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## [Sign the petition! African women demand that oil palm companies give back their land and stop the violence](#)

**Support African women! Sign the petition included on this article** by filling the form enclosed below. Organized women who live around industrial oil palm plantations denounce different forms of violence.

The United Nations proposed 16 days of activism against violence against women, between November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and December 10, International Human Rights Day. The Cameroonian organization, Réseau des acteurs du Développement Durable (RADD), participated through a daily campaign of sending short messages that linked each of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to one of the ways in which African women suffer from the expansion of agricultural monocultures onto their territories. RADD stated that in order to meet all 17 objectives, it is necessary not to leave behind the women who live around tree plantations, and to eradicate all forms of violence against them.

At the end of this campaign, we once again shared the demands of African women who live around **industrial oil palm plantations**, a monoculture that governments and international certification organizations like the RSPO promote. Through deceitful arguments, these institutions claim that large-scale plantations are a "sustainable" way to produce oil for the food, cosmetic, and agrofuel industries. But far from being sustainable and improving the lives of local communities, **these plantations worsen the conditions of poverty, discrimination, and violence in which women and their children live.**

The arrival of palm companies entails: the theft of lands and the destruction of forests upon which women and their families depend for their livelihoods, an increase in sexual abuses and labor exploitation, criminalization of the use and possession of palm fruits, exposure to pesticides, and the contamination of water. In turn, women are excluded from decision-making processes about the fate of their lands, and they are discriminated against and persecuted if they mobilize to fight for their rights. In the declarations from [Mundemba](#), Cameroon in January 2016, and those from [Port Loko](#) in Sierra Leone in August 2017, organized women denounced these and other forms of violence. And on September 21, International Day of Struggle Against Monoculture Tree Plantations, they launched a [petition](#) demanding that their lands be returned to them and for the violence to cease.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are part of the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, to which over 150 countries agreed in 2015. They came into effect in 2016, with the expectation that participating States follow their guidelines. The goals include eradicating poverty, and achieving food security, health, education, gender equality, dignified work, protection of forests and oceans, among other things.

Almost all of the SDGs are based on an analysis that **does not explain the true direct or underlying causes** of poverty, deforestation, or loss of food sovereignty, which directly and differentially affects women. They do not discuss the encroachment of extractive industries onto countries in the southern hemisphere—which involves the displacement of and loss of territory for

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peasant and indigenous communities—or the unsustainable levels of consumption, especially in countries in the North.

Meanwhile, United Nations agencies, such as the FAO, promote **false solutions** to deforestation and food insecurity, such as increasing industrial tree plantations, mechanisms to offset biodiversity loss, carbon markets and REDD+ programs. These policies—geared toward maintaining the same levels of pollution and consumption but “offsetting” them—**are imposed top-down, reinforcing patriarchal structures.**

In contrast, **these women are demanding participation in decision-making, and the restitution of their lands. As they express in their petition:** "We demand respect for the rights of women within and around large plantations. These women demand that their lands be returned to them, because they must be able to continue enjoying their customary rights to use their lands for productive activities, in order to ensure the food sovereignty of the whole community, the stability and plenitude of their families, and the peace and development of these regions. Women should decide how to use their lands."

**If you wish to sign the petition in solidarity with women in Africa, please fill the following form** with your name and/or the name of the organization you belong to and the country:

[box type="download"] **Petition is closed. End date: March 05, 2018. Download signatures [here](#)**  
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