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editorial

migration and food sovereignty

This edition is dedicated to the issue of migration and its implications for our struggle for food sovereignty. The so-called migration crisis has taken a highly tragic turn with Trump's new anti-migrant policy of the inhuman separation of families and the imprisonment of migrant

children in concentration camps, while the deaths in the Mediterranean of refugees that attempt to enter Europe continue.

The United Nations has stated that almost 300 thousand people have had to leave their homeland and try to enter countries that reject and criminalize them. They are people without a country. Many escape due to the violence of the wars of occupation, others do so because of the disasters of the climate crisis and many more because of the inequities of this voracious and savage capitalism system. While a good part of society is moved by the drama of migration, especially when they see images of children drowned in the Aegean Sea or children imprisoned in concentration camps in Texas, it seems that no one knows what to do to find a solution to migration.

For our part, the *Collective on Migrations of La Via Campesina* proposes to understand migration as an act of resistance by the dispossessed. When human beings leave their families, their communities and their lands, they are challenging the system that has condemned them to disappear as peasants, as indigenous people, as women, as people of color, as youth, as another culture, as a community and as a people. So migration is an act of resistance.

By understanding migration in this way, we recognize in the struggle of La Vía Campesina the key role of migrants and their potential as actors of change. We hope that the testimonies, articles and positions found in this edition of Nyéléni will help all of us to understand the centrality of migration in our struggles to achieve food sovereignty of our peoples.

Collective on Migrations of La Vía Campesina

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who we are

In the last years hundreds of organisations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organisations were present in the *International Nyéléni Forum 2007* and feel part of a broader **Food Sovereignty Movement**, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement**.

Organisations involved: AFSA, Brot für die Welt, Development Fund, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, More and Better Network, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, TNI, VSFJusticia Alimentaria Global, WhyHunger, World Forum of Fisher People.

now is time for food sovereignty!

Voice 1

Bangladesh, an example of Climate Migration

Golam Sorowor, Finance Secretary of BAFLF (Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labour Federation)

Bangladesh is a densely populated country, which is a clear victim of global exploitation regarding the impacts of climate change. These impacts already include the rapid expanse of soil salinity due to rising sea levels, tidal flooding, intensifying storm surges, increased temperatures, heavy rainfall, flash floods, droughts, land slides and river erosion. The consequences of climate change are that farmers and rural communities are experiencing increasing livelihood insecurity, malnutrition, unemployment, poverty, human trafficking, forced migration as well as food, land and water crises.

More than half the area of Bangladesh is barely five meters above sea level. A 1 meter rise in sea level would submerge a fifth of the country and turn 30 million people into "climate refugees". The issue of climate refugees will become a major problem in the coming decades in Bangladesh.

Many of the major cities hare already under pressure, particularly the capital city Dhaka. In 1974 the population of Dhaka was 177000; in 2017 it stood at 1.8 million. By 2035, it will be 3.5 million (World Bank report). Two thousand people come from different parts of the country in search of jobs and shelter every day. The 10 most dangerous cities in the world due to climate change include the capital Dhaka. "Global climate refugees" will face increasingly protected borders, as in the case of India, which is militarizing its border with Bangladesh, so that already today deaths are reported every month.

Agriculture in Bangladesh is largely dependent on climatic factors. One cyclone may destroy a significant volume of the seasonal harvest. Cyclone Sidr destroyed nearly 95 percent of crops in coastal districts when it crashed into Bangladesh in 2007 (ABD, 2013). Cyclone Aila flooded nearly 200,000 acres of agricultural land with salt water (97 thousand acres of Aman is completely destroyed) and 300,000 people were displaced (243,000 homes have been completely devastated). continued on page 3

in the spotlight

Global Vision of Migration

"In early times, human beings moved around to look for water and fruit to feed themselves as well as to avoid ferocious wild animals. This was their way of protecting themselves. They travelled to preserve their lives. The first stage of evolution of our race came when the first objects were invented. Humans then moved on to organise their food supplies (hunting, fishing and gathering) as well as to protect themselves from rival groups".

These are the words of Mamadou Cissokho, a leading figure of the West African peasant resistance movement, at the opening speech in January 2018, where he reminded everyone of their responsibility in the current tragedy of migration.

Moving to feed themselves and survive

The same causes have produced the same effects on all continents. It has become a very large-scale business, with climate change forcing many millions of people to become refugees leaving Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia as well as Latin America. Their lands no longer allow them to feed themselves (soil and wells had dried up, crops were destroyed by repeated natural disasters...). Political imbalance, often led by neo-colonial interests and imperialists have plunged countries and whole regions into situations of tragic insecurity, conflicts and wars and left entire regions in situations of tragic insecurity, conflicts and wars that many have tried to escape (Central America, Yemen, Syria, Sahel...). These situations have become worse when famines occurred and placed populations in imminent danger, such as in the case of Yemen.

However it is also essential and urgent to recognise unbridled globalised capitalism as the cause leading to the impoverishment of the indigenous communities and peasants around the world. Land-grabbing and the violation of customary rights, extractivism, norms and restricted access to markets.... Economic Partnership Agreements and other Free Trade treaties are a repeated and very real translation of the law of the strongest, and have largely been responsible for the physical and cultural uprooting of peoples.

Furthermore, in this very difficult context it is important to bear in mind the degree to which there has been very violent and even murderous State and police repression.

"(Europeans) and peoples have left us writing and historical manuscripts in which they confirmed that they had met so-called "soulless" people; they took whatever they found and sold it as they saw fit". (M. Cissokho)

Stolen land and the destruction of food and popular culture

This uprooting of cultures is particularly illustrated through the Moroccan example. In order to supply the European market with low cost tomatoes and citrus, the Moroccan State facilitated entry for Spanish, French and Dutch investors as of the 1990s, hunting the local peasants off their land, pretexting that the land belonged to the Royal Family of Souss Massa Drah. These companies also gained simplified access to water resources and irrigation as well as State agricultural subsidies. There were such needs for labour that everything was organised in such a way that thousands of small-scale peasants who lived in the Atlas mountains abandoned their families' land and moved to the areas where industrial agriculture was being practiced. This phenomenon of extreme exploitation and pauperisation of an uprooted national workforce still exists and actually encourages men and women to leave their homes for horizons that are ever further afield and more uncertain.

Parallel to this, traditional food crops (such as wheat, one of the main ingredients in Moroccan food) have been abandoned to better serve the interests of the export industry and unbridled capitalism!

This situation is similar to many others from which people around the world are suffering.

in the spotlight

Food insecurity

This general observation is further darkened when we look at the conditions of those populations that have been displaced. The current discussions around the Global Compact, the project of a global pact on migration currently under negotiation at the Untied Nations, openly unmasks the cynicism and criminal attitude of the major decision-makers. Not only does the say in which people are being blocked at borders take on an inhuman aspect and is in violation of the Convention on Human Rights, but the "Western" States are turning people away or establishing conditions for granting development aid linked to establishing border controls (including a stronger police presence) in the countries of departure.

This is very worrying indeed! The cynicism and the refusal to provide a dignified welcome to political, economic and climate refugees (...) is leading to a concentration of these helpless people in major urban ghettos (megalopoles) or in rural areas (such as the extreme south of Italy). There are refugee camps there, and extreme insecurity: violence, lack of any organised healthcare, poor housing, forced labour and human trafficking are rife...

Thus these very circumstances mean that a migrant loses his or her capacity and food autonomy and at the very best (?) becomes dependent on the agribusiness system, if indeed they are not simply obliged to make use of food aid, also supplied through the agribusiness system.

"Let us work together to share the wealth and well-being everywhere and for all. The strength of a poor man or woman is that he or she loses nothing, because he or she has nothing to lose" (M. Sissokho)

Dignity for migrant workers and food sovereignty are one and the same struggle!

The Via Campesina and its member organisations and allies are committed to resisting and joining in their struggles for rights and dignity for migrants, and to supporting food sovereignty.

By increasing the spaces where we mobilise against the big multinational corporations, and against the growing control that they exert on resources and food production to the detriment of the lives of small-scale peasants, against policies and treaties that they support...the peasant movement is working on the process of supporting the proletariat to build their struggles and fight the destabilisation of democratic principles of popular sovereignty.

By defending the right to land and water use, claiming their right to produce and exchange their traditional seeds, working for the recognition of their collective rights, freedom to organise in unions and a real status for women peasants etc... the Via Campesina and the Declaration of Peasants Rights provide answers to the things that are causing migration to occur in the first place. We stand against the walls that are being built in a wave of totalitarian madness! It is essential to build bridges between peoples and connect the peasants of the world!

"Rather than taking up arms, let us take up solidarity" (M. Cissokho)

Agribusiness thrives on the exploitation of the smallest. Men and women, migrant workers have been uprooted and are highly fragile and vulnerable when faced by these economic predators and by "consenting" against their will to sacrificing their rights, they contribute to feeding the appetite of a system that is annihilating them.

In the Via Campesina and its member organisations, many different initiatives that resist and show solidarity have been created: training and support for migrant workers to ensure their rights are respected; information and awareness-raising of consumers; land occupation to install workers or migrants...

The Via Campesina and its allies open the path to food sovereignty for peoples and peasants without borders.

...Voice 1

Increased soil salinity and maximum temperatures will lead to decrease in the yield of rice. A change in temperature could also decrease potato production by more than 60%. The flash flood in 2017 in Haor reduced rice production by more than 15.8 million tons. Research has shown a 69% decrease in rice production in a coastal village in 18 years. About 1/3 of the area of Bangladesh is influenced by tides in the Bay of Bengal.

To address the climate and food crises the government is promoting private agribusinesses, higher investment in seed, fertilizers and machinery, adopting hybrid seeds and imposing GMOs in the name of food security. Bangladesh already released the country's first GMO crop bt. Brinjal in 2014. A GMO potato is in the pipeline and the government announced plans for the commercialization of the world's first Genetically Engineered rice Golden rice in 2018. All this instead of protecting peasants and supporting small scale agroecological farming.

The World Bank and other international donors strategy for corporate led 'food security' is a risky strategy for farming in the context of climate change. Their real interest behind this policy is to enable transnational seed and chemical companies to access agricultural markets in Bangladesh. Therefore, it is important to promote farmers' rights to seeds and empower rural communities so they can protect their own livelihoods. Ensuring Food Sovereignty is the best alternative to the current agriculture policy in Bangladesh.

Climate change, Food Sovereignty and Agriculture encompass multidimensional policy issues of human well-being, environmental management and good governance. Consequently, any strategy to address food sovereignty & sustainable agriculture integrating climate change should consider livelihoods as an integral component. An ecosystem approach to Agriculture and Food sovereignty should be included in all national policies and action plans to reduce vulnerability to climate change.

Voices from the field

The Palestinian Nakba: an ongoing process of displacement and exile

Aghsan Albarghouti, Union of Agricultural Work Committees, Palestine

Seventy long years have passed since the Palestinian Nakba of 1948 where over 700,000 Palestinians were forced to leave their lands, farms and homes and seek refuge in camps scattered across the West Bank, Gaza Strip and in neighboring Arab countries. Today, millions count amongst the Palestinian refugee population and are scattered in numerous cities around the world.

Seventy years on, and the Nakba continues. It continues as thousands of Palestinians are forcibly displaced from their lands and homes not solely in Palestine but in neighboring countries. It continues as Palestinian refugees in Iraq and Syria have been forced to leave their homes multiple times over the years. It continues as a reflection of the difficulties and harsh conditions under which refugees live in Lebanon.

The Nakba continues with the ongoing occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; with Israeli policies of dispossession and house demolishment; with the wars Israel has been waging against Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip; with the settlements that continue to be built on Palestinian lands; with settler aggression sanctioned by the occupying state; and with the attempt to entrench Israeli control over the occupied city of Jerusalem and expel the city's Palestinian inhabitants.

The recently passed Israel nation state law is another reflection of the continuation of the original violence against the indigenous Palestinian population. This law sanctioning the ever-existent Israeli policies of apartheid seeks to further rid the land of Palestine of its original inhabitants as continues to be done by the Israeli occupying state.

Modern slavery of strawberry harvesters

Mohammed Hakach, Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole, Morocco

It took over ten years for the reality of thousands of Moroccan agricultural workers in Spain to come to light. This reality is characterised by suffering, isolation, exploitation and various kinds of harassment. Moroccan rural women are "legally" exported to carry out temporary work in the strawberry fields in the South of Spain in the framework of immigration known as "circular" via the ANAPEC agency that falls under the Ministry for Labour.

The suffering of these unfortunate strawberry workers begins when they are recruited, and ends with harsh working and living conditions. Spanish agricultural employers impose selection criteria that are reminiscent of the slaves in Gorée Island in Senegal. Workers must be young, mothers to children of under thirteen years of age; their hands should be calloused and lined, as this shows that they are of rural origin. Their figures must be suitable in terms of height to enable them to work easily in the greenhouses.

And as to the working, living and pay conditions, the victim's revelations as well as the media reports are unanimous: this is a case of modern slavery. The National Federation of Agriculture, through the voice of its women's agricultural sector workers organisation has tirelessly been denouncing the conditions that the immigrant women have to endure. They consider that the current situation is intolerable. The Moroccan State and Spanish State must be held accountable.

Clearly, the continuation of the Nakba against the Palestinian people within and outside Palestine necessitates collective action and real solidarity towards achieving justice that include the return of refugees to their homes, and the freedom of our land.

A letter from a mother

The letters written by migrants are a valuable source of information on their situation, journeys and the abuse they endure. They are also an important aspect of migration literature. Several farewell letters have been found in the pockets of migrants drowned in the Mediterranean or have been by migrants in distress while in prison. We chose this letter sent by a mother to an immigrant aid association after being separated from her child at the US border.

I'm Claudia. My story began when I crossed the river on May 21, 2018. Immigration took me that day. I was coming with my son Kevin. They took down our information and took us to the ice box where we spent 3 hours. Then they transferred us to another place that they call the kennel. My son and I were there. He was very worried and would tell me that he did not want that food, that we are prisoners and on the 23rd of that same month, they separated me from him with lies and that hurt me a lot because I was not able to say goodbye to my son. I only told him they were taking me for some medical exams, but in reality I was headed to the criminal court. Supposedly, on the way back from court we would be reunited with them but it was not so. I cried so much. I felt that I was going insane, and something was missing in my life. I was not complete. They transferred me to Laredo. There I spent 12 days, then Taylor where I've spent 24 days. My credible fear interview was denied and I will see the judge. But it is not fair. My son has been detained for so long. One comes to this country to seek asylum, not to be imprisoned like a criminal and for them to take your son. In all this time we've only spoken three times and the last time he told me that he is sad and asked "When are we going to be together?" and that broke my heart. We want justice and that they reunite us with our children soon. We are human beings and there are many mothers suffering.

28 June 2018, original in Spanish https://grassrootsleadership.org/sites/default/files/uploads/letter_2_redacted.pdf

Voice 5 Crises and struggle like surviving Amarbail

Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum, member of WFFP

The word "Migrant" is a mark of disaster and the struggle of migrants to breathe is just like that of a tree struggling to survive from mistletoe (Amarbail). Being a migrant is not a crime but they are forced to live a life worse than prisoners throughout the world.

A significant number of migrants exists in Karachi (especially Bengalis and Burmese) and they live close to the sea and next to the industrial area. Most of them work in fishing related professions or as laborers. Their crisis begins with the struggle to obtain National Identity Cards (NIC) which is a prior requirement to be officially entitled to basic human rights, such as access to education, health care and better jobs.

Income-earning opportunities are so limited for migrant fishermen that they live way below the poverty-line in Pakistan. The major reason is the lack of CNIC. They are not allowed to apply for government jobs or sail boats on the sea for fishing purposes. The only way for them to earn bread & butter is to work as laborers on boats or peeling shrimps at home without any legal shelter. They don't get their rightful wages due to their legal status.

The only healthcare service available to them is outdoor service in hospitals. Their patients are not admitted in severe circumstances nor issued blood from blood banks without a CNIC.

Migrants' children are forced to leave their education after elementary classes and are pushed towards illiteracy even in the 21st century. With the introduction of new restrictions to admission in primary schools, even their hopes for primary education are fading away. This act is entirely against the state's obligations; "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children".

Due to a lack of education, jobs and other necessities, their young people are involved in drug trafficking and street crime in order to fulfill their financial needs.

The current generation of fishermen in Pakistan are not migrants. They are here because of their forefathers' migration. NADRA (National Database & Registration Authority) seems to go against the Pakistani Citizenship Act 1951 that states that "every person born in Pakistan after the commencement of this Act shall be a citizen of Pakistan by birth" by not issuing them CNIC.

Bengali communities think that their neighbors are welcoming and give them support to resolve day to day problems. Pakistani society is very hospitable but they are being refused the possibility of merging into society by the departments.

Voice 6 Migrant seasonal workers in the South of Italy

Unione Sindacale di Base, Italy

The Italian trade union Unione Sindacale di Base (USB) aims to represent, defend and promote the rights of working men and women; and to oppose the fragmentation of workers struggles by connecting and unionizing workers in their territories. In Italy seasonal agricultural workers -many of whom are migrants coming from Africa and the Middle East-face extreme conditions of exploitation, repression and racial discrimination. This is instigated by an industrial model of production that depends on the exploitation of farm workers and of peasants. In Italy, the situation is further exacerbated by a right-wing immigration law which forces migrants to have a work contract in order to obtain a temporary residence permit. This creates a black market where migrant workers are forced to accept inhumane work conditions with the hope of not being deported.

In Southern Italy, especially in the regions of Puglia, Basilicata and Calabria, migrant seasonal workers are mainly engaged in the harvesting of citrus fruits, tomatoes and olives depending on the season. They live packed in inhumane conditions, packed into camps, abandoned factories and sheds. They work for two euros per hour under extreme conditions and are subject to violence and intimidation. One of the latest victims was the 29 year old Malian trade unionist and worker Soumalia Sacko, murdered in the Plain of Gioia Tauro near Reggio Calabria. Soumaila was looking for plates for their shacks with two compatriots when he was shot in the head.

This tragic event led the USB to organize multiple mobilizations in several Italian cities to demand justice and claim workers' rights. This story was followed by the national media and opened up the way for the USB to start a conversation with the ministry of agriculture and the ministry of labour.

Workers, as well as peasants, are the last link in the production chain and farmers are often forced to exploit workers because they are trapped a treadmill of production. The innovative position brought forward by USB and La Via Campesina supported by Crocevia is not to side with either peasants or workers but to bring together both groups and to unite in the struggle against a production model that, squeezing the peasants and not allowing for a decent income, leads to the exploitation of migrant seasonal workers.

Soumahoro Aboubakar says: "We are asking for the rights of workers, men and women, regardless of skin colour, to be recognized and respected. On this plain in Calabria, like in many other territories, working men and women have decided to break the chains of exploitation because they believe that united we can really enforce our rights, and divided we will go nowhere especially in a context of a permanent and systematic "hate campaign"".

to read, listen, watch and share

- · Confédération paysanne, Agriculture, a laboratory for exploiting seasonal migrant workers, 2015, http://www.confederationpaysanne.fr/actu.php?id=3866 (French)
- · LVC website https://viacampesina.org/en/what-are-we-fighting-for/migrations-and-rural-workers/
- Video on migrants workers in Europe https://tv.viacampesina.org/Video-sur-les-travailleurs?lang=en
- ECVC, Migration and rural areas in Europe, 2018:https://www.eurovia.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ECVC-Document-on-Migration-and-Rural-Labour-2017.pdf

Open letter to the Global Forum on Migration and Development

To civil society; To multilateral institutions; And to the migrant and refugee movements:

The Nyeleni Collective, promoting food sovereignty as an alternative to slow down the current migration debacle, takes up with great hope the initiatives coming from civil society and the proposals by multilateral institutions to find a way out of the current situation that will, in principle, guarantee human integrity and the full rights of migrants and refugees. In this regards we express our concerns over the course taken by the process of the Global Compact for Migration, to be formalized in Morocco on 10 and 11 December. We also take this opportunity to present our position with regards to this process, and bring forward our own proposals.

We are concerned that the Global Compact for Migration has turned away from the crucial aspect of the human rights of migrants and refugees. Indeed, the Compact does mention some of the features of the migration crisis, using euphemisms such as "the needs of migrants in a situation of vulnerability" and "the respect, protection and enjoyment of human rights by all migrants", but at the same time it uses expressions such as "promoting security and prosperity in our communities"; this means respecting rights but with domestic security and the economy first.

This is extremely serious, especially at this time, when the migrations crisis has become a tragedy never seen in present history. The families torn apart on the border between Mexico and the USA, and the confinement of migrant children in concentration camps in Texas, as well as the countless number of deaths among refugees, especially children, women and elderly people who drown in the Mediterranean; the violent racist and fascist attacks in the main cities of this world and the many anti-migrant actions around the world are pushing civilization to levels of dehumanization and barbarity that draw us back to the darkest periods of our most recent past.

On the contrary, as contained in the title of the Compact itself, "For Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration", the approach of the states is one of convenience, to favour capital. In other words,

it is the opportunity for states, especially the more powerful ones, to generate cheap and tame labour to accumulate wealth and capital. Just as the system loaded the burden of the 2008 financial crisis onto the migrants, now it is attempting to turn the tragedy of migration into an opportunity to increase profitability for the richest in this world.

It is also of great concern to see the difference in how migrants and refugees are treated, hiding away that chucking migrants out of their land for economic reasons or climatic disasters and that of migrants due to occupation wars and plundering all obey the same structural causes of the system. All the forces responsible for migration are ignores, or the exodus caused by whatever reason, and these are the ones deserving full attention to confront the structural causes.

Finally, not only do we express our concerns, but we are also willing to come up with proposals to find a way out of the drama of migration. One of such proposals is to step up our fight for food sovereignty so that people are not forced to abandon their villages to feed and ensure the survival of their families. This of course requires fighting for a charter on the rights of peasants and public, popular agrarian policy reforms by the state. At the same time, this requires halting the grabbing of and speculation with the lands and natural resources of the peoples, and especially ending the wars to occupy territories.

We have further proposals that we wish to share with civil society and multilateral institutions, and we will do this for sure. La Via Campesina will be present in Morocco in December, for the formalization of the Global Compact for Migration, to make public all these concerns and share our proposals. The delegation will be lead by our sisters and brothers from the MENA Region (Middle East and North Africa) and an international delegation from our regions, led by our sister organization FNSA (Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole).

We hope to carry our message to everyone wanting to listen to us and those concerned by the Global Compact for Migration and more interested in a global pact for solidarity in light of the migration debacle caused by capital.

Box 2 - The Manden Charter

The United Nations Member States are preparing to vote on the Declaration on Peasants Rights and other people working in Rural Areas in September in New York. Yet one of the first declarations of fundamental rights was the Manden Charter, proclaimed by the Malinke hunters in 1222 in Mali. The Declaration acted as a constitution, but its scope was universal, as it was addressed to the whole world. It guaranteed the respect for human life and equality, the abolition of slavery and the end of hunger! The Manden Charter was listed in 2009 as part of the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Immaterial Heritage of Humanity. Here are some extracts:

Preamble

The Manden was grounded in understanding and love, freedom and fraternity. This means that no racial or ethic discrimination can exist under Manden. This was the meaning of our struggles.

Article 1 - The hunters declare: All human life is a life. It is indeed true that life appears as the existence of another life. But no one life is "older" than another. And likewise, no life is superior to any other.

Article 5 - The hunters declare: hunger is not a good thing. Nor is slavery. There is no greater calamity than these in this world on earth. As long as we possess quivers and a bow, hunger shall kill nobody in Manden, if perchance there were to be a famine. Nor shall war ever destroy a village in Manden to take its slaves hostage.

Article 7 - Man as an individual survives on food and drink. But his "soul" and his spirit thrives on three things: Seeing what he wishes o see, saying what he wants to say, and doing what he desires to do. Therefore the hunters declare: All humans have rights over their person, and are free to act; this is the oath of Manden to the ears of the entire world.

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