



Dakar Declaration of the Global Network on the Right to Food and Nutrition 2016

We, the members and friends of the Global Network for the Right to Food and Nutrition (GNRtFN) representing more than sixty social movements and public interest civil society organizations (CSOs), met in Dakar between 19 and 22 March 2016 for the fourth global meeting of the network.

We met in Dakar after witnessing the arrival of the West African Caravan of the Global Convergence of Land, Water and Seeds in Dakar. The Caravan encompassed thirteen West African countries¹ and marched between 3-18 March, mobilizing communities across the region on the road from Ouagadougou to Dakar, passing through Bamako.

To realize a true ECOWAS of the people, including Mauritania, the Convergence will continue the struggle of the communities of the region to realize their right to land, water and seeds. It will also denounce and actively oppose the criminalization of victims and defenders of human rights. The Convergence further demands the liberation of activists who have been unjustly imprisoned for defending our common heritage in their struggle against corporations and slavery, especially in Sierra Leone and Mauritania.

We feel privileged to have many participating member organizations of the convergence join the fourth global meeting of the GNRtFN. We acknowledge the need for the convergence of issues critical to the violation of the human right to adequate food and nutrition that the caravan represents. The caravan represents an important milestone in bringing together the common struggles that peasants, fisherfolk, pastoralists, workers and communities face every day to secure a decent livelihood and to live a life with dignity in the face of the relentless assault by conservative forces, governments and corporations on their livelihood resources and on their very way of life.

We meet under the sad circumstance of the recent assassination of Berta Cáceres, the Honduran human rights defender and indigenous woman activist from the Lenca community, who defended the land, water and natural resources of the communities who were affected by the Agua Zarca dam project. We salute her work and spirit and demand that the perpetrators of this heinous crime are brought to justice immediately.

¹ List of countries: Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinée- Conakry, Ghana, Mauritania, Ivory Coast

While Honduras may well be one of the most dangerous places in the world for activists, it is not an exception but rather the sad rule, as the space for civil society and true democracy continues to shrink dramatically across the world. As human rights defenders, we are besieged not just by state repression, but by fundamentalists of all persuasions, corporations and their local agents. We reaffirm our commitment to stand firm with all our fellow human rights defenders who are at risk for defending their rights to land, water, seeds, natural resources, and ways of life from corporate capture.

We also mourn the deaths of thousands of women, men, boys and girls who have died due to the violation of their right to food, adequate food and nutrition, since our last meeting in Kathmandu.

We are meeting at a time, when right-wing tendencies are increasingly gaining ground across the world, and continue to diminish the gains that the human rights movement has made over the last fifty years. The fiscal conservatism that has seen drastic cuts of welfare budgets and public provisions across continents, an increase in food speculation, a surge in land grabbing, unfair trade rules at the WTO and through agreements like EPAs, TTIP, TPP & RCEPs, as well as the increasing synergy between corporate interests and state power, are challenges for us ahead.

Increasingly, nutritious, locally grown, indigenous foods are being replaced by low-quality, ultra-processed food that perpetuate preventable hunger, malnutrition and ill-health in all of its forms. Aggressive marketing of these foods, including the marketing of sugared beverages and breast milk substitutes, threatens the well being of individuals and communities. The production of these industrially processed foods threatens traditional food systems and agroecology, and adds to climate change.

We remain deeply concerned that the first act of food sovereignty – optimal breast-feeding – is not being adequately promoted, protected and supported. The systematic violations of the International Code on the marketing of breast milk substitutes continue unabated.

Transnational corporations, that are hegemonic in the current food systems, must be held accountable and we call upon all governments to use the instruments that they already have available, to enforce their human rights commitments and obligations. We demand an end to all impunity for human rights abusers and violators. In addition, we support the current initiative to put in place an internationally binding human rights instrument for the regulation of transnational companies. We are committed to fight corporate capture in all its forms and across sectors, be it in the realm of resources, of land, of seeds, of water, of institutions or structures of governance.

Upholding and enforcing women's rights needs particular emphasis, as women continue to fight patriarchy in every sphere of their lives, including in the domain of sexuality, fertility and self-determination over their bodies. Structural violence against women, including unbalanced gender relations, needs to change, so that women are enabled to be part of all decision-making in a truly inclusive, democratic way. This is also applicable to evolving customary tenure systems that secure women's access to, control and decision-making over land, livestock and water. Our network members are strongly committed to this endeavor. Democratized customary tenure systems need to be defended against privatization and commodification.

Since the Kathmandu meeting, we have:

- worked together in international and regional policy spaces including the CFS. As a result, the genuine implementation of the guidelines on the right to food, on the governance of land, fisheries and forests, on small-scale fisheries is effectively contributing to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and poverty.
- highlighted the root causes of malnutrition and the dangers posed to food sovereignty and nutrition by commercialization of malnutrition through the Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and multi-stakeholder initiatives
- strengthened our information exchanges, so we are even more aware of ongoing grassroots struggles, and better positioned to strengthen our local and national presence
- continuously monitored the international developments on the Right to Food and Nutrition, deepening our analyses and understanding, as well as advocating for our agenda in different fora.
- published the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch entitled "People's Nutrition is not a Business" which is the instrument to share our views globally
- carried out a joint Fact Finding Mission (FFM) to tea gardens in India about violations of the rights of men and women tea workers.

The findings of the FFM confirmed with concern the high level of abuse and violations of the right to food and nutrition of these workers and will support follow-up work at the CFS, ILO, FAO and other relevant bodies. The FFM calls on the government to hold tea garden owners accountable to apply the Plantation Labor Act and to assure that the workers receive a paid a living wage. We also call upon tea packers to ensure that the tea they buy and pack comes from gardens that do not condone these abusive conditions. We thus call on the national and respective state governments to fulfill their legal obligations and ensure the human rights of all tea garden workers in India.

We are in a process where different progressive struggles are converging like the tributaries of a river. This needs to be further encouraged as reconfirmed during our meeting of the Global Right to Food and Nutrition in Dakar.

We, the members and friends of the GNRtFN resolve to commit to strengthening the convergence of all the struggles of different movements of communities around the world who are collectively fighting the continuing assaults on people's sovereignty and human rights.

We call upon all concerned individuals, groups and communities who have any of their Human Rights violated to join us in this global Convergence of land, water and seeds. These struggles aim to achieve the full realization of all Human Rights², including the Right to Food and Nutrition.

² See Kathmandu Declaration of the Global Network for the Right to adequate Food and Nutrition for the list of marginalized groups at : www.fian.org.