A comic series illustrates how corporations are capturing governments, and why we need to stop them

(16 February, 2021) Coinciding with the opening of the 46th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 22 February 2021, ESCR-Net -International Network of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, will launch the online comic series “The Power of the 99% to Stop Corporate Capture,” to shed light on the widespread global phenomenon of how corporations are capturing government institutions and decision-making, including in international spaces such as the United Nations.

“Corporate capture of government decision-making affects all of us in every country across the globe in similar ways - it results in privatization and public policy that prioritizes profit over people. This comic series helps us to collectively name and shame not only the ongoing corporate capture, but also some of the global corporations that are behind rigging our systems in country after country,” says Shayda Nacify, Senior Program Director at Corporate Accountability and one of the dozens of ESCR-Net members.

The global Network has worked with Zago Brothers to illustrate the series, whose first episode focuses on the capture of the United Nations. Alongside the comic (available in English, Spanish, French and Arabic,) the Network will release a background document providing specific examples of how corporations are influencing multilateral processes.

The release of the first episode during the opening session of the HRC, aims to draw international attention on what the Network defines as a “global trend” of corporations receiving
privileged access to multilateral decision-making spaces, which results in states prioritizing corporate elites in decisions instead of the human rights of the 100% of the world’s population.

The series is part of a broader advocacy strategy that ESCR-Net members have been collectively developing over the last 15 years. ESCR-Net has been central to mobilizing global advocacy for an international treaty to strengthen corporate accountability for human rights abuses and violations. However, members have repetitively denounced that the treaty process, currently being negotiated in the United Nations, is “threatened by corporate capture”, often through the inclusion of corporate lobbyists and associations, such as the International Organization of Employers (IOE), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and the United States Council for International Business (USCIB), in consultations on the treaty despite the conflict of interest -- allowing them to exert influence on a binding treaty that is meant to hold them accountable.

“Hundreds of social movements, affected communities and civil society organizations from around the globe have mobilized and played a key role in the treaty process affirming that it is high time to end corporate impunity. In doing so, we have been urging that the treaty must set clear provisions to stop and counter corporate capture in its various forms, and ensure that states take preventive and effective measures to protect against such undue influence and its impacts on human rights and environmental rights,” says Maha Abdallah, International Advocacy Officer at the Cairo Institute for Human Rights and ESCR-Net Board member.

“Corporate capture is so harmful for countries that hundreds of advocates, national and international organizations are looking for different alternatives that will allow us to understand this situation and also look for strategies to stop corporate capture,” says Martha Devia Grisales, who is part of Comité Ambiental en Defensa de la Vida - a social movement emerging from Colombia and ESCR-Net member.

The upcoming episodes will illustrate other human rights issues being impacted globally by corporate capture, including our healthcare systems, the right to a healthy environment, foreign debt and the need for a just recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and corporate abuses in conflict-affected areas.

“Our message in this comic series is clear: if we work together, we - the 99% - can reclaim governance for the public interest in a world in which public goods are not privatized, where we
have living economies instead of economies of death, and where a new normal is possible,” affirms Sahyda Nacify.

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WATCH THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO:

Note to editors

- ESCR-Net connects over 280 NGOs, social movements and advocates across more than 75 countries to build a global movement to make human rights and social justice a reality for all.
- Shayda Nacify, Martha Devia Grisale and Maha Abdallah are three of dozens of members from every region confronting corporate capture and impunity via ESCR-Net's Corporate Accountability Working Group and beyond.
- **4 March, 2020** - Join our comic presentation event. Register here.
- Examples of corporate capture in the United Nations: See our background document.
- **Manifestations of corporate capture**: 8 ways corporations are exerting their influence in decision-making spaces around the world.

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