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Antilles

# Chlordecone: the fight against colonial crime takes on a new dimension

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**Chlordecone, an insecticide classified as carcinogenic in 1979, was authorised in the Antilles (French West Indies) to combat banana weevils until 1993. It took a very long time to eliminate: a century for the concentration to be divided by ten!**

It is present in soil, plants and spring water, and accumulates in organisms via the food chain: traces are found in the plasma of 90% of West Indians, with neurological consequences for pregnant women and newborns, and prostate cancer, not to mention effects that are still poorly understood.

## No penalties for this health scandal

The poisoning of the people of the Antilles is no longer in dispute: in 2021, the French government has finally recognized the prostate cancers of people who have worked for at least ten years in contact with chlordecone as an occupational disease, allowing them to be compensated. But nothing for the others!

What's more, the courts have refused to penalize the chain of responsibility that allowed chlordecone to be produced and used on a massive scale. In January 2023, sixteen years after the complaint was lodged, the dismissal of the case was rightly seen as yet another act of colonial contempt. The judges confirmed that there was a "health scandal", but decided that no one could be punished!

Against this impunity, the *Lyannaj pou dépolyé Matinik* collective, which played a central role in the mobilisation, the huge demonstration on 21 February 2021 and the following ones, has built an even broader front against this dismissal, for truth, justice and reparations for this crime. Because the current responses - free tests, money put into the victims' compensation fund and the chlordecone plans - fall far short of the mark.

## A week of mobilisation

This is how *Simenn Matinik Doubout - Gaoule kont Chlordécone* came into being last June, bringing together trade unions (CDMT, CFDT, CSTM, FO, UNSA), political parties (CNCP, Fédération socialiste, GRS, InsoumiEs, MIM, PALIMA, PCM, Peyi-A, PPM, RDM, RESPE), environmental and women's rights associations, lawyers, artists and activists. This wide range of social, political, cultural and civic forces is a new and very important element in building the balance of power.

The collective is organizing a week of mobilization from 22 to 28 October, joined by Guadeloupean organizations, around a village of struggles and alternatives, debates on health, demands, agriculture, fishing, judicial prospects (with the plan to bring civil actions against hundreds of people) and a mass demonstration on Saturday 28 October. To prepare for the initiative, meetings are being held everywhere, with local elected representatives and the general public, to put together the civil party files.

The plan for an international citizens' tribunal on chlordecone and other pesticides is also under discussion. The French workers' and democratic movement must stand shoulder to shoulder with the Antilles activists, by taking part in the solidarity mobilization on 28 October and supporting all the proceedings under way.

19 October 2023

PS:

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