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World Social Forum

World Social Forum Banned and Suppressed - Reinstated!

- News from around the world -

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We learned this Wednesday morning, August 5, that the World Social Forum, scheduled to take place in Cotonou, Benin, has been banned. Already yesterday, the opening demonstration had been banned by the authorities. And the caravan from West Africa—which included feminist organizations—had been expelled. Five buses were turned back after having already crossed the border.

This morning alarming reports are circulating: the university where most of the debates are scheduled to take place is reportedly closed, and people are said to have been expelled this morning. These reports are difficult to verify, but the government has explicitly told the organizing committee that no meetings may be held at the university and that publicly stating that one is attending the WSF is grounds for expulsion.

There has been complete confusion for several days, with contradictory information being relayed by the authorities to the organizing committee—as exemplified by the caravan, which was initially able to cross the border and travel several dozen kilometers before ultimately being turned back.

Rumors on the ground suggest that the Benin government is under pressure from the United States, Israel, and Morocco to ban the forum. Once again, it is difficult to obtain reliable information, even though it is highly likely that the major powers are playing a very negative role in preventing the World Social Forum from taking place—a forum that serves as a space for self-organization for African human rights activists, social movements, and cultural associations. These actions run counter to the anti-democratic abuses, militarization, and anti-social policies being carried out in Africa under pressure from imperialist powers.

The World Social Forum must take place! Africa must be able to organize so that its peoples can defend their rights!

PS:

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