

LALIT

Report on first ever

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
for the **ABOLITION**  
of **ALL MILITARY BASES**

Quito to Manta  
(ECUADOR)  
March 2007

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## LALIT at NO BASES Conference in Quito, Ecuador

One of *Lalit's* leading members, Lindsey Collen, has just got back from the first-ever World Conference for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases, which was attended by delegates from social, political and neighbourhood organizations from 40 different countries from 5 to 9 March in Quito, Ecuador.

Organized by the NO BASES network, there were over 400 people present in plenary sessions of the Conference in the Main Hall of the Catholic University in Quito. There were 250 registered delegates, a fair proportion from Latin America, and 150 Ecuadorian students who were encouraged to sit in on plenary sessions.

The timing of the Conference turned out to be very interesting: it was during George Bush's tour of Latin America, where the unpopular US President is trying to dredge up flagging support from his allies, like the Columbian Government, which is reeling after the resignation of Ministers associated with right-wing death squads. There were demonstrations against Bush wherever he went. At a national level, the Conference was also at an interesting time: the new left-wing President of Ecuador, Raphael Correa, is confronting the right-wing Congress over a Constitutional Assembly, and issues like the US military base at Manta.

On Saturday 17 March in Curepipe Lindsey Collen gave a Report Back, organized by Lalit, for the fourteen Mauritian organizations that signed the Declaration in support of the Conference.

The Conference was an organizational masterpiece jointly hosted by the Ecuadorian Coalition of anti-bases organizations and the International Organizing Committee, of which Lalit is a member. Translation was available throughout between English and Spanish and Japanese. The Japanese activists had crack translators as part of their own delegations.

The conference also included a caravan of six big buses, full of delegates who spoke at gatherings at Santa Domingo, Chome, and Portoviejo on their way down the Andes Mountains to the coast where there is an infamous US military base at Manta since 1999. On 9 March, there was a march to the base and a demonstration calling for its closure, which inhabitants of the city saw as a high point of the eight-year struggle against the base since its inception. The barbed-wire surrounded base is adjacent to the city's airport, and Awaks can be seen sitting at the airport. The base, which is opposed for its encroaching on Ecuadorian sovereignty and its interventions into Columbia, has given rise to the usual sources of extreme suffering, like peasants being pushed off their land, fishermen being deprived of their freedom to make a living, local communities suffering noise pollution as well as the social ills that plague communities encroached upon by military bases: prostitution and rape. Some of the functions of the base at Vieques, closed down as a result of heroic protests in Puerto Rico, have been moved to Manta, which put emphasis on the need to abolish bases, not just get them closed down piecemeal.

Plenary sessions included a talk by political activist and analyst, Walden Bello, on the present state of "over-reach" or "over-stretch" of the United States armed forces, which could lead to a destabilization of its empire. Various internal contradictions of empires, like the over-reach in the war against Iraq, can be important causes of their downfalls. Walden Bello, activist in Focus on the Global South, is at present standing for election in the Philippines general elections.

In addition to plenary session, there were various workshops which saw passionate discussions on strategy and plans on how to run the international network in the future, so that all bases, these symbols and tools of imperial reign, effectively get closed down.

Other highlights of the Conference itself included the presence of delegates from Hawaii, Guam and Puerto Rico, calling not only for base closure and clean-up, strong in the knowledge that they have

brought the close of the Vieques base in Puerto Rico, but also calling for independence from the USA. They introduced the slogan “Vieques, si! Bases, no!” which for Mauritius could be translated as “Diego Garcia, wi! Baz-la, non!”

One of the speakers, geo-politician and activist, Ana Esther Cecena, from the University of Mexico, also participated in one of the many press conferences that took place during the Conference. She analyzed the way in which each base has its particular geo-strategic importance to the US which goes beyond the boundaries of the country the base is in, and at the moment the two most important reasons for US bases are, according to the US itself, to “control sources of key raw materials” and for “counter-insurgency”. Other reasons, including anti-terrorism, containment, and the war on drugs, come after these two at present.

At the opening session, there was an analysis of the importance of the worldwide struggle against bases by Medea Benjamin of Code Pink fame. Recently Code Pink (the name is a take-off from the Orange and Red terrorist Alerts put in place by the Bush administration) led a high-profile demonstration to the gates of the notorious US military base at Guantanamo, Cuba. Lindsey Collen has brought back a beautiful T-shirt from Code Pink, naturally in bright pink, which she gave to the Muvman Liberasyon Fam, for a drawing of lots.

Lalit’s representative, Lindsey Collen, spoke on the Diego Garcia military base and the inter-related questions of sovereignty, the right to return & reparations, and the necessity to close the base right down. She put emphasis on the need for us all to understand increasingly well why there are bases and what exactly the economic and strategic functions of bases are, in order to be able to develop a common understanding of the strategies for closing them all down, and abolishing them. Lindsey Collen was also made Honorary Citizen of the City of Quito, an honour she accepted in the name of the over 200 delegates from places other than Quito. She gave press interviews, an interview for Venezuelan TV, and interviews for an anti-base organization in Okinawa, Japan.

Editor of the book *The Sun Never Sets*, the classical text on US military bases, Joe Gerson, was also a speaker at the Conference. The American Friends Service Committee, of which he was one of the team of delegates present, distributed a leaflet on “10 reasons to close down all foreign military bases”.

The delegate from two peace organizations based in Nairobi, Otieno Ombok, spoke at the first plenary session. The new US offensive into Africa where it intends getting 25% of its oil supplies in the next decade, is of great concern world-wide as a new form of colonization. Lindsey Collen and Otieno Ombok discussed ways of getting organizations in Africa together to oppose this new US offensive.

Delegates from Europe, including from Germany, Italy, Belgium, countries where there are US and NATO bases, as well as national bases, put a great deal of emphasis on the importance of people being against domestic bases that are used for imperialist purposes, for example, for the war on Iraq.

The biggest US coalition, *United for Peace and Justice*, was represented by activist, Lesley Cagan, who spoke both at the Conference and during the caravan, at Chome. It is a key gain for the anti-bases movement that so many important US organizations are taking up the refined slogan “Get the troops back from the war and from the bases!” Last year the “Bring the Troops Back!” organization, after hearing a Lalit speaker, Ram Seegobin, at the Asia Pacific Solidarity Conference in Sydney, Australia, was convinced, and took the idea home to his organization, which later adopted the slogan on its web-site.

Many delegates spoke of the importance of defining a “base” in a broad sense, and, in fact, a broad definition was accepted. This is necessary because the US often claims that a base is not actually a base. Sometimes, it is, they argue, just a “facility”, other times it is supposedly a domestic base, which the US has access to and not a US base, and other times there are activities like “sea swap”, where ships dock in order to change staff and get in new supplies.

A conference declaration was adopted, and the network celebrated its formal birth during the Conference. It will be a network with more organizational structures than it has had until now. A

plan of action was discussed in small groups, and the International Organizing Committee will act as an interim committee until an International Co-coordinating Committee is set up.

## Diego Garcia: Inspirational Lessons

The history of Diego Garcia, the huge military base on the beautiful horse-shoe shaped Indian Ocean coral Islands, is a classic story of what kinds of struggle can win against imperialism and what kinds can't and don't. In a nutshell, I will argue in the name of *Lalit*<sup>1</sup> the political organization in Mauritius<sup>2</sup> that I represent today, that if and when the people in the movement are always increasing their *will to understand* the entire political-economic-social reality – at the same time as it struggles on particular issues – this is when it is more likely that gains are made. Victory is then always possible. And it is in this spirit that we meet in Quito today. If, on the other hand, the movement allows elements of the demands to be separated in a mechanical way from the “un-understandable” rest, or demands to be traded one for another, its progress will be limited.

### Where did this Diego Garcia base come from?

As Britain withdrew from its worldwide empire of colonies, it “bought into” the United States newer empire. As Britain was ceding Independence to Mauritius in the 1960's, as a blatantly illegal condition for Independence<sup>3</sup>, it sliced off part of Mauritius<sup>4</sup>, including the Chagos Archipelago that Diego Garcia is part of to make up a fictional State called British Indian Ocean Territories (BIOT)<sup>5</sup>, in order to “give it” to the US for a military base to control of the Persian Gulf, Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian sub-continent. In exchange for the Polaris submarines system Britain still has. The plan for the base and for the territorial dismemberment included another concept: that the Chagos Islands, including Diego Garcia, would have no population. Note the strange grammatical formulation of “would have” that betrays so clearly the intended genocide.

Three issues were thus linked organically from their inception: (i) the inhabitants were forcibly removed from the Islands and their history denied, (ii) a country was illegally dismembered, even granted a new Constitution without any mention of its borders, and a fictional State invented, so that (iii) an isolated, strategically placed, military base could be installed where there was not the political pressure of living people present. And our aim in *Lalit*, has been to get our minds around the dialectics of these three inter-related realities, throughout our struggles. It has not been easy.

### 40 years of struggle: gains and difficulties

The struggles in Mauritius, were for the first 15 years completely separate from the struggles at international level. The people forcibly removed had difficulty getting even people in Mauritius to know what had happened to them, while successive Mauritian Governments ran diplomatic level campaigns of a formalistic nature (countless resolutions taken) on the “sovereignty issue” at the UN, OAU, Non-Aligned Movement thus informing top level politicians and UN representatives, who remained the only people who “knew about” Diego Garcia. When you told people abroad about the triple-crime (forcible removal, sovereignty, military occupation) they didn't believe you. Activists, grass-roots organizations, even left parties, women's organizations thought we were confabulating.

One funny example is worth quoting. In 1981, we sent a telegram (it was still those days) calling for support for the women of Diego Garcia. We got a reply from a big women's organization in the

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<sup>1</sup> Lalit is a left political party founded in 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Mauritius is the name of the Republic of Mauritius which includes Mauritius Island, Rodrigues, Agalega, St. Brandon, Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia..

<sup>3</sup> It is against the UN Charter, as well as against international law to divide a colony, keeping part, in exchange for granting Independence.

<sup>4</sup> British Order signed by the Queen: “As from the date of this Order in Council the Chagos Archipelago, being islands which immediately before the date of this Order were included in the Dependence of Mauritius, shall together form a separate colony which shall be known as the British Indian Ocean Territory.[Statutory Instrument Made 8 November 1965 at the Court at Buckingham Palace].”

<sup>5</sup> In fact, some islands from Seychelles, another British colony, were also part of BIOT until they were claimed by Seychelles after its Independence and won back.

USA, must have thought Diego Garcia was a polygamist of some sort: “Who is Diego Garcia. Make sure it’s a women’s issue”.

Perfectly normal British or US citizens did not believe us. If something as awful “mass kidnapping” and dividing a country had happened, they would know.

Neighbourhood and street demonstrations in Mauritius in the – 1970’s and 80’s – were what led to massive gains in all directions – precisely because they were on the combination of the three issues: sovereignty, reparations, and for the closure of the US military base. The victories came in two forms: (i) Exposure of the military occupation and the base (ii) exposure of the illegal excision (iii) winning of negotiations and compensation for the displaced people and the setting up an elected Trust Fund for dealing with the British compensation money. *Lalit* was part of this mass movement.

The issue then went underground until 1998, when *Lalit* together with the largest group of Chagossians took the initiative of setting up a Common Platform together with eight Mauritian organizations. Pressure was put on the Mauritian Government to go to the UN General Assembly to get a motion passed to put a case before the UN International Court of Justice at the Hague, there were events around base closure and demands for the right to return.

During this revival, a legal firm in Britain found out about the case, and offered to put a case in the British Courts for the right to return. They won a major victory in the British High Court in the year 2000, when the Courts said that they had the right of return. The British State was harshly criticised by the judgement. (See our book on our site [www.lalitmauritius.org](http://www.lalitmauritius.org)). The British Government then immediately passed a Queen’s Order in Council banning the Chagossians from Diego Garcia Island and then the other Islands, too. These proclamations by which “the Queen” (Tony Blair, in effect) act behind the back of the British parliament, aimed at over-riding the British supreme Courts. The Chagossians won a Court Challenge, but the British Government appealed. We are waiting for judgment.

However, the present Chagossian leadership has not been able to manage the contradictions that the legal procedures have produced. They had to plead that they were “British” in order to get a locus standi in Court, and legal aid. And the British State has started a process of integrating the Chagossians through immigration. And of course many Chagossians have pictures of the Queen, and wave the British flag and so on in demonstrations. Recently, after holding out for so many years, they have also made an undertaking that they will settle only the “other Chagossian islands” and not Diego Garcia, thus accepting the “permanence” of the base.

Another concession has been made in the damages case in the US Courts. Damages cases cannot be heard from non-citizens if they put into question US foreign policy. And this again has been a very heavy contradiction for the leadership of the Chagossians’ movement to bear. People who were at the WSF No Bases Plenary will remember how the Chagossian leader did not ever actually say that the base must be closed down. Such a concession was perhaps not necessary, but then again, legal advisors on big damages cases get to do a lot of political advising, too.

By accepting British sovereignty and the permanence of the base, the entire movement has weakened.

However, progress was made politically in “background” ways. Through these Court Cases, the issue of Diego Garcia, and the knowledge that it was being used for attacking Afganistan and Iraq, as well as the issue of the forcible displacement of the people, were for the very first time made known to vast numbers of British citizens, despite the Governments attempts to keep it all a secret. This process was accelerated when John Pilger made his TV documentary STEALING A NATION.

Meanwhile, under political pressure at home, the Mauritian government, for the first time, publicly threatened to take the UK Government to the UN International Court of Justice at the Hague in

2004. To do this, the then Prime Minister announced, he would withdraw Mauritius from the Commonwealth. This was necessary because Britain had accepted the jurisdiction of the ICJ only in disputes with non-commonwealth countries. No sooner had this threat been made than Tony Blair sent his UN representative to change what jurisdiction Britain accepts the ICJ for. Now it refuses to accept jurisdiction for disputes involving any country that was ever in the Commonwealth.

When *Lalit* jointly with the Chagos Refugees Group and some ex-Greenpeace seamen internationalized the struggle at Mumbai at the NO BASES first Conference at the WSF, and we were jointly preparing a ship to take the Chagossians to Diego Garcia, and even planned a PEACE FLOTILLA, supported by No Bases network, then the British Government, itself, organized a ship to take 100 Chagossians to visit Diego Garcia and put flowers on their ancestors' graves in 2006.

So the situation is always in flux. The ex-British High Commissioner, David Snoxell, has just taken a public stand in the British press about the right to return and Mauritian sovereignty.

### **Constant difficulties**

- \* Keeping the different "constituencies" together (the Chagossians displaced, the Mauritian people as a whole having the country divided, the anti-war movement worldwide)
- \* David and Goliath, difficulties of scale.
- \* Distance, Diego Garcia and the Chagos is distant from the other Mauritian Islands of Mauritius Rodrigues, St. Brandon, Agalega.
- \* The US Government purchases a lot of fresh supplies for the base from Mauritian producers. In times of economic downturn, this is a constant pressure to concede.
- \* There are jobs for Mauritians and Chagossians on the base. This, too, as with all bases, has to be part of our considerations.
- \* Africa Growth and Opportunities Act (a US law that grants trade facilities to a host of African countries including Mauritius) is on the express condition that the African country does not oppose US "national interests" or "foreign policy". This we have found is also a constant pressure on the Mauritian government, through the bourgeoisie.
- \* And now, of course, as the final appeals are getting underway, and partial victory to return to the "other Chagossian Islands" becomes a real possibility, major tourist industry private companies are jockeying for position to get contracts from either the Mauritian Government or the Chagossian organizations, as the case may be. All this ... alongside the base.

It has been and still is a struggle, rich in lessons. What is important now, is that the hope to close the base at Diego Garcia is clearly closely linked to the destiny of the world movement against all bases.

### **The Demands**

1. The immediate decolonization of Diego Garcia and the Chagos Archipelago through the disbanding of the illegitimate "British Indian Ocean Territories"; the cancellation of the Orders in Council that prohibit the return of Chagossians to their native islands; the re-unification according to international law and the UN Charter, of the Republic of Mauritius that was dismembered as an illegal condition to Independence in 1968.
2. An immediate halt to ever using Diego Garcia for B-52's or other military apparatus to attack other countries (whether Afghanistan, Iraq or any other land) and the complete closing down of the United States military base on Diego Garcia; the organization of an ecological clean-up; a public undertaking that no other base be set up elsewhere to replace this one; the conversion of part of the base into a non-military Tsunami Warning Station for the Indian Ocean, and part into a UNESCO World Heritage Site around a vast ecological project to regenerate the coral and the lagoons, as well as other forms of job creation.
3. Halt to prisoners being held or "rendered" on or near Diego Garcia.

## AN ANTI-BASES NETWORK FINDS ITS BASE

The consolidation of an international network for the abolition of foreign military bases marks an important advance for the global peace and justice movement

by Herbert Docena  
14 March 2007

On the perimeter fence of the Eloy Alfaro air base in Manta, Ecuador hangs a sign, "Warning: Military Base. No Trespassing." Since 1999, the base has been used as a "forward operating location" by the US military - just one of over 737 US military installations currently scattered in over 100 countries around the world.

On March 9, about 500 visitors showed up at the base's main gate. One of them walks up to the fence and pastes a bright blue and red sticker saying "No Bases!" on the warning sign, a broken rifle forming the diagonal line with the letter "o" to make the universal sign of prohibition.

It is a small, symbolic act of trespassing for a newly formed international network with a big goal: the closure of all such military bases worldwide. But with the successful convening of a conference that launched the International Network for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases (No Bases) in Quito and Manta, Ecuador from March 5 to 9, 2007, that goal has become a little closer to reality.

Perhaps the largest gathering against military bases in history, the conference drew over 400 grassroots and community-based activists who are at the forefront of local struggles from as far away as Okinawa, Sardinia, Vieques, Pyongyang, Hawaii, and dozens of other places from more than 40 countries. There were environmentalists, feminists, pacifists, war resisters, farmers, workers, students, parliamentarians, and other activists from social movements, human rights groups, faith-based organizations, and various regional and global networks and coalitions.

But even the final tally of those present probably underestimated the extent of participation in the conference: In the network's e-mail list on the eve of the conference, an anti-bases activist from Iceland wrote to say that their absence in Ecuador should not be taken to mean that they are absent from the movement. The range of groups that made it to the conference - both in terms of where they come from geographically and politically - demonstrate just how broad the movement against bases has become.

International conferences are sometimes dismissed as talk-fests where nothing gets done. But getting together and talking to each other is often an important first step in building a community. In various panels and self-organized seminars, film-showings, and forums, participants deepened their understanding of the role of military bases in global geo-politics, the various forms and guises that military presence takes, and their impacts on local communities and the environment. They also exchanged lessons about strategies and approaches to more effectively campaign against bases back home. Even the Pentagon has taken note of the growing domestic opposition to their bases and it is these grassroots campaigns that are foiling their plans.

But this was not all. What was significant about the conference was that the participants went beyond talking about how bad bases are and why we should all oppose them. They rolled up their sleeves and, in one intensive workshop after another, set out to establish a network, articulate the bases of unity, agree on a higher level of coordination, and decide more concrete plans for common action.

That task proved to be daunting yet illuminating. As the participants tried to clarify what exactly brought them together, potentially divisive but fundamental questions soon rose to the surface: Should the network just target foreign military bases or also domestic bases? Since they all have military and war-making purposes, shouldn't all military bases - regardless of whether they are

the US' or Cuba's - be abolished? What about the "domestic" military bases in Hawaii, Guam, or Puerto Rico? Or in occupied countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan? What about NATO bases which are arguably both "foreign" and "domestic" at the same time? If the network targets only "foreign" bases, how does this distinguish it from all those right-wing nationalist groups in Europe or the Middle East who oppose bases just because they're "foreign"? And while it was generally agreed that no one comes close to the US in terms of the sheer number of bases, how much effort should the network exert against the bases of Russia or France?

These proved to be important questions because the answers to them touch on the values and identity of the network. Underlying them are broader questions that define some of the diverging - but also overlapping - currents within the network and, perhaps, within the larger anti-war movement.

Broadly - and perhaps crudely - categorized, there are those within the network who oppose bases from what could be called an "anti-imperialist" perspective. They see foreign military bases as both the instruments - as well as the visible manifestations - of imperialism. They are against US bases on foreign soil but will defend Cuba's or Iran's right to have domestic military bases for self-defense. Within this current, there are differences on the extent to which the US should be singled out: While there is unanimous recognition that the US is the primary threat, others are quick to point out that the European powers have their own imperialist drives and are equally dangerous. On the other hand, there are those who oppose bases from the perspective of "anti-militarism": they're against all military bases - regardless of who owns them.

These debates also raise questions about the nature of "nationalism" and "sovereignty." In many contexts, mainly but not exclusively in the South, opposition to foreign bases draws from a deep nationalist well, with bases seen as "external" incursions against "sovereignty" and with "nationalism" seen as a necessary bulwark against colonialism. In other contexts, however, "nationalism" and "sovereignty" have become bad words, used to rally public support for wars against "the other" and to justify repressive measures against "foreigners." Cautiously, the network treaded the fine line between self-determination and chauvinism.

After ten hours of spirited but cordial deliberation, the draft declaration presented in plenary was widely commended as a sharp but nuanced formulation (see full text below) that succeeded in drawing the approval of both anti-imperialist and anti-militarist positions. (Or at the very least, it was not expressly rejected by either.) What may have clinched the day was the broadening of the target of the network to include not just foreign military bases but "all other infrastructure used for wars of aggression."

The formulation thus takes a more sophisticated understanding of the complex configuration of military bases by allowing for the inclusion of domestic military bases inside the US, as well as in NATO and in other countries. It appealed to those who insisted on a strong focus on foreign military bases - most of which are owned by the US and all of which are arguably used for aggression - while at the same time not contradicting those who wish to expand the focus of their own work.

In contrast to the right-wing, chauvinist opposition to bases, the declaration makes it clear that the network's objection to bases is not premised on what analysts call the NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) logic - i.e. foreign military bases are fine as long as someone else bears the noise, the waste, and the crimes - but on the NIABY logic (not-in-any-one's backyard), i.e. foreign military bases are bad because they "entrench militarization, colonialism, imperial policy, patriarchy, and racism." In light of the influence of the right-wing objection to bases, the network's opposition to all bases - and not just those in one's locality - offers a global counter-pole premised on internationalism and solidarity.

For an incipient grouping still struggling to define its purpose and to sharpen its focus, the importance of clarifying and reaching agreement on the network's bases of unity should not be underestimated. As Helga Serrano, one of the conference organizers concluded, "The ideological and political bases of unity

of the network is more consolidated than we had thought." It is true that the subsequent session for planning concrete actions and strategies proved to be less clarifying: only a grocers' list of ideas emerged, not a clear set of priorities. But without coming to an agreement on its common vision, the network could have been paralyzed by unresolved contradictions and confusion. The articulation of collective principles lays the foundations for future actions.

Carrying out these actions requires, in turn, a certain degree of organization. On-guard against threats to their autonomy, wary of centralizing tendencies, but keen to achieve their objectives, many delegates stressed the need to combine openness and horizontality with strategic and organized action. As Joel Suarez, a participant from Cuba said, "We cannot continue with the way we have been organizing. Horizontality is correct but, applied wrongly, it has led to the disintegration and paralysis of the movements. Our advancement depends on the efficiency of our organization. We can't let this fall apart." The question, said Serrano, is "how do we create new forms of horizontal relationships?" The challenge, as posed in one panel, was to strengthen the coordination within the network without centralizing and bureaucratizing it.

Put this way, the dilemmas faced by the network is little different from that faced by other networks that have emerged in recent years. . Accepting the need for closer interaction while cautious of rushing the process, participants in the end reached a consensus to remain as a loose grouping but with a higher level of coordination. A process was set up for putting in place an open international coordination committee with a clear but circumscribed political mandate and a defined set of responsibilities for carrying out collective projects.

Still, there are significant hurdles to overcome: The network still has to reach out to so many more local anti-bases activists, especially from West and Central Asia; the issue of bases is still not high on the agenda of the anti-war movements; the network lacks resources because the issue is seen as too radical even for sympathizers; and even within the network, there is uneven access to resources and capacities; translation remains to be worked out more efficiently; and so on.

Despite all these obstacles, the network has come a long way. The conference is a milestone in that it marks the consolidation of the international network as both a space where the broadest grouping of organizations, coalitions, and movements can come together and as an organizational vehicle which can carry out globally coordinated campaigns while providing continuing and sustained support to local struggles everywhere.

But it's more than this. The network's development could also be seen as evidence of the consolidation of the anti-globalization/anti-war movements that emerged in the last decade. While the idea has been germinating before, the birth of the network could be traced back to a gathering of anti-war/anti-globalization activists, shortly after the invasion of Iraq, in Jakarta, Indonesia in May 2003. Attended by representatives from some of the groups that were behind the coordination of the historic February 15, 2003 global day of action against the war in Iraq and who had previously been active in the anti-globalization movement, the Jakarta meeting endorsed the proposal of launching an international network against bases as one of the priorities for the movements.

A group of organizations in that meeting then carried the idea forward through various World Social Forums, local and regional social forums, and other activist gatherings. As Wilbert van der Zeijden, an activist who was among those who steered the network through the years, said, "This would not have been possible without the World Social Forum process." While the concept remains debated, the "open space" provided by the social forum process provided opportunities for networking, information-sharing, and organizing that would have been too difficult or too expensive had the space not existed. The consolidation of the network proves that the movement is capable not only of uniting around a proposal but of actually seeing it through.

Also often underrated and unreported is the degree by which the movement has been getting more efficient at organizing. While there were a few of the usual

glitches and some internal disagreements, it felt as though the conference and the run-up to it was, on the whole, better organized politically and logistically than similar projects in the past. International conferences of the scale that activists had been organizing in the last few years require a high level of organization and coordination but, with very limited human and financial resources, and activists are stepping up the plate. As one participant remarked, "Five years of organizing the World Social Forums and other meetings and we're learning." Ecuadoran organizers of the network conference themselves acknowledge that they have gained confidence and valuable experience from organizing the Americas Social Forum and other international meetings in the past.

What is remarkable - but often taken for granted - is how activists - who are not trained and salaried professional events organizers - have succeeded in realising ambitious projects for a small fraction of the cost that corporations or governments spend on similar meetings. That the movements are learning and becoming more proficient heralds their development and growing capacity for organized action.

More than anything, the consolidation of the anti-bases network demonstrates that the movements have become more deliberately strategic. The network is a "single-issue" campaign focused on the issue of bases. And as Lindsey Collen, an activist from Mauritius, warned, "Single-issue fragmentation may lead to short-term success but long-term failure." The single-minded focus on bases, however, is neither fragmentary nor fragmenting; on the contrary, it arises from a comprehensive understanding of the conjuncture that locates bases within the global strategy of domination.

Rather than being divisive, the emphasis on bases brings together a much more holistic understanding of the ways in which the coercive and corporate sides of militarized globalization come together to perpetuate structures of dispossession and injustice. As Joseph Gerson, an activist-scholar on bases, put it "Bases perpetuate the status quo." The decision to zoom-in and focus on the issue of bases in a coherent and consistent manner comes out of an objective assessment and a compellingly simple logic: without foreign military bases, wars would be so much more difficult to wage; without wars, the pursuit of geo-strategic and economic interests over democracy and self-determination would be so much harder. As Corazon Fabros, a veteran anti-bases activist from the Philippines, said, "The strategy of empire is global. So must our response."

**DECLARATION of**  
**(Planned) Preparatory Conference before the World Conference**  
**for the Abolition of All Foreign Military Bases**

We, the undersigned, and our organizations, wish to adhere to the declaration of 24 February 2007, and to re-iterate our support for resolutions on closing down the Diego Garcia base, debated and voted on 20 March, 2004 in the context of the Worldwide Anti-War mobilization,

Adding that, once the base has been closed down and ecological clean-up effected, that a non-military Tsunami Warning Station for the Indian Ocean be set up there,

Adding also that, since 2004, we have become aware of the the use of Mauritian land for the secret “rendering” and torture of illegal prisoners, something which we abhor,

And that we denounce the British Government’s recent challenge the Court judgement giving the right to return to Chagossians, and we maintain their right to return to all the islands, including Diego Garcia,

That we call for the dismantling of the fictional state, British Indian Ocean Territories,

And that we urge once again the Mauritian Government to bring the issue of the illegal occupation of Diego Garcia before the UN General Assembly, so that the issue can be referred to the International Tribunal at The Hague,

And we send our greetings and expression of solidarity to the Conference to be held at Quito and Manta, Ecuador in March 2007

And call for support for the movement for the abolition of all foreign military bases.

**Organisation**

LALIT  
Institute for Consumer Protection  
Muvman Liberasyon Fam  
Comite pour l’Amelioration de la Sante  
Ledikasyon pu Travayer  
CEDREFI  
Federation of Pre-School Playgroups  
Federation of Civil Service & Other Unions  
Federation des Travailleurs Unis  
Government Servants Association  
Former President of the Republic of Mauritius

**Endorsed by**

Ram Seegobin  
Sahebodin Mosadeq  
Rajni Lallah  
Serge Rayapoulle  
Alain Ah-Vee  
Pynee Chellapermal  
Pushpa Lallah  
Tulsiraj Benyidin  
Atma Shanto  
Radakrishna Sadien  
Cassam Uteem

[The Conference was annulled due to cyclone Gamede, and has been adhered to without the planned debate. The previous declaration referred to above reads as follows:]

**GATHERING HELD ON 20 March 2004, Port Louis, Mauritius**

At a Gathering on the 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2004, on the world day of protest saying NO TO WAR, NO TO OCCUPATION, which was held at Mother Earth Hall, Grand River North West, Port Louis, Mauritius, Mauritian social, political and trade union organizations met to discuss and amend the draft “COMMON DECLARATION of Support for the Peace Flotilla”. The draft document was discussed and amended, to produce the final document below:

The initial signatories of this historic document, at this crucial moment in history, are:

## **Organisation**

Comité pour l'Amelioration de la Sante  
Lalit  
Federation of Civil Service and Other Unions  
Ledikasyon pu Travayer  
General Workers' Federation  
Federation des Travailleurs Unis  
Federation of Free Workers  
Federation of Progressive Unions  
Institute for Consumer Protection  
Muvman Liberasyon Fam  
Federation of Preschool Playgroups  
Fangurin  
JUSTICE  
Mauritius Labour Congress  
Government Servants Association  
CEDREFI  
Sahringon (Southern African Human Rights NGO's Network)  
Fédération des Syndicats des Corps Constitues.  
ABAIM

## **Endorsed by**

Serge Rayapoullé  
Lindsey Collen  
Tulsiraj Benydin  
Pushpa Lallah  
Devianand Narrain  
Atma Shanto  
Auguste Follet  
Amba Lutchoomanen  
Sahebodin Mosadeq  
Rajni Lallah  
Shirley Seedoo  
Nicholas Ragoonauth  
Jean Claude Bibi  
Jugdish Lollbeeharry  
Radakrishna Sadien  
Pynee Chellapermal  
Lindsay Morvan  
Deepak Benydin  
Marousia Bouvery

The Chagos Refugees Group, which was present on 20<sup>th</sup> March, is part of the Peace Flotilla Initiative.

Other organizations are invited to adhere to the "Common Declaration". It is this conscious mass support that will be the basis for the success of the return to Diego Garcia.

## **International Support already gained:**

Over 100 organizations world-wide have shown support, to Lalit, for the initiative of a ship or flotilla to take the Chagossians back to Diego Garcia. They range from huge organizations like the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) in the UK, to big anti-base organizations in Okinawa, Japan and in South Korea, from War Veterans Organizations in the USA to women's groups in the USA, from organizations in Philippines and Puerto Rico that led successful campaigns to close down the bases like Subico Bay and Clark in the Philippines and Vieques only last year on 1<sup>st</sup> May in Puerto Rico, from Peace committees within the Quaker religion, to anti-war movements in South Africa and Holland. During the World Social Forum in Mumbai, and during the Intercontinental Youth Camp held as part of the WSF, in January, 2004, both *Lalit* members and the Chagos Refugees Group members gave speeches, which put the issue of Diego Garcia firmly on the agenda.

[Press Communique] Signed Lindsey Collen, for LALIT, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2004

## **20<sup>th</sup> March, 2004 Declaration**

On the occasion of 20<sup>th</sup> March worldwide protests against war and against occupation, we, as representatives of organizations, met so as to discuss, amend and adopt the following important statement:

### **RE-UNIFICATION**

- On 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2004 we celebrated Independence and Republic Day, reminding us of the urgent necessity of returning and re-uniting all the islands of Mauritius, including the islands of the Chagos Archipelago, namely Peros Banos, Salomon, Diego Garcia, to the Republic of Mauritius. The Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, was illegally excised by the UK, the former colonial power, and Diego Garcia was unlawfully handed over to the US that has since occupied it and used it as a military base to wage war against Iraq and other nations.

### **NO MORE BOMBS FROM MAURITIAN LAND**

- We wish, by our signature below, to make it abundantly clear to everyone in the world that we object strongly to a part of Mauritian land continuing to be used as a launch pad from which to drop bombs on living people, their societies and civilizations, all living things they know and the natural world they live in, leaving desolation where there was life.

### **NO TO WAR, NO TO OCCUPATION**

- As part of the worldwide protest against war and against occupation particularly of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, we call for an end to the USA-UK occupation of Diego Garcia.

**CLOSE THE BASE ON DIEGO GARCIA**

- We call for closure of the US-UK military base on Diego Garcia.

**ECOLOGICAL CLEAN-UP**

- We call for the “clean-up” of Diego Garcia and the Chagos Islands, after all the ecological damage that the USA and UK have inflicted on these pristine coral islands, being particularly careful to remove all the dangers associated with stocking of nuclear weapons.

**NO U.S. BASES, NO WAR BASES**

- We call for the closure of all US military bases world-wide, and for the closure of all other imperial military bases. We oppose the opening of new military bases.

**A SHIP TO TAKE CHAGOSSAINS TO DIEGO GARCIA**

- We support the initiative to get a ship to take Chagossians back to Diego Garcia and the Chagos. This would embody their right to return, bearing in mind that they have never given up their struggle to recover their homeland. And we support their claim for full reparations for the harm and suffering they have endured as a result of their forcible removal.

**SUPPORT FOR THE PEACE FLOTILLA**

- We support this “ship initiative” as it becomes transformed into the plan for a whole Peace Flotilla to go to Diego Garcia, as its first port of call. We demand the re-unification of the Chagos Archipelago to the Republic of Mauritius. We want peace in the Indian Ocean, peace in the whole world.

We call on all workers organizations, social movements, women's, youth and neighbourhood organizations and all peace loving people to join in and to support the peace flotilla.

**DECLARATION:**  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE ABOLITION OF FOREIGN MILITARY BASES  
March 5 to 9, 2007  
Quito and Manta, Ecuador

We come together from 40 countries as grassroots activists from groups that promote women's rights, indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, human rights, and social justice. We come from social movements, peace movements, faith-based organizations, youth organizations, trade unions, and indigenous communities. We come from local, national, and international formations.

United by our struggle for justice, peace, self-determination of peoples and ecological sustainability, we have founded a network animated by the principles of solidarity, equality, openness, and respect for diversity.

Foreign military bases and all other infrastructure used for wars of aggression violate human rights; oppress all people, particularly indigenous peoples, African descendants, women and children; and destroy communities and the environment. They exact immeasurable consequences on the spiritual and psychological wellbeing of humankind. They are instruments of war that entrench militarization, colonialism, imperial policy, patriarchy, and racism. The United States-led illegal invasions and ongoing occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan were launched from and enabled by such bases. We call for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from these lands and reject any planned attack against Iran.

We denounce the primary responsibility of the U.S. in the proliferation of foreign military bases, as well as the role of NATO, the European Union and other countries that have or host foreign military bases.

We call for the total abolition of all foreign military bases and all other infrastructure used for wars of aggression, including military operations, maneuvers, trainings, exercises, agreements, weapons in space, military laboratories and other forms of military interventions.

We demand an end to both the construction of new bases and the reinforcement of existing bases; an end to and cleanup of environmental contamination; an end to legal immunity and other privileges of foreign military personnel. We demand integral restoration and full and just compensation for social and environmental damages caused by these bases.

Our first act as an international network is to strengthen Ecuador's commitment to terminate the agreement that permits the U.S. military to use the base in Manta beyond 2009. We commit to remain vigilant to ensure this victory.

We support and stand in solidarity with those who struggle for the abolition of all foreign military bases worldwide.

Foreign Military Bases Out Now!

Manta Si! Bases No

CALL TO AN  
**INTERNATIONAL GATHERING IN ECUADOR in MARCH 2007**  
**FOR THE ABOLITION OF ALL FOREIGN MILITARY BASES**

The construction of foreign military bases in Afghanistan and Iraq; the cases of torture at the bases in Guantanamo and Diego Garcia; the construction of new bases in Okinawa; the "realignment" of military alliances in Asia; and the dramatic increase of joint military exercises as part of the so-called "global war against terror" have highlighted how foreign military bases, other forms of military presence, and militarization of whole societies are used to secure certain states' and corporations' interests at the cost of democracy, justice, and sovereignty around the world.

Another world will not be possible without abolishing these bases and demilitarizing global and national societies.

Over the past two years, we have been building up an international network to achieve this aim. Many of us have come together for the first time at the World Social Forum and other meetings or through the internet so as to form a global community. Our approaches vary, our concerns are multi-faceted. But our objective is the same: the closure of foreign military bases around the world.

The times demand that we escalate our actions and improve our coordination. The next step in consolidating our community is to organize an inaugural conference for our network. After much communication and deliberation we decided to hold this conference in Ecuador in March 2007.

We hope that this conference will be the biggest gathering of anti-bases activists in recent history. We intend for the conference to provide a rare opportunity for closer, ongoing interaction; for sharing experiences, exchanging strategies and lessons learned; for laying the groundwork for more effective global coordination, and for building strategies for more effective international campaigning.

In organizing the conference, we hope to further broaden the network, remaining conscious of the critical importance of grassroots anti-bases activists to be involved and to take the lead in building our global network.

We call on all anti-bases activists, individuals, and organizations to be part of building this international network and campaign.

We call on the global movements for peace, justice, and ecological sustainability; those working in campaigns and mobilizations against war; the movement against corporate-led globalization and against militarism and imperialism; movements for disarmament and demilitarization; and movements against racism and for liberation and sovereignty.

We call on grassroots women's, indigenous rights groups, environmental groups, faith-based organizations, youth organizations, sexual minorities, trade unions, social movements, human rights groups and other local, national and international progressive formations to be involved in and to contribute to building this global movement.

We call on all those committed to abolishing military bases to send representatives to this meeting. Where possible, we call on anti-bases formations in a country to come together and send a national delegation.

While we hope to have the participation of the broadest range of groups possible, we also intend for the conference to be a working meeting that will come up with a concrete plan of action. Our challenge is to ensure participation that is both broad and at the same time manageable.

We call for solidarity in spreading the word about this initiative; in building a broad range of groups committed to this effort; in reaching out to grassroots or community-based anti-bases groups wherever they may be; in building links across movements and struggles; and in providing concrete support to sustain this long-term effort.

Abolishing foreign military bases around the world and working toward demilitarization is essential in the struggle against war. Abolishing foreign military bases around the world is one step to establishing another world that is possible and necessary.

5 November 2005

NO BASES NETWORK

International Network for the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases

ENDORSERS as of November 2, 2005:

Peace and Justice Service (Ecuador)  
Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador  
Regional Advisory Foundation on Human Rights (Ecuador)  
Campesino Social Security (Ecuador)  
Pro-Human Rights Collective (Ecuador)  
Tohallí Movement (Ecuador)  
Altercom (Ecuador)  
Ecumenical Human Rights Comisión [(Ecuador)  
Conscientious Objector Group (Ecuador)  
Christian Youth Association (Ecuador)  
Migrants, Refugees, and Displaced [(Ecuador)  
Llactacaru Migrant Association (Ecuador)  
Pakistan Peace Coalition (Pakistan)  
American Friends Service Committee - Peacebuilding Unit (US)  
US Peace Council (US)  
Nonviolence International (US)  
American Friends Service Committee (US)  
Bangladesh Krishok Federation  
Gathering for Peace (The Philippines)  
People's Task Force for Bases Clean-Up (Philippines)  
For Mother Earth (Belgium)  
Campaign for the Demilitarisation of the Americas  
Focus on the Global South  
Fellowship for Reconciliation (US)  
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (UK)  
LALIT (Diego Garcia / Mauritius)  
Asian Peace Alliance - Japan  
Bangladesh Sramajibi Kendra (Bangladesh)  
Cuban Movement for Peace and Sovereignty (Cuba)  
Centro Memorial Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr (Cuba)  
Stop the War Coalition (Greece)  
SEATINI (South Africa)  
Japan Peace Committee (Japan)  
Transnational Institute

## **STATEMENT AND PLAN OF ACTION ON IRAQ**

### **The US-led invasion and occupation of Iraq is illegal.**

In 1946, the Nuremberg Tribunal judged that "To initiate war of aggression is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole."

### **Consequently, we demand**

An immediate end to the illegal occupation of Iraq by the United States and the United Kingdom and the immediate withdrawal and removal of all foreign troops, military advisers and representatives, military equipment and armaments.

### **We insist that**

The Iraqi people have absolute and sovereign rights to determine their own future. No occupying power has the right to violate the territorial integrity of Iraq. Any decision about the need for international assistance rests solely with the Iraqi people.

The United States and United Kingdom's occupation of Iraq is illegal, as is any administrative authority or interim government established by the occupying forces. Therefore, any decisions made by the occupying forces or their representatives are not binding on the Iraqi people.

The UN-held Iraqi oil escrow account must not be used to foot the bill for reconstruction of the damage caused by the illegal war and UN sanctions. The funds must be held in trust for the Iraqi people until there is a legitimate and genuinely representative government.

While we strongly support independent civil society assistance to and solidarity with the Iraqi people, the United Nations and its agencies, other governments and non-governmental organizations should not serve as a cover to legitimize, or profit from, the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq. Humanitarian aid must not be used to support or promote the military, political and economic objectives of the occupying forces.

According to the Geneva Conventions, humanitarian assistance, aid, reconstruction and other development activities are the legal and moral responsibility of the invading and occupying forces, and they should not characterize as "aid" that which is the entitlement of the Iraqi population.

The Iraqi people have sovereignty over all natural resources and utilities. The invading and occupying forces, or their private sector proxies, have no right to make any decisions about who controls or benefits from the exploitation of natural resources or the construction and delivery of basic services and utilities.

The full costs of all reconstruction, compensation and reparations for the physical, social, economic, psychological, ecological, cultural and heritage destruction caused by the US-led invasion of Iraq must be borne by the aggressors.

Reparations for the physical, social, economic, psychological, ecological, cultural and heritage loss, damage and suffering caused by the US-imposed UN Security Council sanctions must be borne by the permanent members of the Council.

In addition, reparations must be paid to all persons who have suffered physical, economic, or psychological loss or trauma resulting from twelve years of sanctions and the 2003 invasion, based on individual and collective claims and dispensed by an independent compensation tribunal.

## **We call for the delegitimation of the US and allied occupation of Iraq.**

We support all moves leading towards the convening of a national congress, or constituent assembly, or any other kind of democratic self-organization to establish the legitimacy of a new Iraqi state. This process must be completely independent of the occupying forces.

We call on the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States to work to uphold international law, to end the occupation and to support the establishment of democratic self-government in Iraq.

We ask the international community and governments around the world to refuse to recognize all forms of authority or government established by and under the occupation forces.

We support the campaign initiated by the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms and others to urge the UN General Assembly to request an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice regarding the illegality of the use of force against Iraq and of the doctrine of "pre-emptive war."

We endorse the campaign calling for an international UN war crimes tribunal to try those responsible for the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

We demand that all governments recognize the right of Iraqis to travel freely and to return to Iraq.

We reject the US project to create a "New Middle East Order," including its economic arm, Bush's proposed "Free Trade Area of the Middle East."

We commit ourselves to work in solidarity with the people and civil society of Iraq and to support the democratic forces.

1. We commit ourselves to organize a series of fact-finding missions to Iraq in collaboration with the civil society organizations already working on the ground in order to establish contacts with as many democratic Iraqi organizations as possible, with the possibility of working towards a conference on war and occupation in Baghdad.
2. We commit ourselves to prepare the conditions to participate in the construction of one or more Occupation Watch Centers in Iraq. The goals will be to function as a monitoring and information center on the military occupation and any US-appointed government, including documentation of possible war crimes and other violations of human and democratic rights. They will also include monitoring the role of foreign companies and war profiteers in Iraq.
3. We commit ourselves to developing multiple methods of engaging directly with Iraqis, including mass delegations to Iraq, with the goal of establishing broad ties between Iraqi organizations and individuals, and global civil society, particularly the anti-war, anti-globalization and World Social Forum movements. We also commit ourselves to creating a new global Iraq information website, as well as other means of coordinating information and resources.
4. Based on the proposals of the Turkish, Japanese, South African and Latin American movements, we commit ourselves to building an International People's Tribunal to prosecute the perpetrators of the Iraq war and occupation, to be held in several countries with a team of international prosecutors and judges.
5. We call for an international boycott of US products on 4 July 2004, the United States independence day and support other initiatives to boycott US products.

## **PLAN OF ACTION ON GLOBALIZATION AND MILITARISM**

[...] **We call for a strategic focus on the proliferation of US military bases around the world.** We commit ourselves to working for a global day of action against such bases in the first half of 2004 to be coordinated by the Asian Peace Alliance. [...] Jakarta, 21 May 2003