



INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS GLOBAL PEASANTS' RIGHTS

07-10 / 03 / 2017 SCHWÄBISCH HALL / GERMANY
NEUBAUSAAL SCHWÄBISCH HALL / SCHLOSS KIRCHBERG



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Peasants* of the world unite in Schwaebisch Hall for a declaration on Peasants' Rights

Peasants feed the majority of the world's population. Still, they are increasingly repressed by governments, as well as by the food and agro industries. From 7th to 10th of March, over a hundred peasant and food producer representatives from all over the world will meet with politicians, human rights advocates and Global South activists to pave the way for stronger legal protection of their basic rights in the German town Schwaebisch Hall. Supported by 40 partners, the Global Peasants' Rights Congress is the result of intensive and joint work by organizations struggling for the rights of peasants: the "Foundation House of Farmers" (HdB), the "Farmers Cooperative Schwaebisch Hall" (BESH), the "European Coordination Via Campesina" (ECVC), the Working-group Peasantry Farming (AbL) and FIAN International (FIAN)

Peasants fulfill a most fundamental task: They feed the vast majority of the world's population. According to their ancient know-how about soil cultivation, breeding and harvesting, they cultivate their land in a sustainable manner that corresponds to the local conditions. In doing so, they preserve biodiversity, increase soil fertility and contribute to strengthening the region's added-value.

Nevertheless, peasants are increasingly losing their access to land due to unfair competition from powerful local elites and transnational corporations. This includes practices that ultimately grant the genetic base of their plant breeds and stock to multinational monopolies. In such a context of land-grabbing and biopiracy, many small scale food producers lose their livelihoods along with their traditional knowledge. Additionally, as regional food markets erode, food production for local needs is increasingly being replaced by export-oriented cash crops. Peasants who resist those developments are often harassed and criminalized.

The existing international legal framework does not protect peasants sufficiently against these threats to their livelihoods. Since its founding in 2012, the foundation House of Farmers has strived for instruments that strengthen peasants' rights. In doing so, they support the worldwide peasants' movement La Via Campesina and the international human rights organization FIAN. For several years, these have, together with others, successfully carried out advocacy work at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to establish an Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (OEIGWG) to draft the "UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas".

In a joint effort, the organizations will bring together peasant representatives from all over the world, who will report on the violations of their rights and work together on a peasants' rights manifest. The manifest will address the UN working group and will encourage all State parties in the UNHRC to strengthen the rights of peasants nationally and internationally.

The Global Peasants' Rights Congress will take place from the 7th to 10th of March in Schwaebisch Hall. Among others, inputs will be given by:

Klaus Töpfer, former director of the environment program of the UN (UNEP), Nardi Suxo Iturry, Bolivian ambassador and chairlady of the open-ended working-group on peasants rights at the UNHRC and Pat Mooney, winner of the Right Livelihood Award from the ETC Group, Rudolf Bühler, founder of the “Foundation House of Farmers”, Henry Saragih and Elizabeth Mpofo, the leaders of La Via Campesina, the world’s biggest peasant movement. For more information, see: www.global-peasants-rights.com.

* In this context the term also includes people working in rural areas like pastoralists, beekeeper, shepherds, indigenous people, fisher folk and rural workers.

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