

# HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BELGIUM :

## THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE RIGHTS OF PEASANTS AND OTHER PEOPLE WORKING IN RURAL AREAS

# FIAN Belgium



- FIAN Belgium is a human rights organisation working towards fair and sustainable food systems. Our aim is for the right to food to be a reality for all, in Belgium and beyond.
- Within our network FIAN International, alongside peasants, communities affected by food injustice and social movements, we promote food sovereignty, grounded in principles of international human rights, decolonialism, and social justice.

# Situation – Occupation of land, hunger as a weapon of war

- 3rd cycle : Take more concrete steps to adopt specific laws for conflict-affected areas and provide companies with guidance and advice on respecting human rights in conflict contexts to avoid exposing them to an increased risk of involvement in gross human rights abuses in these areas, including in situations of foreign occupation. (Palestine, noted)
- In light of multiple reports on the use of hunger as a weapon of war in Gaza, and of continued establishment of new illegal Israeli settlements, Belgium should take stronger measures aimed protecting human rights.

# Recommendations – Occupation of land, hunger as a weapon of war

- Take measures to improve traceability in order to completely ban imports, including of agricultural products, from illegal settlements ;
- Increase support for Palestinian organizations in the reconstruction of local, sustainable and resilient food systems.

# Situation in Belgium – Right to food

- 2nd cycle : Consider debating and adopting the framework law on the right to food (Bolivia, noted)
- A framework law on the right to food has been proposed but never debated or accepted at the federal level
- The price of the food basket in Belgium has increased 32 % in 3 years
- Large companies are taking advantage of multiple crises (pandemic, economic, geopolitical, climate) to artificially inflate their prices
- Weakening of social security and budget cuts for food aid in Belgium
- Inequalities of access to adequate food cause health issues

# Recomendations : Right to Food

- Enshrine the Right to Food in the Constitution
- Provide financial and technical support for research and pilot projects on the feasibility of food social security ;
- Impose mandatory regulatory measures for the food industry including banning advertising for junk food ;
- Adopt holistic strategies at federal and regional levels to implement right to food obligations through the transition to agroecology (targets indicators, timelines and a dedicated budget).

# Situation in Belgium - UNDROP

- 2nd cycle : Promote and protect the rights of indigenous peoples, peasants and other people working in rural areas (Bolivia, accepted)
- In 2023 Belgium recognized UNDROP but there are still significant obstacles to its implementation
- Most vulnerable people in the agri-food sector: migrant workers, seasonal workers.
- Distress of the agricultural sector (mass protests).
- Multiple factors causing disappearance of smaller farmers: 39% less farms over the past 20 years
- Challenge to food security, especially in the face of climate change

# Reccomendations – UNDROP

- Promote and implement UNDROP in Belgium, including via the participation in decision-making processes of the most vulnerable rights holders (seasonal and migrant workers, women, young people);
- Produce an analysis of the coherence of Belgian agricultural, commercial and development policies with regards to UNDROP (following the example of Spain);
- Appoint a Human Rights Officer within the Ministry of Agriculture;
- Support the installation of small farmers and their transition to agroecology (regulation of land markets to control speculation).

# Situation in Belgium – Corporate accountability

- 1<sup>st</sup> cycle: Bring ODA up to the internationally committed 0.7 per cent of GDP to Developing countries and 0.2 per cent to LDCs, specially, to support in the areas of poverty reduction, climate challenges and persons with disabilities (Bangladesh, accepted)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle : Increase development assistance to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product in the interests of the sustainable development of developing countries (China, accepted)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle : Comply with the recommendations of the CESCRC to prepare studies on the impact on the human rights of local communities in third countries of agro-fuel projects promoted by Belgian companies (Ecuador, noted)
- Budgetary decisions of new government will cause ODA to fall from 0.48% to 0.40% of GDP
- More prominent role of private sector as deregulation is rolled out and civic space is restricted
- Belgium can set the example and take measures to improve accountability

# Recommendations – Corporate accountability

- Set an example of strong action on corporate due diligence by maintaining the original application scope of the CSDDD including companies of 1.000 or more employees and €450 million net turnover ;
- Strengthen the protection of civic space and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and strike ;
- Effectively transpose the European Directive on the protection of persons participating in public debate against clearly unfounded or abusive legal proceedings (SLAPP) ;
- Actively encourage other members of the European Union to ban the export of harmful pesticides, taking Belgium's 19th November 2023 Royal Decree as an example.