



# WHAT IS COLONIALISM TODAY?

*10 examples of French colonial policy*



*This exhibition was put together by the North/South Commission of Fasti. It is part of the continuity of the work of this Commission which, for many years, has organized meetings-debates, published documents and organised mobilization on the North/South relationship. Its objective is to encourage, through an accessible tool, meetings and discussions on the way the colonial question is posed today.*



*What is colonialism today?*

# INTRODUCTION

**C**olonialism is an ideology that aims to legitimize the extension of a state's sovereignty over other territories. It is characterized by several elements :

- The expropriation of land from colonized people
- The transformation of the economy of the colonized people for the benefit of the economy of the colonist
- The exceptional treatment and the establishment of racial hierarchies

*Colonialism is an ideology that aims to legitimize the extension of a state's sovereignty over other territories.*

From the end of the 15th century until today, this ideology has continued to unfold, reproducing certain forms and inventing new ones. To counter the numerous struggles of colonized peoples, colonialism has reinvented itself while pursuing its initial objectives.

If colonial experiences began before 1492, it is on this date that colonialism takes root globally to give rise to a specific model of economic production : capitalism. Historically, we can distinguish three successive ages of colonialism linked to the development of capitalism :

*To counter the numerous struggles of colonized peoples, colonialism has reinvented itself while pursuing its initial objectives.*

- The genocide and plundering of indigenous peoples and the establishment of the slave trade, which allowed the primitive accumulation of capital
- The progressive colonization of most continents (especially Africa and the countries of the Southern Hemisphere) and the reduction of their populations to the status of natives which served the vital expansion of capitalism and the European "industrial revolution"
- Neo-colonialism, which continues to be implemented following the liberation struggles of the 1960s and which is based on unequal international exchanges for the benefit of the new Western multinationals. These new forms of colonialism use different levers : economic, political, monetary, land and military.

*The capitalist mode of production uses colonialism, racist and sexist social relations to deploy itself.*

The capitalist mode of production does not only use colonialism and the racist social relations to deploy itself. Sexism, which predates the emergence of capitalism, is also used to feed its bulimic hunger for exploitable labor, first and foremost women. Colonialism also knew how to intertwine with patriarchy through the colonization of women's bodies, which suffered the full force of sexual violence and colonial injunctions (forced unveiling, hyper-sexualization of bodies). The capitalist mode of production uses colonialism, racist and sexist social relations to deploy itself.

This exhibition "What is colonialism today?" reaffirms that colonialism is not dead. Through 10 concrete and current examples of French colonial policy, it presents its most obvious and traditional translations (overseas territories, military interventions), its more recent forms (the CFA franc, land grabbing, economic partnership agreements, migration management, debt and extractivism) and finally, its more indirect manifestations through France's support to Israeli and Moroccan colonialism.

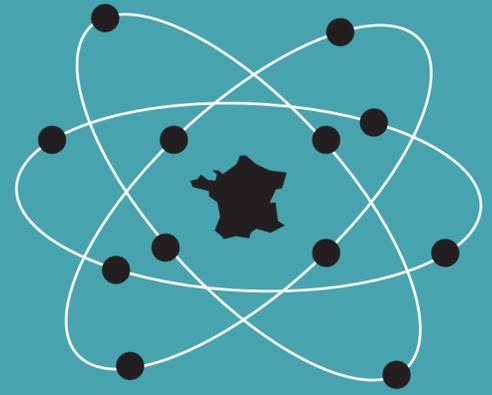


***"Colonization is a systematized negation of the other, a forcible decision to deny the other any attribute of humanity."***

*Frantz Fanon*

Today, colonialism is about:

# THE OVERSEAS TERRITORIES



**I**n 2021, France still has 13 overseas territories, which allows it to be present in the four corners of the world: in Oceania, America, the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean.

These overseas territories are remnants of the French colonial empire. Many of them (those located in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean) were transformed from colonies to "overseas departments" in 1946. Hopes for emancipation and equality were quickly dashed as this departmentalization, described by Aimé Césaire as a "policy of deception and cheating" actually allowed the colonial and unequal order between the overseas territories and the metropolis to be maintained.

**In 2021, France still has 13 overseas territories.**

This current colonial order is manifested in particular by the transformation of the local economy according to the needs of the metropolitan economy, at the

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mercy of financial speculation and the replacement of subsistence agriculture by monoculture. The metropolis also holds a privileged place for the export of various resources at lower cost. The local economy of the overseas territories is transformed according to the needs of the metropolitan economy.

Moreover, the overseas territories allow France to have an exclusive economic zone of more than

11 million km<sup>2</sup>, giving it sovereign rights in terms of exploitation and use of fisheries and other resources (hydrocarbons) and making it the world's second maritime power.

This colonial order is also manifested in the racial hierarchies that persist in the overseas territories. In Martinique and Guadeloupe, for example, social relations of class and race are even more ferociously intertwined than elsewhere: the big owners, the big shareholders, the big merchants and factory managers

are mainly white, which is in keeping with the history of slavery and colonial violence. The colonial order is also manifested in the racial hierarchies that persist in the overseas territories.

Finally, it is also inequality that reigns in the legal domain since the populations of these overseas territories are subject to exceptional legal regimes that are in line with the Code de l'Indigénat.

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## On the side of the struggles

**The Collectif Solidarité Kanaky — of which FASTI is a member — aims to better understand and fight the colonial situation in Kanaky/ New Caledonia, to inform about the struggles being waged there, and to support the local independence movements.**

**CDISCOM, Collectif de Défense de l'Intégrité et de la Souveraineté des Comores, campaigns for the end of the illegal occupation of Mayotte by France.**

**CDISCOM**



# Today, colonialism is about: MILITARY INTERVENTIONS



Since the struggles for independence in the 1960s, France has carried out nearly 60 military interventions in sub-Saharan Africa as well as in Afghanistan, Syria and Libya. It still has several military bases (temporary or permanent) abroad, notably in Djibouti, Senegal, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire. These bases are in addition to the numerous "defense and military cooperation agreements" signed since the day after independence, allowing France to ensure the continuity of its colonial hold in complete opacity.

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In order to win the support of public opinion, the French government, supported by the major media, puts forward several arguments presented as indisputable: the fight against terrorism (Mali, Syria, Iraq), inter-religious conflicts, the prevention of genocide (Central African Republic) or more generally the return to peace, the protection of women and the

defense of "human rights". These "pretextual" arguments suggest that only French interference — and not action by the people themselves — could lead to a return to peace. Public discourse suggests that only French interference — and not action by the people themselves — could lead to a return to peace.

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and commercial aims of its military interventions are also very clear. With 8.3 billion euros in foreign arms sales in 2019, France is among the top 5 arms exporters in the world. The wars waged by France also ensure the supply and control of strategic raw materials (oil, uranium, coltan, etc.), which are lucrative markets for French companies.

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Carried out without real parliamentary control — and sometimes in violation of the French Constitution — military interventions serve other, more difficult to admit, interests. They allow for the maintenance of geopolitical domination, particularly over formerly colonized countries. France has known and still knows how to take advantage of the atrophy of states and civil societies in Africa and the Middle East, for which it bears a heavy responsibility. The economic

## On the side of the struggles

**The French collective «Ni guerres ni état de guerre» was formed in January 2016 on the basis of opposition to wars of interference and plunder, imperialist interventions and their consequences: racism, islamophobia, discrimination and the police state.**



Today, colonialism is about:

# THE CFA FRANC



**C**reated in 1939 during the Second World War, the Franc Zone established a colonial currency that could not be converted outside France. The CFA Franc, Franc des Colonies Françaises d'Afrique, was established in 1945. It became the Franc of the African Financial Community in 1958.

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Thus, despite the access of several countries to political independence in the 1960s, the Franc Zone persisted. The countries concerned were obliged to deposit an essential part of their reserves with the Banque de France for the benefit of the French economy.

Moreover, the parity of the CFA franc with the euro (a "competitive" currency) remains fixed, which penalizes franc zone countries in their international trade. The transfer of CFA francs to France and then to Europe is free, resulting in a significant flight of African capital. Finally, trade in CFA francs between African countries is disadvantaged, hence the difficulties and discouragements in this area. This currency is one of the pieces of the capitalist edifice and therefore serves its interests by increasing economic inequalities at the international level.

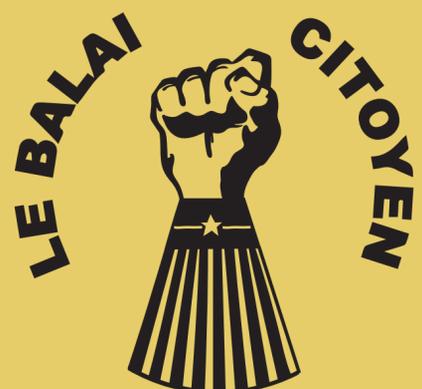
*One of the pieces of the capitalist edifice.*

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The CFA franc is a colonial legacy, allowing France to maintain its financial and economic control over its former colonies. Moreover, France has always reacted brutally to the temptation of monetary independence of these states (assassinations, assistance in the seizure of power of opponents favorable to the CFA Franc, "persil" operations in Guinea). Through similar mechanisms, other colonial currencies give a global dimension to this financial stranglehold: the Pacific Franc in Kanakay/New Caledonia, French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, and the Comorian Franc in the Union of the Comoros.

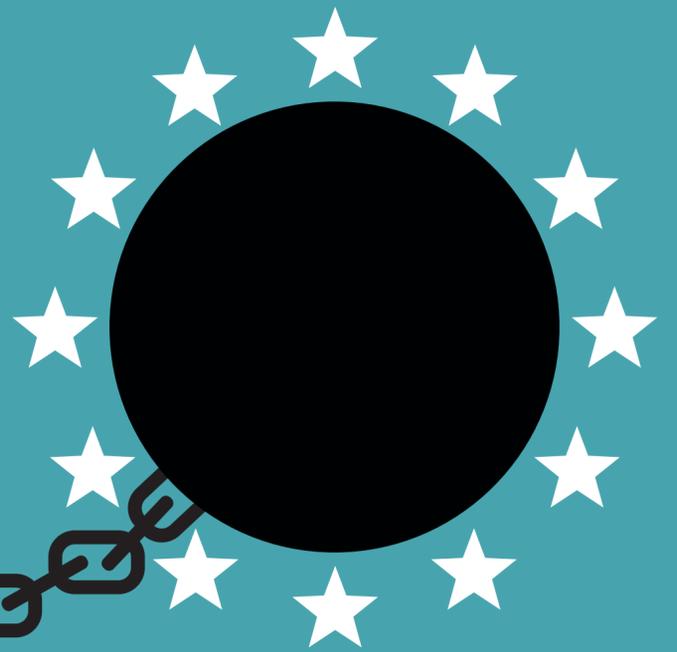
**On the side of the struggles**

*The «France dégage!» movement in Senegal and the «Balai citoyen» movement in Burkina Faso are fighting, in particular, against the CFA franc and for the monetary independence of their states.*



*Today, colonialism is about:*

# ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS



The Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries aim, according to the EU, at "a gradual and harmonious integration of the ACP economies into the world economy." In other words, the countries of the South must adapt to the global economy embodied by the EU. According to the EU, "the EPA

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is above all a development model for ACP countries, adapted to global competition and the constraints of the multilateral trading system."

EPAs are therefore above all free trade agreements defined by the interests and choices of the EU. The objective of the EPAs is to address the full range of trade and development issues in order to impose tariff dismantling and "business-friendly institutional and regulatory reforms" on Southern countries. With the EPAs, the former colonialist countries are extending their economic and financial domination initiated in the previous EU/ACP conventions of Yaoundé in 1963, Lomé in 1975 and Cotonou in 2000.

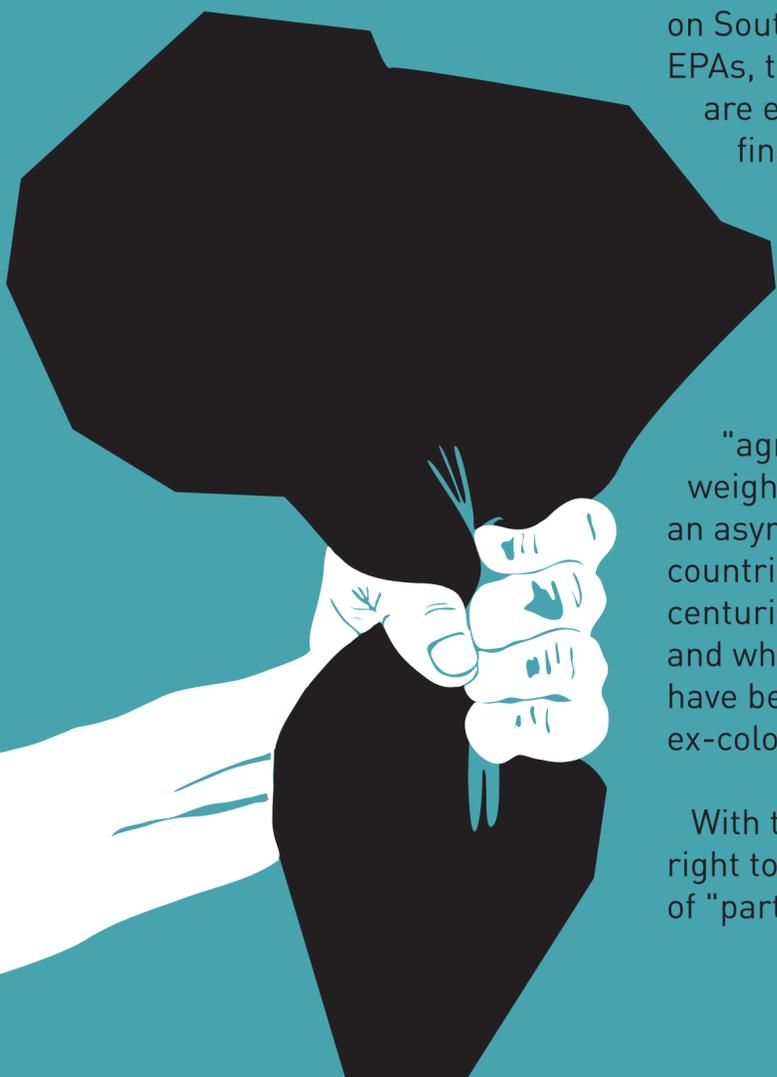
Is it necessary to speak of an "agreement" when the economic weight of Western countries implies an asymmetrical negotiation with countries already weakened by centuries of slavery and colonialism and whose signatory leaders have been carefully placed by the ex-colonialist countries?

With the EPAs, the EU assumes the right to dictate what good governance of "partner states" should be and

focuses on trade liberalization with the opening up to competition.

The mechanisms enshrined by the EU in the EPAs claim to promote the development of ACP countries, notably by offering better access to the EU for their export businesses. This does not take into account the fact that most of these companies are under European and French capital. These economic partnership agreements provide the European Union with security of supply. They justify the continuation of colonialist practices.

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**On the side of the struggles**

**SURVIE**

*The «Survie» association analyzes and acts against all forms of French neo-colonial intervention in Africa and campaigns for a real overhaul of French and European foreign policy in Africa, in particular by abolishing these EPAs.*

Today, colonialism is about:

# LANDGRABBING



**L**and grabbing is an ancient phenomenon, as witnessed by the brutal expulsion of indigenous communities during the colonization of America. The term "land grabbing", born after the 2008 food crisis, refers to a new trend in this land spoliation: the massive and often violent takeover of cultivable land by transnational corporations allied with governments and financial groups. Land grabbing is the massive and often violent takeover of cultivable land

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Between 2006 and 2016 at the global level, the NGO Grain has identified 491 cases of large-scale land grabs, representing more than 30 million hectares in 78 countries. Although the numerous resistance movements have slowed down the progression since 2012, the phenomenon remains very worrying, especially in Africa, Eastern Europe and the Pacific. The big losers of land grabbing are women, the main producers of food crops, who can no longer find cultivable land.

Several large French companies are monopolizing foreign arable land, such as the Louis-Dreyfus and Bolloré groups. A geopolitical situation with colonial overtones is thus being redrawn, with a particular focus on formerly colonized countries.

Land grabbing has taken advantage of the absence of legislation on land ownership — in Africa in particular — to brutally expropriate entire communities from their land, wiping out food crops, thus creating poverty, dependence and food insecurity. In addition to this phenomenon, multinationals are filing patents on molecules derived from local biodiversity, thus reinforcing the plundering of resources in the global South.

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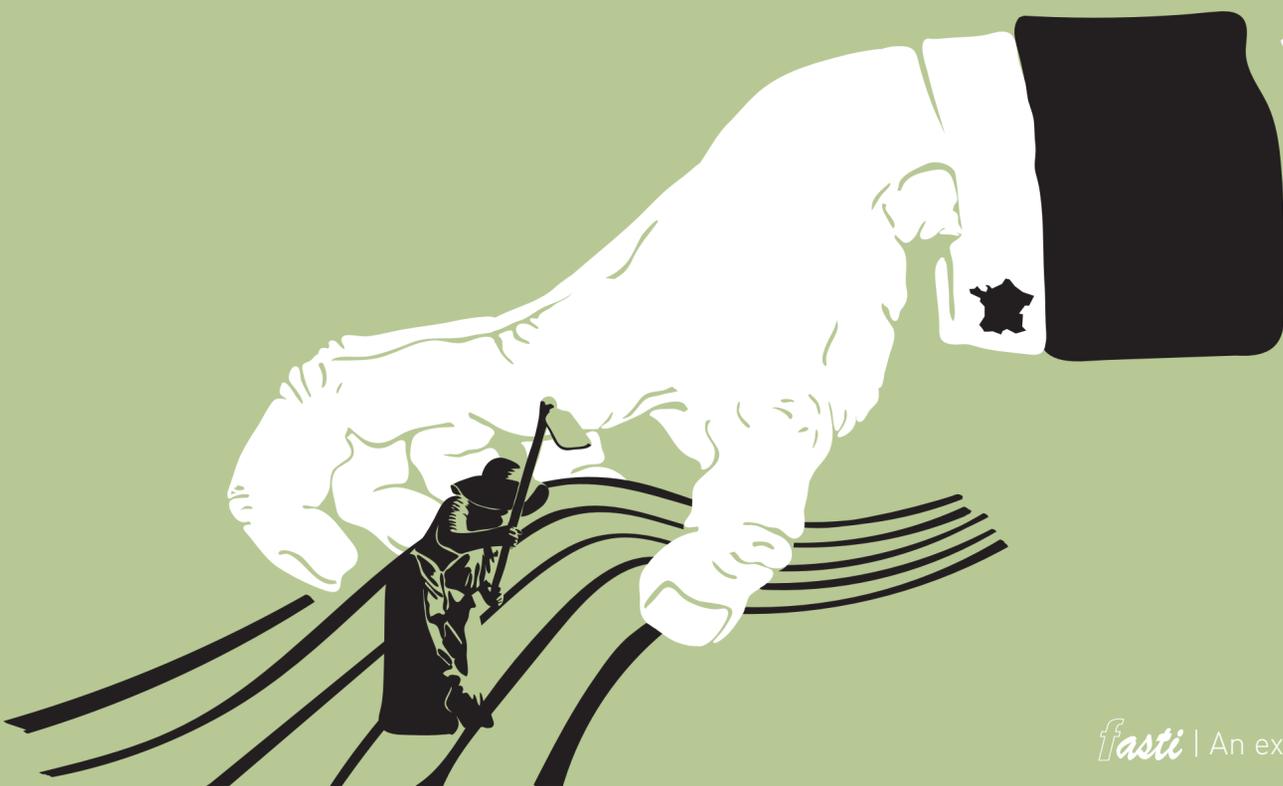
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Totally neglected, the ecological impacts are also considerable: standardization of crops, increase of GMO crops for export, impoverishment and pollution of soils and waterways, expansion of agro-fuel crops. This is the Western agricultural model that capitalism — exploring new colonialist methods — is extending and installing by force, using chemicals and transgenic grains (soy, cotton, corn). This agricultural model does not feed the planet but feeds speculation to enrich a small global oligarchy. Totally neglected, the ecological impacts of land grabbing are considerable.



**On the side of the struggles**

**GRAIN is a small international organization that supports the struggle of farmers and social movements to strengthen community control over biodiversity-based food systems. The NGO pursues a mission of information and communication through extensive independent research and analysis.**



**GRAIN**

*Today, colonialism is about:*

# THE DEBT OF SOUTHERN COUNTRIES



**P**ublic debt is an unbearable burden for many populations. It is the consequence of a powerful mechanism of subordination of the countries of the South, which was played out in several stages.

After the Second World War, Europe was rebuilt with the financial help of the United States. By the 1960s, Western banks were awash with dollars (Eurodollars) for which they were looking for outlets and investments. They then "lent" them to countries in the South, particularly to newly independent African countries and to Latin American countries.

This phenomenon became more pronounced with the 1973 oil crisis, which reduced the financial capacities of countries in the South. The latter

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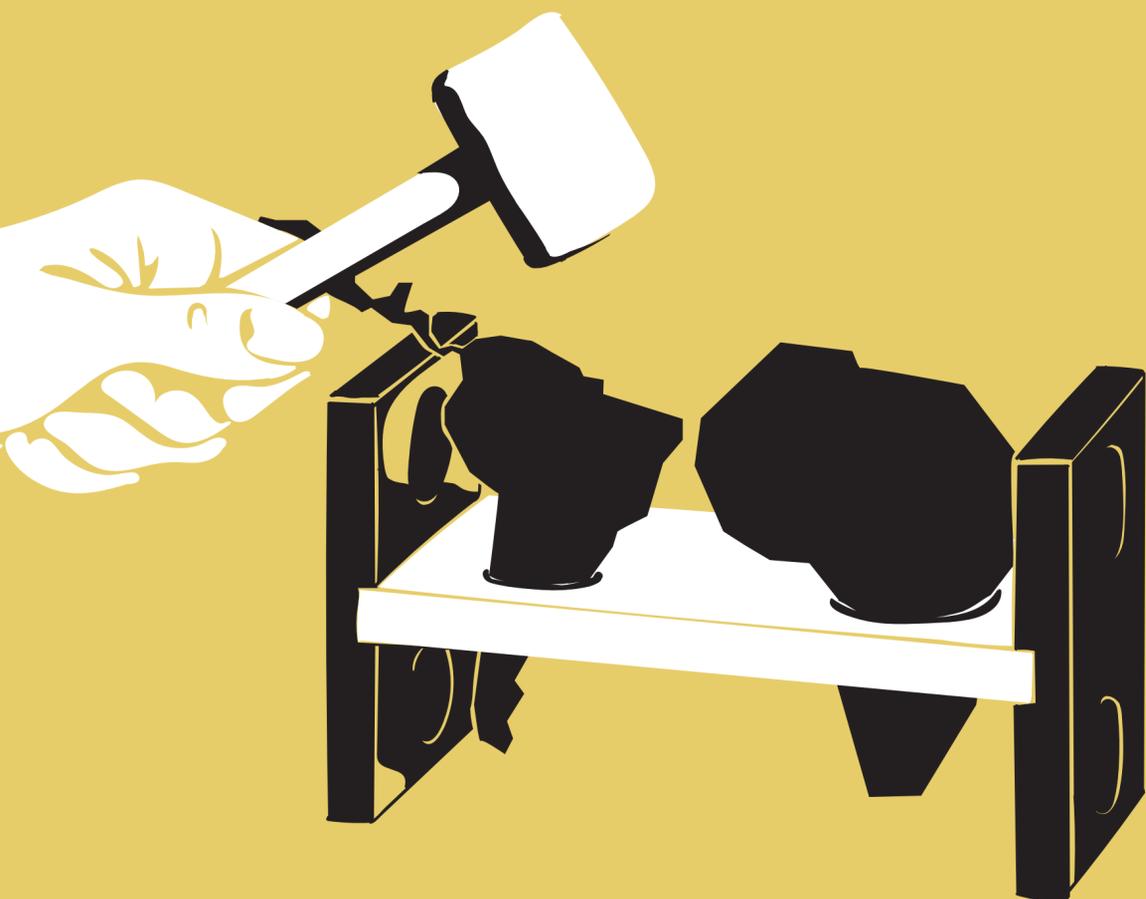
therefore resorted more and more to borrowing from governments, private markets and the World Bank. In addition, the countries of the South are confronted with a drop in the price of raw materials and agricultural products that they export. They are thus caught in the stranglehold of debt without being able to meet their payments.

As soon as a country is forced to stop its repayments, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrives as a pyromaniac fireman. It "lends" the necessary money (which above all allows the creditors — often private — of the North to be saved), at a high rate of interest, but on condition that the country concerned agrees to carry

out a neoliberal policy of austerity decided by its "experts": these are the famous IMF conditionalities, which take the form of so-called structural adjustment programs.

But these "plans" do not stop the mad rush of debt and lead to a multiplication of financial crises. The total opening of the countries of the South to foreign capital and the liberal measures imposed by the IMF have attracted highly volatile capital, ready to flee at the first sign of economic fragility. In each case, priority is given to the continuation of debt repayment. The decline in the price of raw materials continues inexorably. In the continuity of the colonial logic, the debt is one of the main instruments of the economic plunder of the countries of the South.

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**On the side of the struggles**

**The Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM) is an international network of members and local committees based in Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia. Its work focuses on developing radical alternatives for the universal satisfaction of basic human needs, freedoms and rights.**



# Today, colonialism is about: **THE MANAGEMENT OF MIGRATION**

The institutional management of migration has a colonial character. This is particularly evident in the way foreign populations are treated within French and European borders, but also outside these borders.

In its territory, France subjects the foreign population to a derogatory legal regime : the CESEDA (Code de l'Entrée et du Séjour des Étrangers et du Droit d'Asile). This Code is by nature very different from the old slave and

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colonialist codes (Code Noir and Code l'Indigénat). It is nevertheless inspired by them in certain aspects, notably by considering a part of the population as "natives", beings with no rights or sub-rights who can be exploited, locked up and expelled.

Since the 2000s, France and the EU have been externalizing their borders

in the formerly colonized countries of the South. This "externalization of borders" is carried out through migration management agreements and under the threat of cutting off "financial development aid" or trade commitments. With these agreements, the countries of the South commit themselves to reinforcing the control of their own borders, that is to say to exercise a first "sorting" between people considered desirable and undesirable by Europe. This includes the construction of detention camps, the militarization of borders, the reinforcement and training of security agents, and the modification of internal legislation. These agreements are based on asymmetrical relations between states and even reinforce this asymmetry, in the continuity of a colonial logic.

This logic has also led France and the West to set up several offices of their institutions in countries of the South. Thus, Niger, a former French colony, has seen OFPRA and IOM offices set up on its land with a view to closing internal borders in a country qualified as a "transit" country by the European Union.

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**CODE NOIR:**  
REPEALED IN 1848

**CODE DE L'INDIGÉNAT:**  
REPEALED IN 1946

**CESEDA: WHEN WILL IT BE REPEALED ?**

**On the side of the struggles**

*Migreurop — of which FASTI is a member — is a European and African network of activists and researchers whose objective is to publicize and fight against the European Union's policy of externalization, which is deployed through the generalization of the confinement of foreigners and the multiplication of camps.*

Today, colonialism is about:

# EXTRACTIVISM



**E**xtractivism is the overexploitation and plundering of natural resources (most often non-renewable), human resources and financial resources of the countries of the South by the countries of the North.

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*Resource extraction began with Western colonialism.*

All continents are concerned. Diamonds, gold, copper, tin, columbite, tantalite or coltan (so precious for making cell phones), bauxite, iron, nickel, manganese, coal, oil, methane gas, oil shales, cobalt, copper, gas, wood, fish, spices, fruit, water, energy, but also bodies and brains. Slavery, forced or/and underpaid labor are also forms of extractivism.

Resource extraction began with Western colonialism, which set up the infrastructure for extraction with chartered companies, such as the British East Africa Company, the forerunners of modern multinationals. This mechanism continues today, aggravated by the structural adjustment plans of the International Monetary Fund and the debt mechanism. As a central instrument of the neoliberal and productivist economy, extractivism has colossal social and environmental impacts, especially for women.

France is very active in extractive infrastructures with French companies exploiting all the resources (Total, Areva, Alstom, Bolloré, SNCF, Eiffage) under the cover of partnerships or secret defense agreements that poorly hide the colonial continuity. Nor does it hesitate to deploy its special forces and its army to protect mining activities under the guise of defending "human rights".

These are the same "human rights" that Nilce de Souza Magalhaes, one of the spokespersons of the MAB (Popular Movement of People Affected by the Dam) in Brazil, would have liked to avail herself of. She was assassinated because she was fighting for the recognition of the rights of the victims of the hydroelectric project in which the French company Engie is a stakeholder.

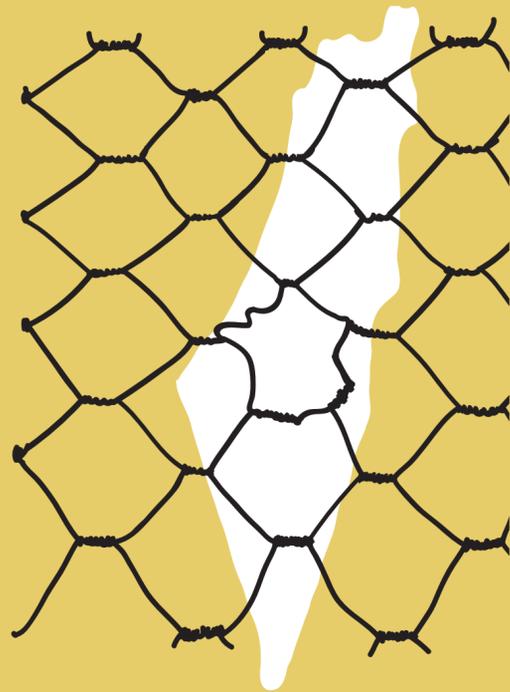
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**On the side of the struggles**

**The extractivist "Gold Mountain" project in French Guiana, which required the total deforestation of more than 1500 hectares and the extraction of 54 million tons of ore, was abandoned in June 2019 following a large-scale struggle by the Guyanese population, and in particular the Amerindian and Bushinengé peoples.**



*Today, colonialism is about:* **FRANCE'S  
SUPPORT FOR THE  
COLONIZATION  
OF PALESTINE**



**T**he colonization of Palestine has been going on for more than 70 years in a continuous mode and even accelerated in recent years. It sets up an apartheid system and organizes the replacement of the population by the appropriation of houses and land, by the imposition of inhuman living conditions such as the withdrawal of access to water, to movement, to work, accompanied by administrative imprisonment without trial or release date, murders and serious injuries.

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In 1947, France voted in favor of the UN "partition plan" for Palestine. Although today the colonization of Palestine is in contradiction with international law, France — through its institutions, its big companies, its banks, its army — supports this war crime. From a diplomatic point of view, the French authorities willingly show their sympathy with their Israeli counterparts, following the example of Emmanuel Macron who invites the Israeli Prime Minister, promoter of the "Greater Israel". Large companies, such as France Telecom, Orange and their subsidiary "Partners", the Elbit company, AXA, etc. are also investing in Israel.

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The major national media take a stand in favor of this Zionist policy by making visible the attacks against Israelis but by passing over in silence the daily crimes against Palestinians or by excusing and legitimizing them as a response to an "attack". France also participates in cultural and sporting events that enhance Israel's image.

Finally, anti-Zionist struggles in France are widely attacked by French institutions, which do not hesitate to equate them with anti-Semitism. Any criticism of Israeli colonial policy is thus discredited. Any criticism of Israeli colonial policy is discredited.

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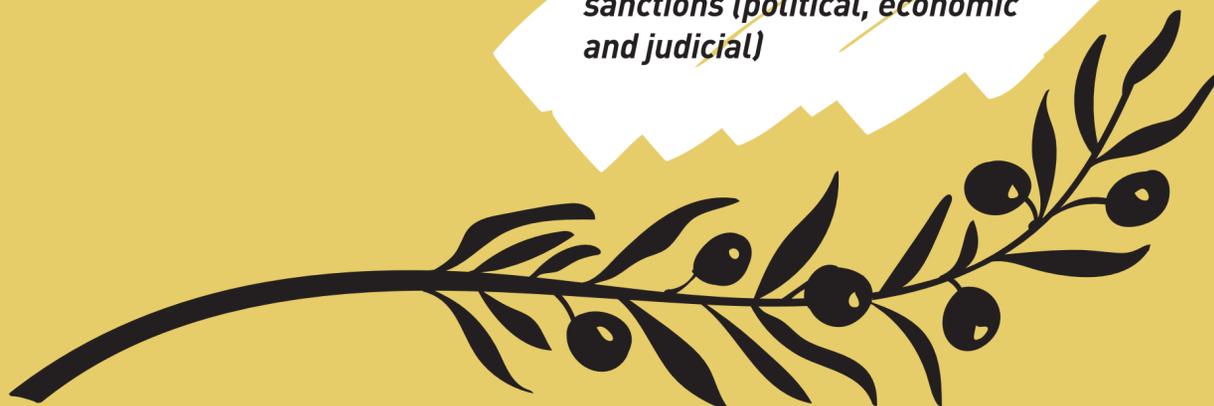


***On the side of the struggles***

***The UJFP — French Jewish Union for Peace — is a secular Jewish association gathering Jewish and non-Jewish members with diverse histories and backgrounds. It fights against all forms of racism, whether Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Roma, anti-Arab racism or negrophobia, and demands that France's colonial past and its current implications be recognized for what they are.***



***Stemming from the international BDS campaign launched in 2005, the BDS France Campaign (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) aims to put an end to Israel's impunity and denounces all Israeli institutions involved in the colonial policy, apartheid and occupation. It has several components: boycotts (economic, sports, trade union, cultural and academic), divestment, sanctions (political, economic and judicial)***



*Today, colonialism is about:*

# FRANCE'S SUPPORT FOR THE COLONIZATION OF WESTERN SAHARA

**F**ollowing the departure of the former Spanish colonist in 1975, the sovereignty of Western Sahara was shared between two neighboring countries: Morocco and Mauritania. Mauritania withdrew in 1978 and Morocco decided to invade Western Sahara and declare war on the Saharawis. Since 1991, when a cease-fire was signed, the Sahrawis have been waiting for a referendum on self-determination. In contradiction with international law and UN resolutions, Western Sahara is still under Moroccan rule.

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Without always assuming it, successive French governments have always supported Morocco. Although their public statements generally affirm support for international law, they act as a mouthpiece for Moroccan positions. Thus, the UN file on Western Sahara has always been subcontracted by French diplomacy.

Moreover, the natural resources of Western Sahara are plundered with impunity. Multinationals and institutions, notably France and Europe, sign commercial agreements with Morocco in order to benefit from the resources of the Sahrawi

territory and thus become accomplices of Morocco's colonial policy. The French company Total and Morocco also signed in 2011 an agreement for oil exploration in Western Sahara on a massive block of more than 100 000 km<sup>2</sup> in defiance of the sovereignty of Saharawis on their territory.

An association agreement between Morocco and the EU that came into force in 2000 allows for free trade between the two territories. EU countries, led by France, are the largest market for Moroccan exports and the largest public and private foreign investor in the Kingdom of

Morocco (industries, banks, real estate, tourism). In the balance between its commercial, financial and geostrategic interests and the solidarity it could have expressed with a colonized people in dire straits, France made its choice.

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**On the side of the struggles**

***PSPSO, The Platform for Solidarity with the People of Western Sahara — of which FASTI is a member — is composed of international solidarity, popular education and human rights organizations, national and regional. It aims to strengthen solidarity with the Saharawi people and promote the realization of their fundamental rights, including their right to self-determination.***

***The Polisario Front is a political and armed movement from Western Sahara, created in 1973 to fight against the Spanish occupation.***

