

Verdict of the Tribunal against Agribusiness
Ceibo Route Tuesday
4 June 2019

The Agribusiness Tribunal, chaired by Prosecutor Carlos Matheu, met in Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina on June 4, 2019, during the V International Congress on Socioenvironmental Health.

In an intense day of work, the President of the Tribunal and the assigned Commissioners listened to the testimony of 17 witnesses of the socio-environmental impacts of agribusiness in Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina and through this verdict, we want to share our conclusions and the main recommendations of this Tribunal.

The presentations were divided into three complementary and convergent axes: Affectations to Nature, to Peoples and to Human and Nature Rights Defenders.

In the axis of the Affectations on Peoples we heard testimonies from representatives of indigenous peoples and peasant communities in Ecuador, Bolivia and Argentina, whose social fabric, health, sources of life, health and livelihoods are being devastated by agribusiness. In its eagerness to maximize its profits, the model imposes working conditions close to slavery, with women and indigenous peoples being the main subjects.

In the axis of the Affectations to Nature, testimonies were presented on the serious damages produced by agrochemicals and antibiotics in the fabric of life, in ecosystems, in water sources, in the soil, in the air and in the impoverishment of biodiversity. It was evident how ecosystems give way to monocultures, how poultry or pig farms receive large quantities of antibiotics, how resistance genes are generated that are present all over the world. This model violates nature's right to exist, to maintain its biological and evolutionary cycles.

In the axis of the Defenders and Defenders we hear a range of cases about the processes of struggle, resistance to agribusiness, and the defence of the rights of communities of neighbourhoods in Córdoba, who live next to plantations of transgenic crops and illegal installation of a bioethanol factory complex, and teachers of fumigated schools in Entre Ríos. Communities stripped of their land by investors, many of them Brazilians in Paraguay, exposed the violence of the model that extends throughout Latin America. It was shown how the interests of agribusiness dominates both governments and justice.

Throughout the testimonies it was shown that this model creates "regions of sacrifice" for the plundering of nature with serious consequences for ecosystems and communities, with the sole purpose of maximizing their profits.

But we also heard strategies of resistance that allowed communities to move from being victims of agribusiness, to defenders of their rights; we saw how, through agroecology and the recovery of memory, the population regained its sovereignty.

This broad regional panorama has allowed us to formulate a grim diagnosis that we summarize below and that is largely compensated by the many lights that illuminate the proposals of the organizations at local, regional and international level.

But the first thing we must highlight is the confirmation of the execution of an ecocide in all the affected territories where the destruction of ecosystems, forests, microbial life and all nature by the advance of a predatory agricultural industrial model that is threatening the very continuity of life on earth, our only house.

This ecocide has in the massive application of synthetic chemical substances to one of its main protagonists: from the agrochemicals used by agribusiness to the antibiotics used by the hegemonic medical system and in industrial livestock. Also monocultures, the imposition of transgenic crops, the use of heavy machinery are part of this perverse mechanism that is converting millions of hectares across the continent into green deserts.

But at the same time this devastating model is drastically violating the peoples that inhabit the territories that the agribusiness has decided to turn into territories of sacrifice. This violence against the indigenous peoples and peasant communities would constitute a genocide that must be denounced and evaluated in all the dimensions in which it affects the peoples. Evidencing that the model of agribusiness is illegal, since this implies the systematic violation of human rights and nature.

Because the massive fumigations, the forced displacement from the indigenous lands towards the big cities, the destruction of the traditional systems of life, the consequent loss of knowledge and of the same identity of the peoples is marginalizing, destroying and literally killing millions of people in each of the regions where we could listen to the shared testimonies.

However, as we have anticipated, in each of the shared testimonies was present the search and effective construction of another society based on other paradigms that we concretely rescue as a basis to face the challenges of the times we live.

- To put at the centre of the struggles the strengthening of community organization as a basis for resistance and social construction.

- Strengthen the resistance in the territories in their multiple dimensions (mobilizations, legal means, information and denunciation and the thousands of forms developed locally by our peoples).

- From the scientific spheres, continue advancing with the legacy of Andrés Carrasco of Dignified Science as a paradigm of knowledge construction together with the peoples in a dialogue of knowledge at the service of Good Living. We urge researchers to direct their efforts to the production of knowledge about the environmental restoration caused by the extractivist model.

- We denounce the complicity of national, provincial and local governments that, by favouring agribusiness, of which they are interested actors, do not comply with their obligation to protect the rights of individuals and peoples. We demand that measures be taken to punish any activity that violates human and natural rights.

- Agri-Culture based on the ancestral knowledge of our people and agroecology, as a new paradigm in food production for food sovereignty and the strengthening of the permanence of peoples in their territories.

Finally, we share some of the recommendations that arise from this Tribunal to continue to travel these Routes for Truth and Justice:

- Extend the knowledge and diffusion of the Rights of Nature as a new paradigm for the construction of a new society.

- Send this opinion to the different United Nations Human Rights Rapporteurs.

- Promote the filing of legal and criminal complaints in cases of toxic agrochemicals (using in the case of Argentina the Hazardous Waste Act No. 24051).

- Create a Digital Library in the Web of the Route for Truth and Justice in order to make available useful documentation for the agribusiness struggle.
- Strengthen the dissemination of legal, technical and scientific support to communities, organizations and networks.

For all these reasons, we celebrate the realization of this Tribunal against Agribusiness, which strengthens the union of peoples in the construction of a civilization based on the new and old paradigm of Good Living that we inherited from our original peoples.

Mary Murray – Australia

Susana Ramírez – Perú

Carlos Manessi – Argentina

Marielle Palau – Paraguay

Carlos Vicente – Argentina

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Commissioners

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