



An overview of the Porto Alegre International Anti-Fascist Conference from India

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In this interview with Gabriella Lima, Sushovan Dhar takes stock of the first International Anti-Fascist Conference, which took place in Porto Alegre (Brazil) from 26 to 29 March. He discusses the progress, limitations, and challenges involved in building a united anti-fascist and anti-imperialist front at the international level, as well as the prospects of organising a regional conference in Asia in 2027.

Sushovan Dhar is a member of the Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM) from India, which played a leading role in organising the Porto Alegre conference and its international links.

Interview by Gabriella Lima.

Gabriella Lima: What is the context of this international anti-fascist conference, and what significance does it hold within the current political climate?

Sushovan Dhar: It is important to note the political moment in which the conference is taking place. We are in a particularly dangerous and unstable period on a global scale. Indeed, we are simultaneously witnessing the rise of the far right, the return of imperialist wars, and a global offensive against social and democratic rights. Today, we see authoritarian and far-right forces developing everywhere. One needs only to think of Trump and Trumpism in the United States, Milei in Argentina, Modi in India, Netanyahu in Israel, and the rise of the far right in Europe, but also authoritarian regimes in various parts of the world, including Russia and China.

So these dynamics are not isolated; they are deeply linked to the crisis of capitalism, the worsening of social inequalities, and increased militarisation. At the same time, we are also witnessing an obvious resurgence of conflicts between major powers. Thus, the war in Ukraine, the genocide in Palestine, the attack on Iran, the escalation in the Middle East, and the growing tensions in Asia all show that we are entering a period marked by instability and confrontation between blocs.

In this context, the Porto Alegre conference was a very significant attempt to rebuild an internationalist response. Since the decline of the World Social Forum, there has been a lack of space for international political coordination. This conference thus aimed to reignite a dynamic with an obvious objective:

to rebuild an anti-fascist and anti-imperialist front on an international scale. I believe this objective is what gives this conference its political significance. It was not merely an event but a first step towards rebuilding international coordination in the face of the rise of the far right and conflicts.

G.L.: The conference organisers started from the understanding that unity in action was necessary to combat the rise of fascism and the return of large-scale inter-imperialist wars. Can you tell us about this united framework and how it was built? What conclusions do you draw regarding our ability to build a broad anti-fascist front at the international level?

S.D.: It should be noted that, from the outset, we understood quite clearly that, in the face of the global rise of the far right, no organization can act alone. So we had to build broad unity, even with significant political differences. The process brought together a wide variety of actors—social movements, political organisations, trade unions, feminist movements, international networks, and peasant organisations from different traditions on the left. It was this diversity that was our strength, but it also created tensions within the conference. It is important to understand that unity was not built on political homogeneity but by focusing on convergence in action.

This is important because, within an anti-fascist front, the aim is not to have a common line on everything but to build common ground in the face of a threat that affects us all. But this unity has also revealed the contradictions within the international left, which is currently quite fragmented. Certain forces still have a 'campist' view of anti-imperialism and downplay certain authoritarian regimes, such as Russia or China, for the sole reason that they

are 'in conflict' with Western powers. Such unity has given rise to significant debates. But I think this is also a positive aspect, because building an international anti-fascist front necessarily involves political discussions and serious debates. Overall, the conference demonstrated a genuine desire to rebuild international coordination, even if the process still requires development. This presents a challenge!

G.L.: We'll come back to these differences of approach regarding anti-imperialism. Could you say a few words about your assessment of this event and outline the key points from the final declaration adopted in Porto Alegre?

S.D.: The conference was a major success: there was broad participation from delegations across several continents and a powerful militant dynamic. What was particularly important was that the conference helped forge links between organisations and movements that hadn't necessarily worked together before. It also provided an opportunity for open discussion of major strategic issues such as the rise of the far right, wars, the question of anti-imperialism, the debt issue, social and feminist struggles, and so on. The final declaration reflects this broad convergence. It highlights the struggle against the far right, solidarity with Palestine, opposition to imperialist wars, the defence of social and democratic rights, and also - very importantly - the need to strengthen international solidarity.

But at the same time, as Eric Toussaint also [emphasised in his assessment of the conference](#), this convergence took place amid certain political ambiguities, which are important to acknowledge because building a sustainable dynamic requires clarifying these differences. In short, I would say

that the conference represented an important step, but that it marks a starting point rather than a finishing line.



G.L.: To return to its limitations, within the international left, some felt that this conference lent credence to the idea that it was essentially only Western imperialist powers that served as a base of support for the various far-right movements around the world. Can you tell us a little more about how this debate unfolded within the organising committee, with those who opposed referring to Vladimir Putin's Russia as one of the imperialist powers that must be fought, even though Russia has been waging one of the most brutal imperialist wars for over four years in Ukraine and openly supports far-right forces internationally?

S.D.: One of the most important debates at the conference naturally centred on the question of Russia, the war in Ukraine and, more broadly, how to define anti-imperialism today. Some of the forces present rightly highlighted the role of Western imperialist powers, notably the United States and NATO. But at the same time, some of these forces refused—or hesitated—to characterise Russia as an imperialist power or to clearly denounce the aggression against Ukraine that has been raging for over four years. This debate is fundamental, because it touches on the very credibility of an international anti-fascist and anti-imperialist project. If we adopt a selective view of anti-imperialism, we risk falling into a ‘campist’ logic, which fails to mention certain authoritarian regimes simply because they are in conflict with Western powers.

Yet Putin’s Russia has for several years been waging a brutal war of invasion against Ukraine, resulting in massive destruction, the repression of democratic movements, and an aggressive policy throughout the region and even against any opposition within its own country. Furthermore, the Russian regime maintains links with various far-right forces on an international scale. It was emphasised during the conference that overlooking this issue was one of its political limitations. This shows that there are still significant differences within the highly fragmented international left regarding how to conceive of anti-imperialism in a multipolar world. So for us, the position must be very clear: anti-imperialism cannot be selective; it must oppose all imperialist powers, whatever they may be. Otherwise, we weaken our internationalist perspective.

G.L.: Could you also comment on the efforts made by activists from the Fourth International Organization to highlight solidarity with the

Ukrainian people and denounce Russian imperialism during the conference?

S.D.: Activists from Fourth International and its affiliated organisations played a major role in organising this conference and defending an independent internationalist position. It was essential to do so. Several speeches affirmed our solidarity with the Ukrainian people whilst also opposing NATO and global militarisation. This independent position rejects both any alignment with Western powers and any complacency toward Russian imperialism. This stance is essential for rebuilding a credible internationalism.

Discussions were also held to highlight the struggles of Ukrainian social movements and trade unions and feminist organisations, as well as the democratic opposition in Russia. The daughter of Boris Kargalitsky, imprisoned for his criticism of Putin's regime, was present, reminding everyone that internationalist solidarity must be built with peoples, not with states. These contributions obviously did not resolve all differences, but they opened up an important debate and put forward an independent internationalist position within the conference.



G.L.: How can we explain that a representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, responsible for the bloodiest repression in that country for over 40 years, was invited and actively participated in this conference? Should 21st-century anti-imperialism and the struggle against far-right regimes worldwide clearly oppose turning a blind eye to authoritarian regimes simply because they conflict with Western imperialisms?

S.D. That is indeed a critical question. The representative from Iran was on the same panel as me, and his presence represented a notable limitation of the conference. It rightly provoked significant criticism both from those

present and from comrades internationally. The Iranian regime is notorious for its extremely brutal repression of social movements, trade unions, women, and minorities. The 'Women, Life, Freedom' movement has vividly illustrated the extent of popular opposition to this authoritarian regime. In this context, the participation of a representative connected to this regime at our conference raises a serious political issue.

The interview originally appeared in French on [Marx 21 website](#).

About the Author



Sushovan Dhar and Gabriella Lima

Author

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Sushovan Dhar

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Editorial Board Member of Alternative Viewpoint



Gabriella Lima

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is an activist based at Lausanne.