

They occupy Bolloré's lawn to highlight Bolloré's role in land grabs over the world

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ReAct and Confédération paysanne | 3 June 2015 [FR]

They occupy Bolloré's lawn to highlight Bolloré's role in land grabs over the world

On Thursday the 4th of June, people from Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and activists from the Confédération Paysanne, will disrupt the AGM of the Bolloré group in Puteaux, outside Paris. Local communities deprived of their land by the industrial palm oil plantations belonging to the Socfin group, in which the Bolloré group is heavily involved, have mobilised since April in Cameroon, Cambodia, Ivory Coast and the Liberia to get back the land that belongs to them.



Activists planting some plants bamboos as they demonstrate in front of conglomerate Bolloré headquarters in Puteaux near Paris, France, calling on Bolloré to return land, or compensate farmers, over disputed concessions for plantations in Cambodia and three African countries, Thursday, June 4, 2015. Bolloré is the largest shareholder of Socfin, which has been accused by activists of land grabs in Cambodia, Liberia, Cameroon and Ivory Coast. (AP Photo/Kamil Zihnioglu) (The Associated Press)

« **They take our land, our turn to take theirs!** ». This Thursday the 4th of June, several dozens of people will support the call of the local communities deprived of their land by the industrial plantations connected to the activities of the Bolloré group. Armed with shovels and pitchforks, they will invite themselves to Bolloré's AGM, which takes place at 4pm at 31-32 quai de Dion Bouton in Puteaux. People from Cameroon and the Ivory Coast supported by the Confédération paysanne and several French NGOS (Sherpa, Peuples Solidaires, CCFD, Grain, Agter) will deliver this message : « We do not have any land left in our countries, we come today to sow the cassava on your lawn, Mr Bolloré! » This action is part of the wider global resistance movement launched at the end of April by the International Alliance of Local Communities of the Socfin Bolloré plantations ; they blockaded plantations in Cameroon between **the 23rd and the 28th of April**, blockades which were then followed by protests in **Liberia, Cambodia** and in the Ivory Coast. Everywhere, local communities have the same demands: that the Socfin give back to local communities the right to land vital to the villages and the compensations promised in the agreements signed with them (see attached the current situation and demands) .

However, Bolloré refuses to engage in dialogue and hides behind the Belgian shareholders. The Bolloré group owns 39% of the Socfin group, to whom belong the industrial plantations of palm trees and rubber trees in these countries. Since 2008, the areas under cultivation have expanded on an ongoing basis. The cultivated surfaces of the Socfin African subsidiaries increased from 87 303 to 108 465ha between 2011 and 2014 (see the Socfin reports). This 24% increase often results in the encroachment of the local communities' lands thus exacerbating tensions with residents. In an attempt to resolve these conflicts, Bolloré accepted a first round of negotiations held in Paris on **the 24th of October** with the delegates from these five countries. However, Bolloré has since backtracked and denies any responsibilities, saying that « he is only a small non-directing shareholder of the Socfin group, which since 70years, has been majority controlled and directed mainly by the Fabri family. »

« **Socfin and Bolloré embody a form of capitalism that is socially and environmentally irresponsible**»

« Bolloré cashes in its Socfin dividends while shirking responsibility » bemoans Emmanuel Elong, spokesperson for the International Alliance. We demand an international negotiation with the Socfin and Boloré to set an agenda to return our land and receive the compensations as defined by our previous agreements.»

For Luc Boedt, the CEO of the Socfin, small agricultural practices in Africa belong to « **the Middle Age**» and need to give way to agro-industrial methods for the sake of development. This is not the Confédération Paysanne's point of view « We fight in France industrial projects like the Ferme des Mille Vaches (the industrial farm of a Thousand Cows) which represent a type of industrial agriculture which is both socially and ecologically destructive. The fight carried by the African and Asian peasants belongs to the same struggle » states Laurent Pinatel from the Confédération paysanne,

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ReAct Alliances Transnationales - www.projet-react.org

Source: [ReAct and Conf](#)

The **Declaration of the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles** launched in Dakar at the African Social Forum in October 2014 and reworked in Tunis at the World Social Forum in March 2015 is open for signature and engagement.

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