

UNISON East Midlands

International



News from the East Midlands
International Committee—January 2012

NEWS

UNISON is the only UK trade union which commits under its rule book to international solidarity work. Rule B4.3 confirms that a UNISON objective is to participate in international trade union activities and to foster appropriate international links.



The Branch International Officer has a role to play in communicating international work of UNISON to members in the branch, participating in Regional structures and promoting and encouraging solidarity work. The Branch International Officer can also develop awareness around the international context in which many of the day to day issues our members face are set e.g. privatisation, neo liberal economics and workers rights. A full description of responsibilities can be found in the Code of Good Branch Practice handbook.

In forthcoming Annual General Meetings branches are encouraged to ensure they have elected an International Officer in order to help ensure that this important dimension of our union's work is given consideration.

Weekend Seminar for branch international officers and regional contacts

There will be an international weekend seminar on the union's international work from:

**Friday 23 March 5.00 pm –
Sunday 25 March 12.00**

The seminar will include presentations, guest speakers and discussions on various topics including: trade union rights in Central America, Burma, austerity in Europe and the fight against neo-liberalism.

*(Application form available from Catherine Barral
c.barral@unison.co.uk)*

In this edition of the Regional International Newsletter information is provided on:

WAR ON WANT - campaigning for world social, economic and employment rights

JUSTICE FOR COLOMBIA - information on the campaign to support trade unionists in the most dangerous country on the planet

VENEZUELA UPDATE - read alternative information on the work of the government of President Hugo Chavez

PALESTINE - BOYCOTT OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES GOODS - learn about the campaign to boycott Israeli goods from the occupied territories

CUBA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN - latest information on the campaign to free the MIAMI FIVE jailed by the US for exposing home grown terrorists in Miami with possible links to the US State Security agencies responsible for assassinations, bombings including passenger planes and drug dealing.

SPANISH CIVIL WAR - 2011 saw the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, read about the legacy of the International Brigades who went to fight Fascism.



In 2011 the Regional International Committee received a presentation from War on Want which highlighted how people on this planet are linked and how the terms of international trade reinforce income disparity, inequality and extreme poverty. War on Want highlighted how we can make differences both at a local, national and international level to combat corporate power, oppressive regimes and improve human rights including the rights of trade unionists.

War on Want fights poverty in developing countries in partnership with people affected by globalisation. War on Want campaigns for human rights and against the root causes of global poverty, inequality and injustice. War on Want have a position which is that poverty is political. The decisions of politicians in rich countries can mean life or death for people in developing countries. We have the power to reshape the global landscape - to ensure that people across the world can live in justice and peace.

War on Want works with some of the bravest and most inspiring groups of people around the world whether it be in rural communities, in factories and sweatshops, in conflict zones and on the margins of society, with people fighting for real, lasting change.

War on Want sees itself as an integral part of the labour movement, and is proud of achievements in helping win rights for working people around the world.

War on Want has worked with the British labour movement for almost sixty years. Trade unions at all levels have been key supporters of War on Want and we have developed strong and lasting links.

As long ago as 1981, War on Want launched a "One hour's pay" campaign with the support of Harold Wilson and the British Labour movement.

The campaign raised the issue of poverty and unemployment in the UK and in the developing world and called on supporters to donate one hour's pay. It raised £10k and attracted trade union members, celebrities and the general public who subsequently became involved in a War on Want supported "People's March for Jobs".

By 1985 sixteen national trade unions affiliated or contributing regularly; there are now twenty five affiliates. Trade unions have also been responsible for providing practical help. In order to support our partners in Western Sahara, the FBU took fire tenders out to Algeria loaded with materials to help build air-conditioned warehouses so that those Saharawi living in exile in refugee camps would be able to store food.

Trade unions have not only supported these campaigns, but have also offered invaluable support for War on Wants partners. The trade union Prospect has supported Cactus in Colombia an organisation that offers advice to workers in the flower industry who are trying to organise as trade unions.

More recently, in 2009 many trade unions signed up to the Love Fashion Hate Sweatshops campaign. Unite the union helped to fund a visit from our partners in Honduras and is supporting our 2010 Annual Conference.

Most major UK trade unions, including UNISON, are affiliated to War on Want, and many individual supporters are also trade union members. Why not get your local branch to affiliate direct to War on Want. As an affiliate you can vote at the AGM, receive information on campaigns and have a real say in future policy. You can affiliate to War on Want easily by downloading a form and returning it. You can either enclose a cheque for one year's affiliation, or set up a Direct Debit. You can find out more at www.waronwant.org

This article is produced from information on the War on Want website.

JUSTICE FOR COLOMBIA



Justice for Colombia (JFC) is a British NGO that campaigns for human rights, workers' rights and the search for peace with social justice in Justice for Colombia.

Colombia remains the most dangerous place on the planet to be a trade unionist. The Regional International Committee sees this as a priority matter for all trade unionists to support the work of this campaigning organisation.

Established in 2002 by the British trade union movement, JFC was created in response to the appalling human rights crisis in Colombia, and particularly the abuses committed against trade unionists and other civil society actors. Though our core backing continues to come predominantly from the trade unions, JFC's support base has expanded to include the legal profession, the student movement and numerous politicians, journalists and academics and we now also have a chapter in the Republic of Ireland – JFC Ireland – and supporters in several other European countries.

International pressure, including from JFC, has led to some improvements in the situation in Colombia although in other areas the situation has deteriorated and Colombia remains the most dangerous place on earth in which to be a trade unionist or a human rights defender.

JFC runs several campaigns in the UK and Europe and has various projects on the ground in Colombia including one to promote a free press, a project to assist trade unionists and others that have been victims of human rights abuses, a project working with displaced agricultural workers to protect their human rights, and a project to help trade unions improve their recruitment and organising activities.

The JFC office is in London and all staff speak fluent Spanish and have lived and/or worked in Colombia. The management committee, which decides what campaigns and projects we will prioritise, is made up of prominent trade union leaders, lawyers and politicians.

The four founding aims of Justice for Colombia are:

- To provide concrete support to trade unions and other civil society organisations in Colombia in their struggle for human rights, trade union rights, democracy, peace and social justice and to promote links between progressive organisations in Britain and Colombia.
- To campaign against the systematic human rights abuses carried out against trade unionists and other civil society activists in Colombia and to highlight the regular collusion between the Colombian state security forces and illegal paramilitary groups and the impunity which the perpetrators benefit from.
- To support and promote a peaceful politically negotiated settlement to the conflict in Colombia and express opposition to foreign military intervention in Colombia.
- To insist that UN and ILO conventions and recommendations are implemented in Colombia in both law and practice.

JFC campaigns are about trying to bring about an improvement in the human rights situation in Colombia.

The European Union should not sign a Free Trade Agreement with Colombia so long as the Colombian Government continues to abuse the human rights of its citizens.

There are hundreds of political prisoners currently imprisoned in Colombian jail. JFC is campaigning to free them.

The British Government provides military aid to Colombia despite the fact that the Colombian Army frequently violates human rights. Britain provides highly secretive assistance to the Colombian security forces. Among those who have benefited are Colombian military units that have been involved in the torture and murder of trade unionists and other innocent people. Even more concerning is that there are no strings attached to the assistance – so even when Colombian soldiers kill people the aid keeps flowing.

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Media reports say that Britain also provides aid and equipment to the DAS secret police. This is extremely concerning given that the DAS has provided paramilitary death squads with lists of trade unionists to kill. The DAS has also been involved in espionage and intimidation against journalists, members of the political opposition and human rights activists, supposedly using equipment provided by the British to carry out such activities.

Most shockingly the British Government has repeatedly misled the public about their involvement in Colombia. At times British officials have even lied and simply denied that there is any British military involvement in Colombia at all. They have also refused to reveal the financial value of the assistance to Colombia making it impossible for British taxpayers to know how much of their money is being spent and on what.

Please contact your MP asking them to call for an end to all military aid to Colombia.

See they work for you website

www.theyworkforyou.com. If Britain wants to help Colombia there are millions of people living in desperate poverty that would benefit from educational, housing and health projects. Providing assistance to those responsible for the human rights crisis makes no sense – especially when public services are being cut at home. However you look at it, the money could be better spent.



WHY VENEZUELA IS IMPORTANT

The article below highlights the strategic importance of Venezuela to the idea of alternative social, political and economic forms in Latin America based on principles of equality, social justice and democracy.

The article illustrates why the Chavez government is seen as such a threat to the strategic interests of US based multi nationals and Corporate Capitalism in general.

A Union is Born: Latin America in Revolution By Eva Golinger - Correo del Orinoco International

While much of the world is in crisis and protests are erupting throughout Europe and the United States, Latin American and Caribbean nations are building consensus, advancing social justice and increasing positive cooperation in the region. Social, political and economic transformations have been taking place through democratic processes in countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil throughout the past decade, leading to a massive reduction in poverty and income disparity in the region, and a substantial increase in social services, quality of life and direct participation in political process.

One of the major initiatives of progressive Latin American governments this century has been the creation of new regional organizations that promote integration, cooperation and solidarity amongst neighbouring nations. Cuba and Venezuela began this process in 2004 with the founding of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), that now includes Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Dominica, St. Vincent's and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda. ALBA was initially launched in response to the US government's failed attempt to impose its Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) throughout the region. Today ALBA is a thriving multilateral organization with member nations that share similar political visions for their countries and for the region, and includes numerous cooperation agreements in economic, social and cultural areas.

The fundamental basis of trade amongst ALBA nations is solidarity and mutual benefit.

There is no competition, exploitation or attempt to dominate amongst ALBA states. ALBA even counts on its own currency, the SUCRE, which allows for trade between member nations without dependence on the US dollar.

In 2008, the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) was formally established as a regional body representing South American states. While ALBA is much more consolidated as a unified political voice, Unasur represents a diversity of political positions, economic models and visions for the region. But Unasur members share the common goal of working towards regional unity and guaranteeing the resolution of conflicts through peaceful and diplomatic means.



Unasur has already played a key role in peacefully resolving disputes in Bolivia, particularly during an attempted coup against the government of Evo Morales in 2008, and has also successfully moderated a severe conflict between Colombia and Venezuela, leading to the reestablishment of relations in 2010.

Two hundred years ago, South American Independence hero Simon Bolivar, a native of Venezuela, dreamed of building regional unity and creating a "Patria Grande" (Grand Homeland) in Latin America. After achieving independence for Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Colombia, and fighting colonialists in several Caribbean nations, Bolivar attempted to turn this dream of Latin American unity into reality. His efforts were sabotaged by powerful interests opposing the creation of a solid regional bloc, and eventually, with the aid of the United States, Bolivar was ousted from his rule in Venezuela and died isolated in Colombia several years later. Meanwhile, the US government had proceeded to implement its Monroe Doctrine, a decree first declared by President James Monroe in 1823 to ensure US domination and control over the newly-freed nations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Nearly two hundred years of invasions, interventions, aggressions, coup d'etats and hostilities led by the US government against Latin American nations shadowed the 19th and 20th centuries. By the end of the 20th century, Washington had successfully imposed governments in every Latin American and Caribbean nation that were subordinate to its agenda, with the exception of Cuba. The Monroe Doctrine had been achieved, and the US felt confident in its control over its "backyard".

The unexpected turn at the beginning of the 21st century in Venezuela, formerly one of Washington's most stable and subservient partners, came as a shock to the US. Hugo Chavez had been elected President and a Revolution had begun. A coup d'etat attempt in 2002 failed to subvert the advancement of the

Bolivarian Revolution and the spread of revolutionary fever throughout the region. Soon Bolivia followed, then Nicaragua and Ecuador. Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay elected socialist presidents, two of them former guerrilla fighters. Major changes began to occur throughout the region as the peoples of this vast, diverse and rich continent assumed power and made their voices heard.

Social transformations in Venezuela that gave voice to people's power became exemplary for others in the region, as did President Chavez's defiance of US imperialism. A powerful sentiment of Latin American sovereignty and independence grew stronger, even reaching those with governments aligned with US interests and multinational control.

On December 2-3, 2011, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac) was born and the overwhelming force of a continent nearly 600 million strong, achieved a 200-year dream of unity. The 33 member nations of Celac all agree on the unquestionable necessity to build a regional organization that represents their interests, and that excludes the overbearing presence of the US and Canada. While Celac will take time to consolidate, the exceptional commitment evidenced by the 33 states present at its launching in Caracas, Venezuela, cannot be underestimated.

Celac will have to overcome attempts to sabotage and neutralize its expansion and endurance, and the threats against it and intents to divide member nations will be numerous and frequent. But the resistance of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean who have resumed this path of unity and independence after nearly two hundred years of imperialist aggression, demonstrates the powerful force that has led this region to become an inspiration for those seeking social justice and true freedom around the world.

This article was taken from the Venezuela Solidarity website. Branches are encouraged to affiliate. More information can be obtained at www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk

PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Don't buy into the Israeli Occupation, since the landmark policy passed at the TUC last year to boycott all companies complicit in the illegal Occupation, the PSC has launched a new campaign calling supermarkets to stop using suppliers that profit from Occupation. Don't buy into the Israeli Occupation

Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem are all under an illegal occupation by Israel, which profits from exporting goods, including fruit and vegetables and herbs, grown in illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian land, into the UK. While most British supermarkets now claim to no longer stock goods from illegal settlements, they continue to source from companies that profit from these settlements. The sale of products from these companies help to sustain their operations in the settlements.

To take action:

- Email: info@palestinecampaign.org.uk to order the new PSC/TUC postcards.
- Encourage members of your branch to use the e-tool at www.palestinecampaign.org to send supermarket CEO's an email
- Hold a supermarket inspection for Israeli goods, or hold protest or stall outside your local supermarket.
- Hand out boycott pledge cards and supermarket postcards.
- Keep up the supermarket inspections to help us inform activists around the country which Israeli goods are stocked in supermarkets. Email: bds@palestinecampaign.org

CUBA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN MIAMI FIVE UPDATE (05 December 2011)

More than 250 people braved lashing rain to stand shoulder to shoulder with the mothers of the Miami 5 outside the US embassy on Thursday 1 December. The fifth annual US embassy vigil heard from trade union general secretaries and leaders, lawyers, and MPs who all pledged their continued support for the campaign for family visitation rights and their freedom from US jails. Actors, musicians and poets performed moving compositions inspired by the five and read personal extracts from letters between the five and their families. The highlight of the evening was the appearance of Mirta Rodriguez, Irma Schwerert, and Magali Llorca, mothers of three of the five, Antonio, Rene and Fernando. They expressed their gratitude and that of their sons for the support in the UK, saying that they would go back to Cuba with renewed hope that their cause would continue to be pushed in the UK after their return home.

Amnesty labels Miami Five trial as unfair 04 January 2012

In its 2011 Annual Report Amnesty International singled out the trial of the Miami Five under the heading of 'Unfair Trials' in the United States country report. This was the only trial in the US to be singled out by Amnesty International as unfair in this report.

The exact entry reads:

Unfair Trials

In June, a new appeal was filed in the case of Gerardo Hernández, one of five men convicted in 2001 of acting as intelligence agents for Cuba and related charges. The appeal was based, in part, on evidence that the US government had secretly paid journalists to write prejudicial articles in the media at the time of trial, thereby undermining the defendants' due process rights. In October, Amnesty International sent a report to the Attorney General outlining the organisation's concerns in the case. In October 2010 Amnesty International had published a Report on the case of the Five concluding that:

"The organisation believes that the concerns outlined above combine to raise serious doubts about the fairness of the proceedings leading to their conviction, in particular the prejudicial impact of publicity about the case on a jury in Miami. Amnesty International hopes that these concerns can still be given due consideration by the appropriate appeal channels. Should the legal appeals process not provide a timely remedy, and given the long prison terms imposed and length of time the prisoners have already served, Amnesty International is supporting calls for a review of the case by the US executive authorities through the clemency process or other appropriate means."

More information on this campaign and broader issues relating to Cuba including the campaign to end the illegal blockade can be found at www.cubasolidarity-org.uk

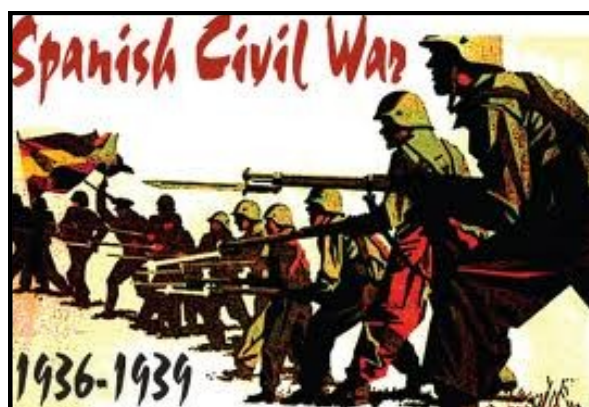
Spanish Civil War - Legacy of fight against fascism

At UNISON's international seminar in Liverpool in October, North West regional secretary Frank Hont told delegates about his involvement in the International Brigade Memorial Trust (IBMT), and why the legacy of those who fought fascism in Spain over 70 years ago is still relevant today.

"The IBMT works hard to keep alive the memory of those brave men and women who went to Spain in the 1930s to fight fascism.

"The Spanish Civil War was a conflict between a democratically elected republic and a gang of rebellious army officers – the so-called 'Nationalists'. The defeat of the republic was hastened by the arms embargo enforced by Britain and other western democracies and the support given to the nationalists by Hitler and Mussolini. 'By their friends shall you know them.'

"Thanks to the IBMT the commitment, loyalty, courage and humanity shown by those men and women will never be forgotten. But more than that we should be ever watchful about the threat of fascism here and now as the BNP and EDL parade on our streets. We owe that to those who gave their young lives for our freedom."



UNISON activists were also privileged to hear Dolores Long speak. Dolores is the daughter of Brigadier Sam Wild who was leader of the British Battalion in 1938. She said her father and all the other British Brigaders went to Spain because they believed that if you didn't fight the hatred and intolerance of fascism there the fight would be taken to Britain's door. They were proved right.

Delegates pledged to encourage their branches and regions to affiliate to IBMT. You can do the same. International Brigade Memorial Trust: <http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/>

This newsletter was produced by the UNISON East Midlands Regional International Committee. For more information or to highlight international work of UNISON branches please contact Regional Organiser Gerry Looker at g.looker@unison.co.uk

PLEASE FILL IN THIS FORM IN BLOCK CAPITALS USING BLACK INK AND GIVE IT TO YOUR UNISON REP OR STEWARD OR POST TO UNISON REGIONAL CENTRE, FREEPOST, NOTTINGHAM NG5 1AF.

1. YOUR PERSONAL DETAILS

Please tick or fill in the boxes below

Mrs	Ms	Miss	Mr	Other
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First name	Other initial(s)
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Surname/Family name	Date of Birth / /
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Home address	Postcode
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National insurance number (from your Payslip)

Please tick this box if you require materials in a different format (eg large print or Braille) - be sure to supply contact details below.

Please give a telephone number/voice/text/email address for UNISON to contact you—indicate if work or home

Contact tel/voice/text/email

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian other	<input type="checkbox"/>	White UK	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	White other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black UK	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Asian UK	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Please tick this box if you are a student member in full-time education (including student nurses). Your subscription is £10 per year.



2. YOUR EMPLOYMENT DETAILS

Employer's name

Your job title/occupation

Department/section

Workplace address	Postcode
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Payroll number (from your payslip)

4. POLITICAL FUND

UNISON's **Affiliated Political Fund (APF)** is used to campaign for and promote UNISON policy and need for quality public services within the Labour Party, locally and nationally, in Parliament and Europe. UNISON APF affiliates to the Labour Party.

UNISON's **General Political Fund (GPF)** is used to pay for and the campaigning at branch, regional and national levels of the union and for research and lobbying in Parliament and Europe. It is independent of support for any political party.

It is important that you indicate a choice of fund by ticking one of the boxes below, otherwise you will be allocated to a fund by the union. Your subscription shown at section 3 includes a political fund payment so you do not pay any more by being in one of the funds.

If you have been a member of a trade union before, please state which one:

The information provided by you shall be recorded by UNISON for statistical purposes and used for sending you UNISON publications, ballot forms and otherwise communicating with you. If you do NOT want any mailings from UNISON, besides those required by statute, please tick this box.

To keep you fully informed of the services we arrange for members we want you to receive details of benefits offered by or in conjunction with UNISON's affinity partners. The affinity partners are organisations with close links to UNISON that share our ambition to provide you with the best possible range of benefits. Under the Data Protection legislation we can only disclose your details to our affinity partners with your explicit consent. Therefore if you WANT to receive details of the range of benefits you MUST tick this box.

5. YOUR AUTHORISATION

I wish to join UNISON and accept its rules and constitution.
I authorise deduction of UNISON subscription from my salary/wages at the rate determined by UNISON in accordance with its rules to be paid over to them on my behalf and I authorise my employer to provide information to UNISON to keep my records up to date

I authorise deduction of the following Political Fund payment as part of my subscription: *Tick one box only*

Affiliated Political Fund General Political Fund

Now Please sign and date below.

Signature

Date

OTHER WAYS TO PAY
Direct debit
Cheque
(please tick if appropriate)

3. WHAT YOU WILL PAY— CURRENT RATES (set 1 October 2003)

Your Subscription- What you pay:	Please tick your earnings		
	Weekly Pay	Annual Pay	Per week/month
Up to £38.47	<input type="checkbox"/>	Up to £2000	£0.30 £1.30
£38.48-£96.16	<input type="checkbox"/>	£2001-£5000	£0.81 £3.50
£96.17-£153.84	<input type="checkbox"/>	£5001-£8000	£1.22 £5.30
£153.85-£211.53	<input type="checkbox"/>	£8001-£11,000	£1.52 £6.60
£211.54-£269.23	<input type="checkbox"/>	£11,001-£14,000	£1.81 £7.85
£269.24-£326.92	<input type="checkbox"/>	£14,001-£17,000	£2.24 £9.70
£326.93-£384.61	<input type="checkbox"/>	£17,001-£20,000	£2.65 £11.50
£384.62-£480.76	<input type="checkbox"/>	£20,001-£25,000	£3.23 £14.00
£480.77-£576.92	<input type="checkbox"/>	£25,001-£30,000	£3.98 £17.25
£576.93-£673.08	<input type="checkbox"/>	£30,001-£35,000	£4.68 £20.30
£673.08+	<input type="checkbox"/>	over £35,000	£5.19 £22.50