

URGENT APPEAL

FOR THE FORMATION OF THE AFRICAN WARS' TRIBUNAL

WITHIN THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM (WSF)

The African continent in the era of globalisation has been the scene of numerous gruesome wars. These wars have cost many millions of human lives, caused massive environmental damages and the loss of huge amounts of natural resources, and have contributed immensely to the aggravation of poverty. For all these reasons, it is of utmost importance to bring them to an end and prosecute all those internal and external forces responsible for these crimes.

Although it must be admitted that these wars have often complex causes, which can not be entirely subsumed under a single heading, there is no doubt that there exist close links between these wars and processes of globalisation.

First, by relentlessly pursuing their neoliberal agenda, the World Bank and the IMF, ever since the African crisis in the late 1970s/early 1980s started, have seriously undermined the capacity of African states to cater to their populations' needs. This process of the de-legitimising of the state and the undermining of its economic strength, has proceeded with cynicism before, through, and subsequent to the agonising wars. For instance, in West Africa, the imposition of structural adjustment programs, the enforced dismantlement of state-owned corporations and policies of trade and investment liberalisation, have close links with the outbreak of wars, in particular in Ivory Coast. In yet other regions, such as in states of Central Africa, the World Bank and I.M.F. have used the tragic outcome of wars or a fragile peace in order to impose or promote contracts for mineral exploitation which do not benefit the peoples of Africa in the least.

Moreover, the method of financing of African wars has its roots in policies which, for decades, have been pursued by the world's financial institutions and by the world hegemonic power, the US. In most cases, warring parties have used exports of their country's leading raw materials - oil, diamonds, coltan, cocoa, etc. - in order to finance the imports of arms from countries in the North or from Western arms' dealers in the parallel market. This mechanism would not have taken such great proportions if African governments and public opinion makers had not been fed for decades with the belief that through an export-oriented economic strategy, based on the sale of one or a few natural resources, they could bring welfare to their peoples. Even if the World Bank and IMF are not directly responsible for instituting the international exchange of raw materials against arms, their imperial policies have much contributed towards generating the thought patterns behind an exchange mechanism that is outright disastrous for the South.

Given the multiple links that exist between globalisation policies and African wars, and given the fact that these have caused an overwhelming amount of destruction of resources and caused immeasurable human suffering illustrated by huge losses of lives and floods of refugees, it is only natural that they be given appropriate attention within the context of the World Social Forum. This is all the more necessary in order to counter the mistaken belief spread by the world's corporate media and by Western governments that the crimes committed in the course of African wars are exclusively the consequence of 'cruelty' committed by African warlords and rulers, and that the squandering of natural resources is exclusively due to African shortsightedness. Nothing is father from the truth!!

Therefore, we the undersigned, organisations and individuals, call for the formation of an African Wars' Tribunal within the framework of the WSF 2007 in Nairobi (Kenya), in order to: (1) sensitize the world's public opinion about the relations between these wars and neoliberal globalisation; (2) expose the responsibility of IFIs & Western corporations; (3) contribute towards bringing them to a speedy end.

We cannot continue to sit by and watch how the responsibility of the world's financial institutions and of foreign corporations for these wars is constantly dumped onto African states and governments only, even though we readily admit that they do share in the responsibility for wrongs committed in the context of African wars. Nevertheless, since we know that the continent's economic and social crisis cannot be solved, nor the eruption of new wars prevented, until and unless the neoliberal policies of the World Bank and the I.M.F. are completely overturned, we pledge to build the African Wars' Tribunal as a powerful forum to build public opinion against their faulty designs.

In short, the African Wars' Tribunal will have the following principal **aims**:

***To highlight the tremendous suffering that has been caused by African wars, by enabling some of their victims – women, men and children - to speak out;**

***To highlight common aspects of African wars, - both with regard to their economic causes and consequences, and with regard to their mode of financing;**

***To promote adjudication of global corporations and other global actors, bearing responsibility for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the context of African wars;**

***To promote the broadest public opinion in Africa and in the world at large against continuation of these wars.**

We pledge to help build the African Wars' Tribunal as a continuous endeavour, so that the economic policies that generate these war can be highlighted through a series of sessions, each devoted to one or more of the wars;

Lastly, we call upon institutions and individuals who are in solidarity with the struggles of the African peoples to help ensure that the first session of the African Wars' Tribunal can be held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January, 2007.

We, the undersigned,

Demba Moussa Dembele, Forum for African Alternatives, Senegal
Francois Houtart, Centre Tricontinental (Cetri), Belgium
Peter Custers, XminusY Solidarity Fund, The Netherlands
Samir Amin, World Forum of Alternatives

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P.S. Signatures can be mailed to the initiators of the African Wars' Tribunal, c/o Peter Custers, Email: antimil@hotmail.com and Demba Moussa Dembele, forumafricain@yahoo.fr