

**In the World Bank's opinion**, there are "too many" African students and their numbers should be cut. Why bother educating those who are destined to be a source of unskilled cheap labour for the West? Where many post-independence governments invested in free education up to university level, the World Bank and IMF structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) imposed drastic cuts to higher education. Most students now pay fees, and no longer receive stipends which once covered meals and supplies.

According to *A Thousand Flowers: Social Struggles Against Structural Adjustment in African Universities*: "On most African campuses, student life today verges on the catastrophic. Overcrowded classrooms, students running on one meal a day, failing water and electricity supplies, collapsing buildings, libraries without journals or books, lack of educational supplies from paper to chalk and even pens are the visible test of what [the IMF], stripped from the ideological smoke, actually provides."

The higher education student in Africa is an endangered species. Perhaps not coincidentally, African student movements have been the fiercest critics of the World Bank and IMF's new form of colonialism. "The police and/or the army are frequently stationed on or near the campus and classes are filled with informers, to pre-empt or suppress students organizing and protesting," *A Thousand Flowers* reports.

African students fighting education cutbacks and economic restructuring over the past 20 years are described as "hoodlums", just like their counterparts in the global North. Hundreds of African students have been killed on protests, paying the ultimate price of resistance. But the following testimony from the *Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa* speaks not just of death, but of hope, as a new generation of young people – part of the international movement against neoliberal globalization – carry the message of the African student dead to the Washington doorstep of the World Bank and IMF.

## An April of Death: African students fight World Bank policies

by the editors of the *Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa* newsletter

The ten days between 9 April and 18 April 2001 were bloody ones for African students and youth. They epitomized the literal war African states (committed to the structural adjustment ideology of the World Bank and IMF) are waging against African youths who see no future for themselves or their countries in the path these states are following.

On Monday 9 April, a Zimbabwean science student, *Batanayi Madzidzi*, aged 20, died from injuries suffered during clashes with the police on Sunday. The clashes arose from a demonstration organized to protest the late payments of their stipends. This was one of many demonstrations in the last decade the students of the University of Harare have organized focusing on the rising costs of food, accommodation, and tuition due to the government's structural adjustment policies. The immediate trigger of the students' anger was the apparent suicide on Friday 6 April of a first-year female student who was found dead in a female students' hostel with a note beside her body that referred to a relationship gone sour. Apparently many female students, in the context of the economic crisis, are financing their education through making liaisons with wealthy men. The results are not, however, always under their control.

On Wednesday 11 April, students of the Addis Ababa

University in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia were demonstrating against the police presence on campus, and demanding elementary academic freedom rights like freedom of assembly and expression on campus. Apparently two plain-clothes policemen were spotted by the students in their midst; this triggered an attack by riot police bent on rescuing their colleagues. The police riot ended in the injury of 50 students that night. In the following days, student demonstrations and strikes were echoed by rioting in the city by youths who state officials called “hoodlums and lumpen.” Shops were looted, government buildings burned, and cars were trashed. The state unleashed a deadly response, killing 38 people and wounding 252 others. The deaths were due largely to gunshot wounds caused by police fire. Thousands of students were arrested and sent to a concentration camp in the village of Sendafa, 17 miles north east of Addis Ababa. Students returned to campus in early May, but continued to demand the release of all their fellows. They eventually left the university campus en masse on 12 June, concluding that the government was not seriously negotiating with them.

On Wednesday 18 April, while the deadly confrontation in Ethiopia between students and police was beginning to quiet, Algerian police killed a student, Germah Massinissa, in the Kabylia region during a demonstration anticipating the huge annual gathering of indigenous Berbers to celebrate “Berber Spring” on 20 April. The killing of the student was followed by demonstrations of protest throughout Kabylia, and by sympathetic demonstrations in Algiers and other parts of Algeria where students chanted, “We are all Berbers!” These demonstrations were met with determined violence by state forces. At least 50 people have been killed in a long series of demonstrations demanding the right to practice Berber culture. But they continue, and they threaten the government’s hold on power.

We present these moments of Zimbabwean, Ethiopian, and Algerian state violence as an indication of African states’ confirmation of the World Bank’s judgment on the students of Africa: there are too many of them; they are expendable. At the same time the political leaders of Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, and Algeria, through their decision to respond with massive mortal force, have lost hold of the future while these

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heads of the IMF in Bamako, Mali. Banners outside the meetings announce that the World Bank and IMF are assassinating African people, and causing poverty and catastrophe.

>> **February 20** >> Direct actionists in the Earth Liberation Front network burn a research cotton gin at Delta and Pine Land Company in Visalia, California, US. Their communiqué announces that the warehouse was

chosen “because it contained massive quantities of transgenic cottonseed in storage”. No one is injured in the action.

>> **February 21** >> Indian farmers disobey police orders, and march towards the port in Mumbai to stage a symbolic protest against import of food grains and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Police arrest over 51,000 of them, release them after several hours, and

then disperse the crowd with water cannons.

>> **February 24-March 11** >> Following the historic route of Emiliano Zapata into Mexico City, 23 Zapatista commanders and Subcomandante Marcos caravan through 13 Mexican states on the March of Indigenous Dignity. They are joined by thousands of members of national and international civil society. Their demands are constitutional recognition of indigenous rights, the