



## PERMANENT PEOPLES' TRIBUNAL

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### **THE PERMANENT PEOPLES' TRIBUNAL DECLARATION IN DEFENCE OF THE SEEDS**

#### **Final Declaration**

**Cartago, Costa Rica, 21 January 2026**

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The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) met for preliminary sessions in Cartago, Costa Rica, from 19 to 21 January 2026. It was convened by a diverse group of farmers', peasants' and indigenous organisations along with community networks involved in seed defence. This convening was not a mere symbolic gesture or rhetorical appeal. It was a call to rigorously and realistically examine a field of conflict in which the daily lives of entire communities are affected by economic, technical and regulatory decisions that are presented as inevitable but are, in fact, political choices.

The organisations that requested the Tribunal represent peoples and populations with an ancestral, daily and intimate connection to the land, its seeds and its agroecological practices. This relationship is not merely productive or based on instrumental knowledge. In their narratives, seeds are a form of cultural continuity and living technology, accumulated over centuries of selection, care, exchange and mutual nurturing as a community practice. The agroecology invoked in these meetings is a way of life and a way of knowing.

The Tribunal notes that this issue is not just about identity, but also has direct consequences for livelihoods, health, food sovereignty, and the management of biodiversity.

During the sessions, organisations eloquently described a variety of issues, including conflicts over land and territory, regulatory pressures, the criminalisation of traditional seed exchange practices, the imposition of registration requirements, trade conditions, technological dependence, exposure to chemical packages, and environmental degradation. While many of these conflicts appear to be regional and local in nature, involving different rules, agencies and administrative languages, analysis reveals underlying systematic patterns. Beneath the diversity of scenarios, common mechanisms emerge that are recognisable, repeated and therefore structural.

Consequently, the Tribunal understands that, at a minimum, the following mechanisms are present—with local variations—in all of the claims examined:

*(a) Explicit violence and territorial coercion.*

There are numerous testimonies of direct violence, including threats, harassment, evictions, forced displacement, the selective persecution of leaders and intimidation tactics designed to instill fear. This violence does not always manifest as a single event. Rather, it becomes an ongoing climate that serves as a constant reminder that remaining in the territory may result in punishment. For the Tribunal, this dimension is central because it accompanies the material transformation of the territory and the breakdown of community life.

*(b) Ubiquitous lobbying and capture of public decision-making processes.*

The Tribunal recognises the existence of a persistent mechanism of political and economic pressure, which is ubiquitous and has similar general characteristics. This pressure is exerted by large national and transnational companies on governments of all political persuasions, and has been present for at least the last three decades. This pressure takes various forms, including promises of investment, threats of shortages, strategic litigation, indirect financing, the movement of personnel between state agencies and companies, the production of “technical” reports as authoritative arguments, and the construction of narrative frameworks that establish what is “realistic” and what is “impossible”. While the pattern adapts to each State, situation and political regime, its essential function remains: to guide regulatory design and public policy towards the expansion of a model that concentrates benefits and spreads costs.

*(c) The emptying of justice in formal legal architecture.*

The Tribunal notes that formal laws, local regulations and free trade agreements often operate as instruments that are devoid of substantive justice. This is not because legal forms lack value in themselves, but because in such conflicts, legality often appears as an empty shell that creates the appearance of regularity while displacing democratic debate and making obedience the guiding principle. Legislation and regulations are enacted to organise the market, not to protect life; they are enacted to standardise, not to recognise diversity; they facilitate the circulation of merchandise, they don't safeguard common goods. In this context, the law ceases to limit power and becomes a technology of subordination.

*(d) The concentration of profits and the socialisation of risks on a compulsory basis.*

The Tribunal recognises a recurring economic and legal pattern whereby profits are concentrated in the hands of a select few who control genetics, inputs, licences, logistics, and market access. At the same time, these same actors socialise health, environmental, and social risks across broad populations. Profits are privatised while adverse effects are distributed. Pollution, soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, epidemiological uncertainty, indebtedness, technological dependence, rural exodus and cultural erosion are presented as issues that are unrelated to the model/package — that is to say, as damages that should not be included in the accounts of those who benefit from it. The Tribunal understands that this asymmetry is not incidental, but rather intrinsic to the way in which the system under complaint operates.

*e) Systematic “invisibilisation” through fragmentation and subverted evidentiary requirements.*

A common mechanism identified in these sessions is treating each instance of damage as an isolated episode, each community as a disconnected case and each conflict as an unrelated event. Added to this is the requirement for proof of causality in scenarios where the State does not produce data, exposures are chronic and multi-causal, and those affected lack the resources to finance independent environmental or health monitoring. This renders the damage process invisible and reverses the burden of proof.

*(f) Significant representation of women and aggravated harm.*

The Tribunal noted a significant proportion of women among those directly affected by these processes, particularly with regard to the daily custody of seeds, the reproduction of food practices, community care and the transmission of knowledge. This significant representation is not an incidental fact, but rather implies a differential impact. Therefore, the damage is not only economic or territorial, but also constitutes an additional violation due to its specific impact on women's lives.

Based on everything heard and documented during these sessions, the Tribunal confirms that the alleged facts fall fully within its jurisdiction with regard to people's rights, common goods and structural violence. Consequently, the Tribunal requests that the requesting organisations submit a roadmap of the proposed procedure to the General Secretariat.

Throughout the upcoming process, the Tribunal emphasises the importance of communities and organisations exercising a duty of evidentiary and political care. This involves preserving and providing verifiable records of events (such as testimonies, documents, photographs, maps and minutes) to the greatest extent possible, while ensuring the integrity and safety of those who testify.

Given that the requesting organisations come from different regions and traditions — a strength of this process — the Tribunal encourages them to maintain collective coherence while ensuring forms of deliberation within the communities that allow and encourage pluralism.

Gianni Tognoni, Secretary General of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal

Alejandro Macchia, member of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal

## Annexes

### **Procedure for the sessions**

The current session, which marked the start of a process that will take place at various times throughout the year, was held at the National Centre for Organic Agriculture, part of the National Learning Institute in Cartago, Costa Rica, from 19 to 21 January 2026.

**19 January.** General presentation and positioning by the Seed PPT Promotion Committee, led by Camila Montecinos, from the Anamuri organisation in Chile.

The PPT responded through its secretary, Dr Gianni Tognoni, with the history and role of the PPT, emphasising its specific competence in the case, and Dr Alejandro Macchia in his capacity as judge of the Tribunal.

The evidence was detailed with presentations from Latin America: Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, plus the relevant regional assessments.

**20 January.** The cases from the Philippines, Kenya, Benin and Malaysia were presented. The first three had to be presented virtually because transit visa restrictions in Europe and the US prevented participants from Africa and the Philippines from attending the session. The representative from Malaysia was able to attend and present his evidence.

**21 January.** Local communities from various territories in Costa Rica presented evidence, and the Tribunal established its position through Dr Alejandro Macchia and Dr Gianni Tognoni. Options for regional sessions (Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe and North America) and the possible methodology for online regional sessions during the year were discussed.

**Agenda.** The launch session will be followed by a period of approximately one year during which groups and communities can organise regional virtual sessions to present evidence of their grievances in a systematic and detailed manner. The regional results will be made available to those involved, adding to the collective systematised process with a complex historical vision, woven from the social base.

The session was closed by the Tribunal authorities and the Promoting Committee.

**The following organisations have requested and are promoting this process before the Tribunal:**

**In Latin America,** el Colectivo de Semillas en América Latina as part of Alianza Biodiversidad [Acción Ecológica-Ecuador, Colectivo por la Autonomía-México, Asociación Nacional para el

Fomento de la Agroecología-Anafae, de Honduras; Grupo Semillas-Colombia; Centro Ipé-Brasil; Red de Coordinación en Biodiversidad de Costa Rica; REDES-Amigos de la Tierra-Uruguay; Base-Is-Paraguay]. Along with the Alianza organisations, the Colectivo de Semillas also includes Red en Defensa del Maíz de México, Terra de Direitos en Brasil, and Red Nacional por la Defensa de la Soberanía Alimentaria de Guatemala-Redsag.

**International organisations,** GRAIN, Grupo ETC, Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones el Campo —CLOC-Via Campesina-continental— (these three are part of Alianza Biodiversidad) plus IFOAM (International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements), A Growing Culture (AGC), HEKS and War on Want.

**In Africa,** The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), Coalition pour la protection du patrimoine génétique africain (COPAGEN), African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), Jinukun (Réseau national pour la protection des ressources génétiques au Bénin), *Coordination Féministe pour la Souveraineté Alimentaire CFSA*, *Network Siyada*, "Bon samaritain" pour le Développement Durable (ABSDD), Coordonnateur national du réseau Slow Food Burkina Faso, SKI [ZIMSOFF (Zimbabwe Smallholder Organic Farmers Forum). Biowatch South Africa. PELUM Zimbabwe. ZAAB (Zambia Alliance for Agroecology and Biodiversity)]

**In Asia,** Magsasaka at Siyentipiko para sa Pag-unlad ng Agrikultura (Masipag), Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Malaysian Food Sovereignty Forum (FKMM).