



Alter-globalization 2.0
Newsletter of the Intercoll Network
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One day in Bagdad



Where can you go to talk freely with Iraqis of Shia, Sunni, Kurdish, Palestinian, Christian, Eziidi, International and many other backgrounds about equality, civil and human rights, solidarity, unemployment and freedom? Anyone visiting Baghdad could not have missed the great energy of the nearly 3500 diverse Iraqi activists (young and old) from across the country who came to support the third *Iraqi Social Forum*, the second running of the *Baghdad Marathon for Peace*, and closing ceremony of the Forum in September 22-24 in Bagdad¹.

Jassim al-Helfi: “We are strong”²

Due to the current political, social and economic crisis in Iraq social inequality is increasing because of the great polarization in the distribution of income and wealth. The

¹ For further details, see <http://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/archives/category/iraqi-social-forum>

² President of the Information Centre for Research and Development in Baghdad and co-founder of the Iraqi Social Forum, currently member of its National Committee. He is one of the leading figures in the civil coalition that organizes anti-corruption demonstrations in Baghdad every Friday, since July 2015, asking for accountable institutions, and an end to confessionalism in Iraqi politics. He believes the struggle against Daesh (Islamic State) is a political one, and requires an institutional change.

gap between rich and poor people became wider and the number of millionaires and billionaires is increasing, exploiting the people and the national economy. A certain class of people has seized control of the funds in various ways, while large segments of the Iraqi people are living on the poverty line or below. These are the main motives behind the protest against the poor living conditions of Iraqis nowadays. People who marched in the streets also gave a clear indication of their rejection of sectarianism, of corruption and of the quota system based on ethnicities and religions, which is the basis of the political and administrative system built after 2003. Since that year corruption spread in all state institutions, squandering the wealth of Iraq and causing the deterioration of security, allowing Daesh (ISIL) to occupy one third of the Iraqi area. It's too early to count the direct and indirect achievements of the popular movement, however you we can enumerate the following results so far: – promoting the concept of the civil state- defeating power symbols- shaking the sectarian political construction from the base- producing cracks in the wall of the quota system- expressing a political party and having some members elected in parliament.- activating a supervisory role on the parliament and on the selection of ministries- imposing the dismissal and removal of senior officials in many of the provinces where demonstrations took place- causing the dismissal of ministers- forcing the government to announce that it would reduce the salaries and allowances of officials and politicians with special ranks- raising the level of political awareness of hundreds of thousands of citizens, and young people in particular, who participated and watched demonstrations, as a political training field- defeating the routine and breaking the fear and hesitation towards institutions among ordinary citizens- spreading the goal of promoting social justice on a large scale.

The Casablanca Declaration

Record-breaking temperatures month after month, a succession of cyclones, hurricanes, floods, forest fires and debilitating droughts remind us that climate change is a reality which already affects hundreds of millions of us. Thus we, the social movements and civil society organisations in all our diversity, have gathered here in Casablanca to launch our mobilisation towards the COP22, which will take place in Marrakech between the 7th and 18th of November, and to reaffirm our determination to act to keep global warming under the 1.5 degree celcius limit – as agreed in Paris by the world's heads of state and government. At the end of COP21 we committed to mobilise, wherever needed, in order to prevent the 'red lines for a just and liveable future' from ever being crossed. We have honoured that commitment, and will continue to do so. Africa, host of the COP22, suffers most directly and dramatically the consequences of runaway climate change: resource and environmental degradation, food insecurity, water stresses, increasing poverty, health risks, and massive population displacement. Africans are not responsible for climate change, so our commitment is in the name of justice: of climate, but also of social justice.

Adopted in Casablanca, the 24th of September 2016, at the occasion of an international gathering convened by the **Moroccan Climate Justice Coalition**

Camille Chalmers: Resisting in Haiti¹

Haitian people are suffering a violent aggression by imperialism and this has been a structural problem since the 1915 intervention, which transformed the political system in order to coerce it to submit to the permanent domination of the State Department. But, more recently, we are witnessing an example of what we call “*disaster capitalism*”. After the earthquake, the national troops took advantage of the situation to seize control over strategic economic areas. They seek to do it with mining too, and now they are trying to introduce agro-export systems and “free-trade zones”. All of this aims at transforming the Haitian economic system, through using the power of the UN troops: the MINUSTAH.. They are a force that is supposed to maintain peace but they are at the service of the interests of the U.S. global strategy, not only in the military process of the West Indies but also to choke and kill every attempt of popular construction in the country. They attack every economic progress in favor of the population. The Haitian people is fighting against the military occupation and against North American imperialism.

General strike in India by [Kunal Chattopadhyay & Soma Marik](#)²

On September 2, 180 million Indian workers participated in a massive one-day strike that extended across the country and engaged employees in every economic sector. Likely the largest general strike in world history, it demonstrated the power of the Indian working class, which is increasingly underpaid, casualized, and unorganized.



The participation of 180 million workers indicates that the strike went far beyond union members. In that sense, it articulated popular anger from below. At the same time, there is no doubt that left formations like the [Centre of Indian Trade Unions](#) (affiliated with the CPI(M)), the [All India Trade Union Congress](#) (affiliated with the CPI), and the smaller [United Trade Union Congress](#) (affiliated with the Revolutionary Socialist Party) and [United Trade Union Congress-Lanin Sarani](#) (affiliated with Socialist Unity Centre of

¹ Interview by Dawn News, October 2016

² Extract from an article published by Jacobin, October 6, < <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/10/indian-workers-general-strike>>

India) — played a pivotal role. They brought numerous unions together, chalked out the demand charter, and campaigned sufficiently so that other unions and non-unionized workers would come and join. While none of these have created a true alternative, their fights make it possible to continue working-class struggle even as electoral figures like to suggest that the class, in the form of the old left parties, is about to vanish. This contradiction cannot exist forever. Either all parts of the Left come together with the militant class-struggle poles emerging at the base and form a new left alternative or the radical right offensive will smash down on the working class.

USA: The Lakota Nation against Pipelines¹

The Standing Rock Lakota Sioux are taking a stand to protect the water, the land, and their heritage threatened by the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The construction led by Energy Transfer Inc. has already destroyed ancient burial sites, prayer grounds, and sacred artifacts. The Standing Rock Lakota have been joined by members of 280 other tribes, and the youth from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation want to join their elders and stand with them. It could also be a turning point in stopping the epidemic of youth suicide on the reservation.



If you're wondering why so many teens are choosing to end their own life, look at these numbers:

- 97% of the population at Pine Ridge Reservation live below federal poverty line.
- The unemployment rate on the Reservation vacillates between 85% and 95%.
- The median income on the Pine Ridge Reservation is less than \$3,500 PER YEAR.
- 75% of the youth drop out of school.
- At least 60% of the homes are without water, electricity, insulation, or sewage systems.
- The Pine Ridge Reservation has the shortest life expectancy of any community in the Western Hemisphere outside Haiti. It's a third-world situation right in America's back yard.

¹ From Native News, October 6, 2016

Despite these difficult conditions, Lakota youth are determined to support their people, make an impact, and be part of the history that Native tribes are creating right now.

Walden Bello: The need for a new left narrative¹

My sense is that the persistence of Capital's structural power is related to the fact that while the combination of objective developments, intellectual critique, and collective action eroded the legitimacy of neoliberalism, we have had a signal failure to articulate the bold alternative that can match the depth of the crisis of capitalism that we are in. There is great, seething discontent out there, at the multiple crises triggered by capitalism. I wish, however, one could say, as one great revolutionary did at another time and place, "There is great tumult under heaven, the situation is excellent." Unfortunately, the situation is not excellent, since many of those who have been run over by corporate-driven globalization are turning to demagogues and ideologues of the right such as Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, and, in my own country, President Rodrigo Duterte, who has managed to convince a large section of the citizenry that crime and drugs are the root of the country's problems and that the main cure for the ills of the country is to kill 'em all, pushers and users alike. In this regard, let me say that the US and Europe have no monopoly on dangerous right wing demagogues with a heated, angry mass base, who want simple solutions and are willing to countenance violence to bring about the leader's version of heaven on earth. The key difference at this point is that your demagogues are still on the sidelines chopping at the bit to grab power while ours has already come to power by electoral means. Undoubtedly, part of the problem is the failure of the traditional forces of the left to educate their core bases of support. Another part has been the inability to integrate minority populations into the ranks of the left, which has traditionally been the home of the disenfranchised and marginalized, forcing some to turn to radical fundamentalist groups such as ISIS. Thus the very real hurts imposed on so many sectors by corporate-driven globalization have been successfully joined to myths about displacement and crime by immigrants, on the one hand, and to the very real failures of immigrant integration, on the other. Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, and ISIS have been very astute in taking advantage of the openings that were made by the left, by those who brought about the Seattle debacle of neoliberalism, by those who had been in the forefront of the anti-globalization and the Occupy Movement. I will not go further into the sociological reasons for their success and our failure, since many others have done that, but I do want to raise one question, and that is whether it is not overdue for us to take on the super-ambitious task of creating that overarching vision, language, and program to spell out the alternative and flesh it out. Bernie Sanders started this brave task by calling for "democratic socialism," something that has resonated in the Philippines and the global South. I think it is urgent that we flesh it out since the other side is already fleshing out their alternative in the form of Trumpism or National Frontism or Brexitism, a task which marries some of our intellectual critique of capitalism with the highly charged emotional appeal to return to an idealized past of white homogeneity, cultural purity, or religious uniformity. I think it is urgent that we overcome our fears of articulating Grand Narratives and lay out a vision that lays out the overcoming of the present world blighted by Capital through common struggle, with the end being the

¹ Extract from a report by Transnational Institute, 25 August 2016:
<https://www.tni.org/en/article/revisiting-the-lessons-of-the-battle-of-seattle-and-its-aftermath>

construction of societies that harness men and women's deepest instinct—to use a loaded word—and that is, cooperation.

What future for the WSF?

The debate on the WSF will resume in Porto Alegre next January. How can the baby be rescued from the dirty bath water? There are many discussions and proposals around.

Looking ahead (Pierre Beaudet)

The picture coming from the Montreal WSF is somehow mixed. The Forum was a success, mainly because of the influence of the organizations that got together (“the spaces”) and developed rich and coherent programs. Many local and international stakeholders noted that the quality of the debates was generally excellent. On another level, the Forum's impact was limited and it was more a place of resourcing for activists rather than of a citizen event, as seen before in Brazil or in Tunisia. Surely, the local and international context in 2016 had something to do with that. Indeed, throughout the world, movements are at the defensive. Instead of the convergence that took shape in Latin America, there are now lots of ambiguities. In the end, the Social Forum is, in a way, a reflection of popular movements.

In the past, Forums were like big trade fairs of ideas where everybody was explaining its cause. Attempts to establish gateways, if not convergences, were not taken seriously enough, or worst, were regarded with suspicion, as if the possibility to identify strategies would necessarily lead to a monopoly of truth by one and another. This phobia of strategy, leadership and concerted action, needs to be overcome, especially in the current context, because the fragmentation will lead to catastrophes. If we don't want so-called enlightened and self-appointed vanguards to impose their views, we will have to activate the intellect, to conduct investigations, get off the beaten tracks, and mobilize “organic” intellectuals from popular movements and defecting critical thinking professionals out of their ivory towers. This reconciliation between theories (plural) and practices is indispensable, but is not easy. It is possible by relentless hard work, analysis and debates. Are we ready for this? Maybe we are.

During the Montreal Forum, the international council of the Forum had tough meetings that reflected the dismay of our fellow Brazilians, notably. In Brazil, as in Argentina and in Venezuela, movements are torn apart. The right is regaining the power from left-center governments, who have been extensively criticized for their absence of foresight, their penchant to go for dangerous and false solutions (extractivism), and their systems of power marked by patronage, if not corruption. This dilemma exists elsewhere, in the United States and many European countries, as in the global south where many people's “springs” have faltered and are stuck between reactionary governments and right-wing revolutionary groups. The urgency to resume dialogue between movements is obvious, but again, it is not only about being “friendly”. We will have to raise painful themes, confront serious political and intellectual impasses. Is it possible? Well, it is necessary, and the subsequent work of the WSF will be decisive. Then, we will need a massive political and intellectual effort to reconstitute the thread once again. The good news is

that the critical mass created by the popular struggles over the last decades is full of intelligence and capacities.

Moving forward (Jean-Guy Dufour)¹

For the last 15 years, Social Forums have gone a long way towards promoting resistance movements against the oligarchies that rule over globalized capitalism. They have helped these movements to get to know each other, to recognize values and targets they share, to design and implement cooperation in the struggles. In one word, they have led the way to the acknowledgment of being part of a very wide movement, "the anti-globalization movement ". These movements have now grown and multiplied within a much wider context, thus proving the relevance of the Porto Alegre Charter, which sets a frame for Social Forums. The growth of social movements in quantity, quality and diversity cannot however mask their inability to reverse the increasingly disastrous evolution of global capitalism. Time is short, if only because of the climate challenge: we have three or four decades at the most to get something done. Hence the agonizing question grasping all the alterglobalists is: "How can we do it?" and especially addressing social forums: "How can we be useful in meeting this huge challenge?" Some people already seem to have answered that they do not believe Social Forums are of any use at all and have deserted them. Others argue that the Porto Alegre Charter should be altered, that there should be more decision making in the Social Forums; some even think that Social Forums should advocate political opinions. Many more, probably, feel that the Porto Alegre Charter is more modern than ever since it is perfectly consistent with the dynamics of massive movements implying young people, such as the "occupy" movements. For these activists, the real problem is to find a way of applying the Charter with practical initiatives in an attempt to answer the question: "How can social forums be made more useful in bringing more power to the people in the face of the oligarchies of globalized capitalism?" With this in mind, I suggest the following 5 steps:

- Redefine the International Council
- Build a very comprehensive website for social forums
- Set up and use tools designed to record the "memory of Social Forums"
- The International Council must launch a renewed call for the development of local social forums
- Quickly build up an International Institute of Anti-globalization studies

¹ Dufour is a member of the local Social Forum at Ivry-sur-Seine near Paris.

Food For thought

How can political shift to the right be stopped?

Immanuel Wallerstein

This is the question people left of center have been asking for some time now. In different ways, it is being posed in Latin America, in much of Europe, in Arab and Islamic countries, in southern Africa and in northeast Asia. The question is all the more dramatic because, in many countries, this follows a period when there were significant shifts leftward. We live in a world in which the geopolitical power of the United States is in constant decline. And we live in a world in which the world-economy is seriously reducing state and personal incomes, so that the living standard of most of the world's population is falling. These are the constraints of any political activity by the left. Increasingly, emerging movements make their appeal on a denunciation of mainstream centrist political parties. They call for new transformative policies. But there are two kinds of such movements, what one might call a right version and a left version. The right version can be found in Trump's U.S. presidential campaign, Rodrigo Duterte's anti-drug campaign in the Philippines, the Law and Justice Party in Poland, and many others. For the left, the priority is to keep such movements from seizing state power. These movements are basically xenophobic and exclusionist and will use their control of the state to crush movements of the left. On the other hand, movements of the left have also been organizing on the basis of radically new transformative policies. They include Bernie Sanders' attempt to obtain the Democratic nomination for U.S. president, Jeremy Corbyn's attempt to return the British Labor Party to its historic support of socialism, Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, and many others. Of course, when such movements come near to obtain state power, the world right (mainstream or anti-Establishment) unites to eliminate them or to force them to modify their positions in major ways. This is what happened to Syriza. So this second priority has its in-built limitations. The left is forced to become another version of a center-left social-democratic party. This does serve one function: It limits the short-run damage to the poorer strata, thereby minimizing the damage. But it does not aid in transformation. The middle-run objective of establishing a new world-system that is relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian requires political action of a different kind. It requires organizing everywhere at the bottom level of politics and building alliances up from there, rather than down from state power. This has been the secret of the recent strength of right-wing anti-Establishment movements. What will make it possible for the left to gain the upper hand in the struggle over the next 20-40 years to establish a successor system to our existing capitalist system, now in definitive decline, is an ability to combine the short-run politics of alliances to minimize the harm that tight budgets do to the poorer strata, fierce opposition to the control of state power by right-wing anti-Establishment movements, and continuous organization by the world left at the bottom level of politics. This is very difficult and requires constant clarity of analysis, firm moral options for the kind of possible other world we want, and wise tactical political decisions.