

Invitation to WSF IC members to sign a protest letter after the Spanish Government forcibly prevented the holding of the Madrid Forum for a Just Peace

Monday 21 January 2008, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 21 January 2008).

This invitation to sign the above letter is sent to the members of the International Council (IC) of the World Social Forum (WSF).

Dear IC members:

Greetings.

As you know, the Spanish Government recently forcibly prevented the holding of the Madrid Forum for a Just Peace. This followed several heavy-handed attempts by the government to force through a program suited to its political agenda. When the organizers resisted this violation of the autonomy of civil society, the government resorted to authoritarian measures.

We must strongly protest this violation of the freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. We have a special responsibility to do so since many of the organizations in the Madrid Forum have been active in the World Social Forum. Unless we register our protest loudly and strongly, the banning of the Madrid Forum will serve as a bad precedent that other governments will be tempted to follow.

Many of you have probably already registered your protest with the Spanish government. You might, however, still want to sign the attached letter (also pasted below) which some of us have drafted so we can collectively gain visibility as supporters of the WSF. We are asking people to sign the letters as individuals, with their organizational affiliation noted only for identification purposes. For those who are able to obtain the consent of their organization, it will be indicated that they are signing for their whole group.

Please get back to us by January 25, 2008, so we can post the statement in the internet and send out press releases as soon as possible.

Herbert Docena will be collecting all the signatures, so please write directly to Herbert at herbert@focusweb.org

In solidarity,

Walden Bello

Minister D. Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Plaza de la Provincia 1

E-28071 Madrid

Spain

Dear Minister,

We, the undersigned members of the International Council of the World Social Forum, are writing to express our deep concern and condemnation of the actions of your Ministry over recent months, which culminated in the forcible closure of the Madrid Forum for a Just Peace, which was scheduled for 14-16 December 2007.

We have been fully briefed by our fellow International Council members on the events and it seems that, having failed to impose your political agenda on the conference, you have resorted to force to shut down an important space for democratic and free discussion between civil society representatives.

We understand that for several months before the scheduled Forum, your Ministry brought intense pressure to bear on the organizing committees of the conference to include Zionist delegates and representatives who refused to accept the values of peace, justice and democracy on which the conference was founded. These values are expressed in the Declaration of Principles for the conference, which in turn is based on the World Social Forum Charter of Principles, the foundation document of the World Social Forum and expresses the values and aspirations to which we all subscribe.

We see this not simply as an attack on the Madrid forum, but on the whole of global civil society and the values of democracy and freedom for which we stand. We completely reject any attempt by the Spanish government or indeed any government to subvert and suffocate these principles. We deplore the use of covert means to undermine the discourse of democracy and the use of force to silence the voices of justice and peace.

We urge you to make a full public statement, apologizing to the organizing committees and affirming your government's commitment to a free and independent civil society, which is essential for democracy.

Yours sincerely,

Walden Bello, Focus on the Global South

Nicola Bullard, Focus on the Global South

Meena Menon, Focus on the Global South

(We will list all names alphabetically)

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