

Fourth International Conference

06-07 November 2023

Social Movements: The Struggle for Alternative Economies



The Social and Economic Policies Monitor (Marsad) and Popular Art Centre are organizing the fourth international conference on social movements entitled “Social Movements: The Struggle for Alternative Economies”.

This conference is held in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic that has been ongoing for over two years. The pandemic has resulted in severe human losses, many of which could have been avoided through the provision of efficient healthcare services and moving away from economic approaches that have always been guided by profit and that prevented many peoples of the third world from receiving Covid-19 vaccinations, as they were monopolized by major pharmaceutical companies. This crisis has once again – like the global economic crisis of 2008 – revealed that it is no longer feasible for people to combat crises individually by focusing on individual solutions rather than collective solutions.

The poor living conditions, increase in poverty rates and unemployment and inflation around the world did not prevent the celebration of a long list of billionaires. Even in light of a global pandemic, this list was increasing and the same people on them made enormous profits. Oxfam’s report “Inequality Kills” noted that – since the start of the pandemic – the top ten richest people in the world have doubled their wealth. The economic and social policies biased in favor of the rich and those in power contribute to this directly, and they result in a state of inequality, which leads to the death of 21,300 people every day around the world. These policies deny the poor access to health care and healthy food, and they marginalize women and subject them to violence as a result

of biased and patriarchal economic regimes, that is not to mention the impact of climate crises and famine that result in the death of hundreds of thousands around the globe.

As a result of the pandemic and the Russian – Ukrainian war, as well as other structural factors, such as the colonization and power structures and relations in the world, the World Bank expects an increase in the number of people who will be categorized as extremely poor around the world. Their number is estimated at around 75 million peoples, in addition to the newly impoverished people during the pandemic by the end of 2021, who are estimated at 119 to 124 million people. Although these numbers are high, solutions for poverty around the world are still connected to individual economic empowerment and swamping poor countries with additional debt and loans, following austerity measures and structural reform, decreasing wages and lifting the essential commodity subsidy. That is despite the fact that many studies and reports show that austerity measures threaten at least 73 countries around the world of increased inequality and delayed equality for future generations.

The World Bank statistics show an increase in the rate of flow of foreign debt to countries with low and intermediate income, as it has increased by 10% in 2017 to reach \$700 trillion. This is an accelerated rate to the accumulation of debt compared to the increase of 4% in 2016. However, poverty in poor countries remains connected to corruption and poor planning rather than globalization and colonial control that powerful countries have yet to relinquish. The solutions often presented maintain economic dominance and exploitation relations to ensure wealth and natural resources flow to powerful countries.

In light of promoting individual empowerment, all other economic patterns have been neglected, such as cooperative and solidarity economy, including cooperatives that amount to over 3 million and employ over 250 million workers around the world according to the International Cooperative Alliance. International organizations also insist on not mentioning social solidarity economic models, which are neglected in national and protection policies in light of the generous funding and facilitations granted for private sector companies, the adoption of unfair taxation systems and the weak funding of social protection systems and comprehensive health insurance.

The conference to be held in Ramallah – occupied Palestine gathers hundreds of activists in social movements around the globe in order to localize alternative economies for the colonization and western dominance, and to stress on the existence of alternatives and new paths to replace dominance and controls that we must fight for.

This conference opens the floor for social movements, economic initiatives, cooperatives and all different forms of cooperative and solidarity economy initiatives to present and discuss their models and their development, the values and principles on which they were based, the influence and changes they contributed to and the targeted groups and parties who benefited from them. This would contribute to the creation of economic alternatives to combat and replace colonization and dominance.

Conference Importance

The importance of this conference comes from its role in framing the academic and cognitive discussion throughout the previous years on the roles of social movements at both the local and global levels due to the importance of social movements currently in light of the increased dominance of western capitalism over the entire world, particularly the southern hemisphere. The conference will present models of international alternatives for the dominant economic system in

the world. Moreover, it will promote networking, coordination, cooperation and exchange of expertise between social movements on alternative economies. Furthermore, the conference represents an attempt to draw clear characteristics of a set of models and international and local experiences in the field of social movements and alternative economies, which are expected to have a role and impact not only locally but also globally in achieving social justice and defending the rights of different social classes and categories.

Key Components of the Conference

First: critical theoretical introductions to understand the current economy and alternative economy.

- New theoretical contributions to critique the dominant economy.
- Research contributions in building alternative economy.

Second: models from the global alternative economy.

- Farmers combatting major agricultural corporations (the price of monopoly)
- Global fair-trade models.
- Different forms of cooperatives in the southern hemisphere (agricultural, economic, consumption...etc.)
- Cooperatives run by women.
- Global solidarity corporations.
- Building a south-south economy.
- Taxation justice.
- Climate justice.

Third: alternative local economic models.

- Local fair trade models.
- Local alternatives to combat the blockade and external economic sanctions.
- Youth initiatives and groups as a social phenomenon to overcome economic and social inequality.
- Cooperatives in Palestine.

Fourth: social economies and solidarity economies.

- Visions on solidarity economies globally and locally.
- Wages and social justice.
- Social welfare and protection.

The organizers encourage social movements and activists around the world to participate and register in the conference through presenting research papers, attendance and participation in the discussion groups that follow the presentation of papers. The organizers this year focus on the participation of social movements from around the world whose work is focused on the following fields:

- Movements against racism.
- Movements against the vile sovereign debts.
- Movements of farmers and food sovereignty.
- Movements against globalization.
- Movements against war.
- Fair trade movement.
- Movements embrace and work towards Climate Justice

Participation Conditions

- The participation is either through presenting scientific research papers or through presenting global and local models and sharing acquired experience. Those willing to participate with research papers must provide an initial summary on the research with a maximum of 300 words, including the title of the intervention, the presented problem, research methodology and key ideas, in addition to five key words, a brief bibliography or a 250 word summary that presents models and experiences of international and local social movements by 10 August 2023.
- The paper or experience must not exceed 20 A4 pages with a size 11 Simplified Arabic font for Arabic papers and a size 12 Times New Roman font for English papers.
- The research must be edited, well documented and in accordance with due research procedures.
- A summary of the research must be presented.
- The paper must not have been published before, and the supervisory committee over the conference has the right to select the participating research papers.

Organizer

Social and Economic Policies Monitor (Al Marsad)

Popular Art Centre

Location and Tentative Date

Ramallah, Palestine, 06-07 November 2023

Conference Language

Arabic, English and Spanish

Address for Correspondence and Inquiry

Papers must be sent to the following address: almarsad@almarsad.ps