



## SOCIAL WATCH E-NEWSLETTER

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### Yemen: Pacific Protests, Violent Repression



Ezzaddin Alasbahi, coordinator of the Yemeni Human Rights Network, held a meeting in Geneva with high UN officers. (Photo: HRITC)

The Human Rights Information & Training Center (HRITC) condemned the continued targeting of peaceful demonstrators in Yemen and the use of the armed force against them. This organisation, focal point of Social Watch in the Arab country, reported on Wednesday that a young man had died and five others resulted injured by live bullets the day before in Taiz city. The media informed about a dozen deaths the same day because of the violent repression in Sana'a, the capital city.

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### Palestinian NGOs Condemn Killing of Vittorio Arrigoni

The Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO) condemned the kidnapping and killing of Vittorio Arrigoni, an Italian supporter of the Palestinian cause, in Gaza. This crime was done by individuals who don't represent the Palestinians and their values, traditions, struggle, and cause, said the organisation.

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### CIDH Urged Argentina to Protect Toba Community

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) decreed this month safety measures to guarantee the return of the members of the Toba indigenous community known as "La Primavera" to its land at the Argentinian province of Formosa. The action was promoted by the State Prosecutor's Office of this Latin American country and the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, CELS), national focal point of Social Watch.

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### Peasants Are Crucial Against Hunger, Still Under Increasing Pressure

On the occasion of the International Day of Peasant's Struggles, celebrated on 17 April, the importance of peasants and small farmers for the world's food production has been stressed. Despite their importance for feeding the world's populations, many continue to suffer from oppression and intimidation, experts have warned.

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### Africa: The Return of the "Developmental State"

Since the need for stimulus packages in the developed world became an issue after the global economic crisis, there has been a strident call for the return of the 'developmental state'. Africa, once more caught in the whirlwind of the global economic downturn is mulling over its lost opportunities as it went for broke and under the guidance of the IFIs abandoned the developmental state agenda that most of its countries set for themselves after independence, according to the last editorial of African Agenda published this week by Third World Network Africa.

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### EU Called to Include Gender Promotion in all Policies

The European Parliament's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM) discussed last week the draft opinion report on "EU external policies in favour of democratisation", that calls to put gender equality at the heart of all Community policies, programmes and projects at EU level as well as towards third countries.

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### International Claims for Repression in Yemen

The Human Rights Information & Training Center (HRITC) reported that Marwan Mohammed Abdullah Alqbat (24 years old) fell dead on Tuesday, and that five other young men suffered injuries by live bullets fired while they were marching amongst thousands of people in front of Alshaeb School, near to Freedom Square in Taiz.

HRITC condemned violence against peaceful demonstrators and claimed for respect for universal human rights, specially, in this case, for the freedom of expression in form of street demonstrations. At the same time called the Yemeni government to stop the suppression of those basic rights.

### Claims at the UN

The coordinator of the Yemeni Human Rights Network, Ezzaddin Alasbahi, held on 21 April in Geneva a meeting with Navanethem Pillay, High UN Commissioner for Human Rights, to discuss the situation in this Arab country.

Pillay informed Alasbahi that his office is working hard on this case, and confirmed that the international community must send a fact-finding mission to Yemen. She also praised the Yemeni civil society for its actions.

Alasbahi informed Pillay about the constant violations of human rights by the Yemeni security forces and the government against peaceful demonstrators in different cities in the last three months.

The activist also presented Pillay a letter signed by more than 30 Yemeni organizations calling for an international investigation and inviting her to visit Yemen as soon as possible

Source: HRITC

### [Palestine Pays Homage to Italian Activist](#)

Italian activist Vittorio Arrigone, member of the International Solidarity Movement who helped farmers and fishers in Gaza and the Palestinian prisoners and their families, was killed by the extremist group Monoteism and Holly War on 14 April. Before that, he had been injured and arrested by the Israeli occupation forces, but he insisted with his actions in solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

PNGO paid its sincere condolences to Arrigoni's family and friends, to the Italian people and to the Palestinian victims who used to receive his invaluable help.

The Network also called the government in Gaza to pursue the criminals who killed Arrigoni and present them to justice, and to prevent such crimes.

PNGO is sure that the International Solidarity Movement will maintain its activity in Gaza, besieged and attacked by the Israeli occupation.

#### Demonstration in Ramallah for Palestinian Unity

On 17 April 2011, the PNGO organized a demonstration at Manara Square in Ramallah. National figures, representatives of Palestinian political parties, members of Legislative Councils, NGOs, popular institutions and youths participated in the protest.

Demonstrators demanded protection for the freedom of speech and expression, and the end of the political arrests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and of the arbitrary firings.

They also urged the political Palestinian parties to defend the freedoms and the people's dignity, and to put an end to the Palestinian internal political divisions.

Source: PNGO

### [Argentina: Indigenous Community Gets Safety Measures](#)

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has officially requested the Argentine State to protect the members of the Toba indigenous community known as "La Primavera".

The IACHR has officially requested the Argentine State to "adopt the measures necessary to safeguard the lives and physical integrity" of the members of the Toba-qom Navogoh community known as "La Primavera".

In a resolution, the AICHR backed on Thursday 21 April the safety measures the community had appealed for, which were sponsored by the State Prosecutor's Office and the Centre for Legal and Social Studies (Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, CELS).

The Commission requested the Argentine State to protect these indigenous people "against possible threats, aggression or harassment by members of the police, public authorities or other State agents". The IACHR has also exhorted the State to guarantee the safe return to Formosa of the community leader Félix Díaz and his family.

This call for safety measures came after members of the community were expelled from their homes and repressed on 23 and 24 November 2010. As a result of this brutal police operation, two people died and dozens were seriously wounded, and children, pregnant women and old people were detained en masse. Members of the community had their houses burned down and consequently lost their personal belongings and documents.

The Commission has also asked the Argentine State to submit a report on "The action taken to investigate the facts that gave rise to the adoption of the security measures". Legal proceedings were initiated after the repressive police action but this was in the local courts and up to the present time the only people who have been charged are members of the indigenous community."

Some community representatives who have been camping out in Buenos Aires since December started this week a hunger strike, and they blocked the main thoroughfare Avenida 9 de Julio. They are demanding that Argentine State authorities keep an agreement they made on 30 December to safeguard the health and safety of

the members of the community.

The IACHR ruling opens a new dialogue initiative between the indigenous community, the Federal State and the authorities of the province of Formosa to find a solution to the conflict. With the Commission's intervention, all measures that are taken must be agreed beforehand with members of the community and their representatives.

The Spanish version of the communiqué from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to the Argentine State is available in pdf format at <http://www.cels.org.ar/common/documentos/Cidh.qom.cautelares.pdf>

Source: CELS

### [Agricultural Sector Underfunded During Four Decades](#)

In light of the food crisis that revealed the international community's failure to effectively address the problem of hunger in the developing world, the agribusiness industry has been put under increased pressure. The use of energy and resource intensive modes of production in industry have been criticised for curtailing the progression of a sustainable and climate friendly food market.

It is in this context that the importance of rural people, including peasants, small-scale farmers, pastoralists, landless people, peasant fishers and indigenous people becomes apparent the most, experts have stressed.

Although rural people represent half of the world's population and are responsible for at least 70% of total food production, their contribution to feeding the hungry is largely neglected, noted Henry Saragih, chairperson of the Indonesian Peasant Union and general co-ordinator of La Via Campesina.

"Thousands of peasants and those who advocate on their behalf are still oppressed, intimidated, arrested and killed as they struggle for land, food, economic opportunity and human rights — even though they are the very same men and women who are feeding the world".

Experts have also pointed to four decades of enduring underfunding of the agricultural sector and the shift of donor's aid contributions to other sectors, specifically in Africa. Despite pledges from donor countries to increase their aid funding in recent years, the realisation of these promises has been very slow, they noted.

With these processes in mind, the need for African governments to play their part is increased. As Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, chief executive officer of the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency argues "We all have to make the necessary funding available. We need to increase our levels of investment into agriculture in Africa."

However, even with increased funding, an improvement on the ground will not necessarily be given, experts have warned. Increased focus should be dedicated to the sufficient access of peasants and farmers to key agricultural tools through the provision of agricultural services. In particular, women farmers should be prioritised in the provision of such services, noted Namanga Ngongi, president of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, a non-governmental rural development initiative launched by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. In this regard, it is essential that "necessary support [is granted] to the women farmers, who produce the majority of Africa's food", Ngongi continued.

Source: Eurostep (based on UN documents and articles published by The Guardian)

### [Africa: The State Cannot Abdicate its Duties](#)

The Washington Consensus that deemphasized direct state involvement in economic transformation and opted for private involvement became the lot of most African countries. The result was that even social interventions in the area of education, health, transport, and housing among others that are key in the development of the state were abandoned and left for private commercial gain. Some three decades on and goaded on by 'stimulus packages', Africa is yearning for a return to its 'developmental state' agenda.

Some have however cautioned against a return to the developmental state with a good stocktaking of the challenges of the previous attempt, without learning the lessons of other countries like the Asian Tigers who went the path of the developmental state and succeeded. The particular earlier failure of Africa may not necessarily be that the policies were wrong as the return to the developmental state by even the developed countries in the era of global crisis clearly shows the merit in those policies. (See page 9 Global crisis must prompt Africa to transform its economic structure). Both the Africa Union and the UNECA, at their recent 4th Joint Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and ECA Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (March 28-29 in Addis Ababa) have added their voices to the call for Africa's return to the developmental state (See page 5 The African state must be back in the saddle).

Prior to this the UNECA had launched its annual Economic Report on Africa titled, 'Governing Development in Africa - The Role of the State in Economic Transformation'. The report unequivocally proffered the return to the developmental state as fundamental to drawing Africa from the jaws of poverty and deprivation. It goes on to define the developmental state that Africa needs as one in which the 'state takes as its overall socio-economic goals the long term growth and structural transformation of the economy, with equity.' The UNECA's Executive Secretary, Abdoulaye Janneh in support of the call asked that African countries return to the 'effective developmental state' with, 'clear visions of development paths and coherent, consistent and coordinated planning

frameworks.'

The global crisis and the response of the developed countries to turn round their economies may have awoken African countries to the need to return to the developmental state but it should also remind them of the blow that Structural Adjustment dealt them. The unfinished agenda of the developmental state that Structural Adjustment curtailed must not be lost on Africans. They must pick up the necessary lessons from the challenges of the previous attempts at implementing the developmental state and harness the positives from them for the next stage.

From Europe through the Americas to Asia, the success of most countries can be traced to their recourse to the developmental state as the basis of building their countries. This has been reinforced by the 'stimulus packages' with a heavy state influence they implemented after the global crisis to put their economies back on track. The irony is that Africa faced with a more debilitating crisis through the 70s to the 90s was advised by the same countries and institutions that the answer to its challenges lies in state withdrawal from the economy. Thus the state the only entity with a huge potential to turn around Africa's economies through various interventions left the scene for private sector operators. The result was that poverty was accentuated as a minute group of the people, the upper middle class shared the spoils of Structural Adjustment to the detriment of the majority lower class whose safety nets in the form of provision of subsidized social services were withdrawn.

To reverse these trends, the state must return to its core business of protecting its citizenry from the vagaries of poverty through not only social interventions but state-led sustainable economic stimulus packages that ensure social equity. It must also be at the centre of transforming Africa's economies from their primary commodity dependency status to a value addition process that gingers Africa's industrialization. The earlier attempts at import-substitution based industries must be looked at again and retooled to oil the wheels of Africa's industrial revolution. Agriculture which is a major player in Africa must be put on track to ensure agro-processing and this must be linked to the total industrialization effort of the continent.

All these also calls for a return to planning which was kicked out of the ministries of most African countries and replaced by 'development edicts' from the IFIs and so-called development partners. African countries if they don't have planners must invest in them, institute planning departments/ministries that come up with comprehensive development plans that seek to redress the many years of collapse of planning.

At the heart of it all is the political will and commitment by the state to retake its rightful place in the development of its people. The abandoned developmental state is to all intents and purposes the answer to untangling Africa's development challenges as shown by both the Asian countries and now the Western countries 'stimulus package' in response to the global crisis. The state cannot abdicate its duty of 'developing' its citizenry to private commercial capital, who has profit as its sole aim. It will be an abject dereliction of duty towards its citizens! Back to the developmental state and drawing board must Africa go!

*Source: African Agenda Editorial, 21 April (Third World Network Africa)*

### [EU Must Shift Priorities to Gender Issues](#)

Papadopoulou Antigoni (S&D, Cyprus), Rapporteur of the European Parliament's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee (FEMM), informed on 20 April about a report that calls on the EU to shift its external policies away from security and stability objectives towards an increased focus on the application of human rights and democratic provisions of international agreements.

The initiative was led on behalf of the Human Rights sub-committee (DROI) by AFET Rapporteur Véronique De Keyser (S&D, Belgium), presented on 14 April in a joint meeting with the Development and Foreign Affairs committees.

In this context, the FEMM opinion stresses the EU member states' responsibilities in "mainstreaming and reinforcing gender equality issues". Moreover, member states and the European Commission have the duty to ensure that gender equality is systematically assessed and evaluated, Antigoni continues.

Women empowerment and their active participation in decision-making structures is another aspect covered by the opinion. During the meeting on 20 April, MEP Rovana Plumb (S&D, Romania) acknowledged the topical nature of this issue by recalling that in countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, women have successfully fought along-side men for freedom and democracy.

Moreover, Plumb stressed that those same women are now continuing their fight in strengthening gender equality and empowerment in their own countries. She has therefore urged the EU to enhance the role of women in areas of peace, security and international trade.

The AFET report is due to be voted in committee on 6 June as well as in the EP Plenary in July. The next exchange of views on this report shall take place in the DROI sub-committee on 2 May.

*Sources: Eurostep (Based on European Parliament documents)*

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