facebook. They are not public or democratic spaces. On the contrary, the algorithms and scopes are defined by a company that practices opacity and that is enriched by the collection and manipulation of data. The functioning of the system is not revealed, nor is it in dispute, and we users have to 'accept' the applicable terms and conditions, even though we know that Facebook does experiments, manipulating feelings, needs and opinions, and promoting extremism.

Data is converted into capital. And data is not there to be harvested, but instead is a product of people's lives and relationships. Whether through phone apps or sensors in cities, coordinated mass surveillance between corporations and states is part of maximizing profits. And, as such, it is not isolated but systemic.

Racism and hatred of the poor and women do not multiply only as an idea, but are in daily life generating a social fascism. The virtual is nourished by the concrete lives of people who daily battle against living conditions with increasing precariousness and violence. The virtual has a material base, which drives and needs extractivism, energy and specific territories to store and process so much data.

The construction of counter-hegemony requires much more than a good communication strategy on social networks. It is a long-term challenge that involves expanding our anti-capitalist alliances with those who are fighting digitally, facing opacity and building free and non-proprietary technologies.

More info on this theme in the Nyéléni newsletter num 37 on The Digitalization of the food system <http://www.nyeleni.org/ccount/click.php?id=136>

## box 4

### Peasant food production: a thorn in the side of the capitalist system

*The challenges and potential of the struggle for food sovereignty against the global conservative wave.*

A substantial part of the battle against the capitalist system is fought in the countryside, specifically, around how food is produced. The rise of the extreme right wing in different parts of the world worsens the serious threats and human rights violations already suffered by rural workers.

In Brazil, a global leader in terms of violence against rural people, 1678 peasants were murdered between 1985 and 2003 according to the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT); moreover, Global Witness warned that 2017 was the worst year on record: 207 peasants, community members, indigenous peoples and environmental activists were murdered.

In the past years, agribusiness became the main cause of conflicts in the countryside. Large agroindustrial transnational corporations, the weak role of States (due to lack of action or collusion) and corporate abuses in each country reinforced an already deadly machinery, reaffirming the control of capital over natural resources with the new global fascist wave.

"We will not achieve food sovereignty if we can't recover control over our communities and territories, if we can't take back control over food from the corporations," warned peasant Carlos Marentes, a long-standing leader from La Vía Campesina (LVC) and a representative of the organization "Border Agricultural Workers Project" from North America. Neofascism can be seen in the alliance between agribusiness-drug trafficking-militarization, which threatens and loots communities, dismantles public policies and attempts to go back to the patriarchal family model to prevent women and children from being key actors of system change, stressed feminist agronomist Miriam Nobre (World March of Women Brazil).

In Southern Africa, in response to repressive regimes and traditional authorities which control territories and make decisions to the detriment of peoples' livelihoods, Mercia Andrews (from the Rural Women's Assembly) said: "It's important that organizations, peasant movements, farmers movements resist this level of violation of their rights. The Rural Women's Assembly in many cases joins hands with farmers movements, with peasant movements and we have joined campaigns that say we have the right to say NO."

In Europe, the fascist movement promotes xenophobia and a "false protectionism", warned Andoni García, from the Coordination Committee of La Vía Campesina Europe. "Food Sovereignty implies an end to the fascist movement because it speaks of rights, of public policies based on the right to protect local agriculture, peasant culture, and these ways of living, without them conflicting with individual and collective rights, in solidarity, rather than in conflict," he added.

Roma Malik also made reference to this false protectionism, which often relates to exacerbated nationalism. She also highlighted how important it is for the struggle for food sovereignty in peasant organizations to be linked to the right to land. "Companies are coming in a big way, they are building dams, power stations, privatizing the rivers, cutting forests, killing the people, evicting people from their homelands. So, in a way, the struggle for land rights is a struggle against fascist governments also," she said.

Meanwhile, Marentes added that food sovereignty is "one of the aims to face this war against poor people that is related to a more vicious, predatory system determined to ensure that multinational corporations control food production and the means of production, as well as nature." The key is in the work to organize, to raise awareness to defend the right to life, to food, and protect natural resources.

To read the full interviews check the section "On the front line" of this newsletter at page 4.

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