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ESF

News from the European Social Forum, Athens

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Monday 8 May 2006

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The success of the 4th European Social Forum (Athens 4-7th May) exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. With 100, 000 people participating in the rally and with more than 35,000 participants attending the seminars and workshops, the Forum proved both the potential of the Greek movements and the strength of the alterglobal movement. For four days, Athens was the European capital of resistance, for four days, tens of thousands of people have been sending the message: Another world is possible!

Beside the mass participation we should also mention some qualitative characteristics of the 4th ESF:

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/esfiathens.jpg>]

1. The participation of activists from Eastern Europe and Turkey was larger than ever (more than 2.000 people), showing that the Forum embraces the whole continent and not just Western Europe.
2. There has been mass attendance in the seminars and workshops. People came to listen and discuss, not just to browse around.
3. For the first time in a European Social Forum, trade unions had a significant role as members of the organizing committee.
4. Art and culture had a central place in the Forum, with more than 120 cultural events and with a participation of hundreds of artists.

The greek social forum addresses its warmest greetings:

- * To the thousands of citizens from all over Greece and abroad who filled the streets of Athens and marched with determination despite the throw of tear-gas from the police
- * To the hundreds of volunteers of the Greek Social Forum, who did their best for the organization of the 4th ESF. To them we owe the success of the event.
- * To the Greek Social Forum's teams of safeguard that contributed in the successful finishing of the rally as it was originally planned by the organizing committee.

The groups that used the demonstrators as a protection shield between them and the police, showed with their actions that they consider the Forum and its people as enemies. Their behavior during Saturday's rally is a sample of an extreme authoritarian political behavior.

With the closing of the 4th ESF, we have every reason to be optimistic for the potential of the alterglobal movement as well as for the forthcoming struggles in Greece. All those of us who were present in the events taking place in the 4th ESF, sensed the breath of a forthcoming Spring.

Declaration of the Assembly of the Social Movements

Declaration of the Assembly of the Movements of the 4th European Social Forum

Athens 7th May 2006

We, women and men from social movements across Europe, came to Athens after years of common experiences, fighting against war, neoliberalism, all forms of imperialism, colonialism, racism, discrimination and exploitation, against all the risks of an ecological catastrophe.

This year has been significant in that a number of social struggles and campaigns have been successful in stopping neoliberal projects such as the proposed European Constitution Treaty, the EU Ports Directive, and the CPE in France.

Movements of opposition to neoliberalism are growing and are clashing against the power of trans-national corporations, the G8 and organizations such as the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, as well the neo-liberal policies of the states and the European Union.

Important political changes have materialized in Latin America that have shaken the neo-liberal offensive, and in some of them popular mobilizations managed to reverse the privatization process.

The current situation is full of opportunities but also dramatic dangers. Opposition and resistance to the war and occupation of Iraq have exposed the British and US strategy as a failure. The world is facing the nightmare of a new war in Iran. The arbitrary decision of the EU to cut funds to the National Palestinian Authority is unacceptable and exacerbates the whole situation. The oppression of Kurdish people has still not come to an end.

Conservative forces in the north and the south are encouraging a "clash of civilization" aimed at dividing oppressed people, which is in turn producing unacceptable violence, barbarism and additional attacks on the rights and dignity of migrants and minorities.

Although the EU is one of the richest areas of the world, tens of millions of people are living in poverty, either because of mass unemployment or the casualization of labour. The policies of the EU based on the unending extension of competition within and outside Europe constitute an attack on employment, workers and welfare rights, public services, education, the health system and so on. The EU is planning the reduction of workers' wages and employment benefits as well as the generalization of casualisation.

We reject this neo-liberal Europe and any efforts to re-launch the rejected Constitutional Treaty; we are fighting for another Europe, a feminist, ecological, open Europe, a Europe of peace, social justice, sustainable life, food sovereignty and solidarity, respecting minorities' right and the self-determination of peoples.

We condemn the witch-hunts and criminalization of alterglobal and other progressive movements in Eastern and Western Europe.

We emerge from the ESF in Athens having made a step towards a better coordination between Eastern and Western movements, with a common determination to fight for peace, jobs, and secure existence. We will promote our

agenda of European campaigns and mobilization on the main issues of our common platform developed in the ESF networks.

We need to coordinate our work, to define an effective strategy for the next period, and to strengthen and enlarge our movements.

We call on all the European movements to open a large debate in order to decide all together new common steps during the next months within the framework of the ESF process.

Some very important events are already on the agenda:

* We will mobilize for a complete withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afganistan, against the threat of a new war in Iran, against the occupation of Palestine, for nuclear disarmament, to eliminate military bases in Europe and we call for a week of action from 23 to 30 September 2006.

* We appeal for an international day of action and mobilization the 7th of October 2006 in Europe and Africa, for a European unconditional legalization and equal rights to all migrants; for the closure of all detention centers in Europe, for the stop to externalization, for the stop to deportations; against the precariousness and for the uncoupling of the link between resident permit and the labor contract, for a residence citizenship.

* We will mobilize against the casualization and the dismanting of public services and for the social rights coordinating our struggles in the whole Europe in the next months.

In January 2007, the WSF will meet in Nairobi. The growth of the African social movements is crucial for the world. Building for the WSF will be an opportunity to fight against European exploitation and neo-colonialism.

In June 2007, there will be a meeting of the European Union Council and a meeting of the G8 at Rostock in Germany after the one in St Petersburg in July this year. We will seize the opportunity of these occasions for a general convergence of our struggles.