

Biographical Note: Adolfo Pérez Esquivel received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1980 for his efforts in the defense of human rights. He continues to be a leading voice in opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Hear the cry of your people

By Adolfo Pérez Esquivel

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The historic emergences of the people are like an underground river, where they converge with other rivers and in a determined moment unite with a great surge and spring out to the surface. They change course, transforming reality and life. We are in that historic phase of transforming the reality imposed on us through domination, of the ruling neo-liberalist ideology, of the cruelty against our people, the merciless plundering of our resources, the destruction of biodiversity, the trampling of our native peoples, the growth of poverty, and continuous violations of human rights.

The Third Peoples' Summit is an arena for reflection and proposals towards construction and continental unity, in defense of the Peoples' right to their own sovereignty, cultural identity, and self-determination. It promotes the necessity for structural and social changes, based on cultural diversity and a pan-continental unity among the people, just as well as the rejection of domination. Many of the harms that the people suffer wouldn't occur were it not for the complacency of governments that subject themselves to the policies imposed by the IMF, World Bank, and the United States government.

The policies of the FTAA and other free trade agreements; the militarization of Latin America, and the establishment of US military bases in these countries, the Plan Puebla Panama, Plan Colombia and the entry of North American troops in places like Paraguay, where an FBI office was further installed to control the Triple Frontier to generate tensions and conflicts with the Bolivian people and the entire region. Among this escalating domination, Haiti is one of the axes of this militaristic imposition, having foreign troops by the UN sent there, promoting the presence of 7400 soldiers in the poorest country of the entire continent. Some of these activated soldiers have supported a coup d'état in their home Latin American countries. Haiti doesn't need armed forces, but rather doctors, teachers, technical equipment for life and development. The Third Peoples' Summit will surely reject the continuous threats and coup attempts against the government of Hugo Chávez Frías, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In the same spirit, the summit will also reject and denounce the embargo—now in place for over 45 years—imposed on Cuba by the United States in a unilateral manner that violates the UN resolutions regarding the right of the Cuban people to their own sovereignty and self-determination. It will denounce the politics of IMF, the World Bank and other multilateral financial institutions that seek to inflict on Latin American countries and on the developing world their privatization projects and illegitimate

external debt payments that are immoral and unfair, and have already been paid many times over. They are policies that oblige countries to keep paying, including the very countries that are poor and needy like Haiti, thus generating more hunger, destruction, and social exclusion.

It will further denounce the governments which have negotiated bilateral agreements with the United States that will bankrupt small producers, both rural and industrial, as a consequence of US subsidies towards producers, provoking more hunger, poverty, and social exclusion. It would be important for the Summit to demand for an immediate investigation of the crimes against humanity committed by George W. Bush - President of the United States of America - and his allies: Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Great Britain and Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister of Italy. They are responsible for the invasion and massacre of the Iraqi and Afghani peoples. Investigations should examine the situation of the US military base in Guantanamo, Cuba, where prisoners are tortured, killed, and subjected to acts of cruelty that are inhuman, degrading, and offensive to humanity.

Now the great power is trying to condone atrocities committed in violation of the International Pacts and Protocols and UN Resolutions, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN needs to act before it's too late, avoiding major harms to humanity. It's necessary and urgent that the OAS, as a continental organization, initiate a profound reform of its structure. It should act in an equitable and fair manner and not under the pressure from the United States, putting itself at the service of the people of Latin America. The organizations and social movements attending the Third Peoples' Summit reject all types of terrorism, regardless of the source. We demand our right to self-determination and sovereignty. We demand from our governments coherence and continental unity, fortifying the regional alliances in order to jointly find a solution to serious problems that affect the lives of our people, such as the permanent concentration and shipping overseas of our riches, the sacking and appropriation of our resources and the commercialization of everything, including of life itself.

Much too often, the only response that governments have to confront demands and social protests is repression; from the Third Summit we ask and insist that governments be at the disposal of their people and not financial capital in order to privilege human capital and the right of the people. Listen to the voices of the People! That more and more each day they surge with greater strength and continental unity and become protagonists of their own lives and creators of their own history.

*Note: This article was translated from Spanish by the staff of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.