**Branch international officer training**

**Resource pack**

1. International motions carried at National Delegate Conference 2016
2. The UNISON International Development Fund (UIDF)
3. UNISON’s international priorities 2017
4. Links to solidarity organisations
5. International Newsletters
6. Articles
7. International calendar (separate document)

Updated April 2017

**International motions carried at National Delegate Conference 2016**

**82. Don't Silence the Occupation of Palestine**

**Carried as Amended: 82.1**

Conference is concerned at the introduction of new laws in Britain, the US and Israel, intended to silence those who campaign for the rights of the Palestinian people.

In October 2015 the Conservative government announced they would introduce new rules “to stop politically-motivated boycott and divestment campaigns by town halls against UK defence companies and against Israel.” The proposed rules will restrict the ability of local authorities to consider the risks of making pension investments in or procuring services from companies which are involved in the illegal occupation of Palestine.

In June 2015 the US government approved the “Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act” which sets out their principles for negotiating the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The act includes provisions to actively discourage actions to boycott, divest from, or sanction Israel and businesses in Israel or the occupied territories. This is a deliberate attempt to use TTIP negotiations to undermine international law and existing European Union measures on trade with the occupied territories.

The Israeli government is supporting a proposed new law prohibiting activists in the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement (BDS) from entering the country. They are also supporting a proposed law, seen as primarily targeting groups which campaign against the occupation, requiring organisations to provide details of the countries funding their activities in any communication with elected officials, and requiring employees to wear special tags when working in Israel’s parliament.

These new laws seek to undermine the growing success of the BDS movement and prevent or restrict divestment from companies that are involved in the illegal occupation. They attempt to delegitimise international law and several UN conventions, which confirm that the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem is illegal.

The Israeli government has continued its programme of rapid settlement expansion in the West Bank, denying increasing numbers of Palestinians access to their land, and undermining prospects of a two state solution. Settler violence towards the Palestinian population has also increased dramatically, with limited, if any, sanctions for the perpetrators.

Conference recalls that, for eleven years now, the Palestinian people have been calling for BDS and that UNISON has supported this call at several previous conferences. Conference continues to believe that BDS is a legitimate and practical way to put pressure on the Israeli government to end its repression of the Palestinian people, contribute towards the building of peace, and secure the Palestinians’ right to self-determination. It is a rapidly growing movement, led worldwide by the Palestinians themselves through the BDS National Committee, which is beginning to be successful at persuading companies to end their involvement with the illegal occupation

As the BDS movement has grown, so has the campaign against it. Many local authorities and others have been threatened with legal action, seeking to reverse democratic decisions on ethical investments regarding Israel and the illegal occupation of Palestine. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign in particular has faced increasing attempts to delegitimise its work.

Conference instructs the National Executive Council to:

1. Campaign for the repeal of restrictive laws which seek to silence those who campaign for Palestinian rights;
2. Continue to campaign for an end to the illegal occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza;
3. Defend the right of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to support the rights of the Palestinian people without intimidation or harassment;
4. To encourage all UNISON branches to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign;
5. Pursue the policies and strategy already decided upon at last year’s National Delegate Conference, with particular reference to positive BDS campaigning, and in supporting the continued struggle to secure the Rights and Aspirations of the Palestinian People.

Conference congratulates the National Executive Council on publishing its guidance, “Palestine: Is Your Pension Fund Investing in the Occupation?”. To build on the work many branches already have under way, conference also instructs the National Executive Council to develop practical arrangements in conjunction with regions to promote and sustain, fund by fund, the lines of action the guidance recommends and to monitor outcomes. Where practical, these initiatives should be developed jointly with other relevant trades unions, trades union councils, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and others as appropriate.

**75. Opposing DFID'S Privatisation Agenda**

**Carried**

Conference is concerned that the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID) is aggressively promoting the private sector as an alternative provider of public services globally.

Traditionally privatisation, driven by the international finance institutions, has been promoted in infrastructure projects, particularly water, sanitation and energy, often with terrible consequences, but increasingly DFID is promoting a stronger role for the private sector in education and health.

In education DFID has been promoting the role of private and low fee schools as an alternative to publically run schools, including through its investment arm, the CDC Group. One preferred model, which has striking similarities to the ‘school’s pence’ system, abolished in Britain in 1891, involves low daily fees, large classes and unqualified teachers with very little training, instructed to read a lesson from a hand-held computer.

Conference believes this investment in private and part-private education as an alternative to publically provided education, increases inequality, drives down standards and undermines publically provided education. It damages the opportunities of children from poorer backgrounds and is counter to the sustainable development goal on free, equitable and quality education.

In healthcare the privatisation agenda is far more advanced. Since the 1980s the international finance institutions have been encouraging low income countries to open up their health markets to foreign investors.

In recent years the UK government has been promoting various forms of private and part private healthcare provision in low income countries, particularly Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). These include promoting the UK as “world leader in healthcare PPPs” and DFID support for the establishment of a PPP advisory facility at the International Finance Corporation. The approval of the Sustainable Development Goal on universal access to healthcare is likely to be seen by the UK government and many multinational companies as an opportunity for massive expansion in private healthcare provision, to the detriment of public services.

Conference further believes that public healthcare systems produce efficiencies of scale, are better able to control costs and have lower administrative costs. They are more effective and efficient in meeting the health care needs of the whole population, lead to better health outcomes and help reduce inequality. Private and part private healthcare systems on the other hand are more expensive to run, are primarily accountable to shareholders, disadvantage the poorest and further erode public services.

Where healthcare is provided for free, it is much more likely to be accessed by the poorest. Where it is paid for, even at low cost, it can absorb a significant proportion of the income of the poorest in society, forcing women in particular to choose between education, health, shelter or food.

Conference recognises the work by education unions to highlight DFID’s privatisation agenda in education, but is concerned by the lack of focus on the privatisation of healthcare.

Conference welcomes UNISON’s work with the global union, Public Services International (PSI), to support health unions in Ebola-affected countries in West Africa to campaign for decent public health services.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

1. Highlight and oppose DFID and the UK government’s aggressive promotion of private and part private healthcare and education provision in low income countries;
2. Promote the value of decent public health and education services;
3. Work with PSI, sister unions and progressive NGOs to achieve this.

**H. Colombia**

**Carried**

Conference notes that the peace talks between the government of Colombian and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) which began in 2012 are likely to be concluded in 2016.

Conference joins with the Colombian trade union movement and civil society in supporting the peace process. However, like them we share the concern that lasting peace can only be achieved through policies aimed at achieving real social and economic justice.

Conference notes that Colombia has the highest level of social inequality in the Andean region and a third of Colombians live in poverty. Colombia is the third most unequal country in Latin America and tenth in the world. Afro-Colombians are far likelier than other Colombian workers to earn less than the minimum wage and comprise more than 50 percent of the country’s poor, although they are a quarter of Colombia’s population. Poverty is higher amongst rural Colombians who also make up many of the 4.5 million internally displaced people.

Conference notes that this year also marks the fifteenth anniversary of ‘Plan Colombia’, the United States’ multi-billion dollar military and police assistance package to Colombia. The Plan, initiated at a time when the Colombian government and FARC guerrillas were in peace talks, has been widely criticised for derailing those talks, setting back the peace process and escalating violence in the country. US military aid is part and parcel of an unjust economic strategy to further open up Colombia to multinational corporations, exploiting Colombian workers and the environment.

The armed conflict – which is the longest running in Latin America, having spanned over 60 years – must, therefore, be recognised as the product of political, social and economic inequality. A peace which seeks to end the armed conflict but does not address structural issues will not last. This is why UNISON actively support the work of human rights organisation NOMADESC and SINTRAUNICOL (an education union) in articulating a need for a ‘transformative peace’ consisting of a short, medium and long-term plan which includes the demilitarisation of Colombian territories; construction of alternative development plans; strengthening of communities; and the participation of the Colombian people, including peaceful actions and mobilisations, people’s forums and popular education.

Practical UIDF solidarity projects with these organisations, coordinated by the Northern Region, have continued over several years in the Valle del Cauca area and seen the development of an alternative ‘cultural university’ that addresses the requirement for education strategies that meet the needs of communities facing human rights abuses. The success of this approach is demonstrated in the high levels of participation in the annual Women’s Assembly (held in Cali), which consists of trade unions and social movement groups from across the region, many of whom have attended capacity building workshops as part of these projects.

Conference further notes that despite the peace talks, human rights abuses are rife in Colombia with human rights defenders, trade unionists, Afro-Colombians and indigenous people being the main victims. Conference notes that 17 trade unionists were murdered in Colombia in 2015. Of the more than 3,000 trade unionists killed over the past 20 years, 98% of cases had not been investigated by the Colombian authorities nor have the perpetrators been brought to justice. Human rights lawyers CCAJAR, thanks to funding from UNISON’s International Development Fund (UIDF), have successfully brought several cases proving the complicity between employers and paramilitaries in the assassination of trade union leaders but much more needs to be done. The peace agreement must address this issue as well as collective reparations for the families of murdered trade unionists and communities that have been victims of the violence.

Conference expresses its concern that Colombia has over 5,000 political prisoners including many trade unionists. When a UNISON delegation visited the FENSUAGRO agricultural workers union leader Huber Ballesteros in La Picota prison in December 2015 he had been held for 28 months without trial. His case is not unusual. The peace agreement must lead to an amnesty and compensation for political prisoners.

Conference further notes that political prisoners have very poor access to healthcare provision and the limited care provided is not of the quality expected to meet the human rights of these prisoners, with examples of prisoners waiting weeks with life threatening conditions in severe pain for treatment.

Conference recognises the excellent work done by Justice for Colombia in raising these issues within the British and Irish trade union movements and with politicians and political parties. Justice for Colombia was set up by the TUC and its affiliates and is dependent upon funding from the trade union movement.

Conference instructs the National Executive Council to:

1) Continue to provide support to the Colombian trade union movement and human rights organisations through the UIDF;

2) Develop further links with the ANTHOC the national trade union representing workers in the health sector;

3) Campaign with Justice for Colombia and Colombian civil society for any peace agreement to be accompanied by meaningful policy measures addressing social and economic injustice;

4) Lobby the UK and European Union to provide international development support for these measures;

5) Put pressure on the Colombian authorities to end the culture of impunity with regard to the assassination of trade unionists and human rights defenders and to provide effective protection to all individuals at risk;

6) Campaign for the release of all political prisoners;

7) Encourage regions and branches to affiliate and make donations to Justice for Colombia.

1. **The UNISON International Development Fund (UIDF)**

The Fund was established in 2006 to promote the union’s international policy objectives as agreed by UNISON National Delegate Conference and International Committee. The UIDF has enabled UNISON to provide practical assistance through projects leading to sustainable, long-term development of trade unions outside of the UK.

The fund currently supports 16 projects in 15 countries.

Potential partners must meet the following criteria to be considered for application:

* The applicant organisation must be a trade union or non-governmental organisation.
* The UIDF will only support organisations that are democratic or are working towards that objective.
* The UIDF projects should aim to build and support trade union capacity, labour movement organisations and organisations promoting the interests of public sector workers.

In practice UIDF projects tend to be either: (1) managed or delivered by a local trade union; (2) managed and delivered by a trade union in association with another organisation such as a UK based solidarity campaign, UNISON region, or global union federation such as PSI.

These are the criteria for a UIDF project.

* Trade union and labour rights: Supporting trade unions whose members rights are denied or under threat, or supporting workers rights where trade unions are not able to organise.
* Strong and active trade unions: Supporting the development of strong and active trade unions, particularly organising in public services.
* Quality public services: Supporting unions and others to promote, build and defend quality public services.
* Equality: To promote equality of opportunity in the workplace, within trade unions and public services, ensuring that underrepresented groups are given equal rights, equal access to services and decent representation.

The UIDF does not fund: general, disaster or emergency appeals that are not related to supporting trade unions operating in extreme circumstances and or circumstances due to natural phenomena.

The UIDF seeks to prioritise larger, strategic projects with a timeframe of 1-2 years. Partners need to complete a project proposal form, and agree a structure of further reporting for the duration of the project, in addition to completing a final detailed report at the end of the project.

All project proposals are agreed by the International Committee. They are then managed by a member of staff in the International Unit who is responsible for keeping in touch with project partners and in monitoring reports. The International Committee receives a report on all UIDF projects at each meeting

The UIDF is solely funded by income from UNISON’s affinity partners through UNISON plus membership services.

**Examples of current and recent UIDF projects**

**Defending and organising workers from East Jerusalem & Area C, Occupied Palestinian Territories**

This project, conducted by the Workers' Advice Centre WAC-MA'AN worked to organise Palestinian workers at a number of workplaces, mainly in manufacturing and transport. It also provided legal support and promoted workers rights. One of the key places where WAC-MAAN are organising is the Zafarti Garage where employers have used every means available to them to attack WAC –MA’AN and its members. UNISON supported the legal case in defence of Hatem Abu Ziade, head of the workers committee at the garage, who lost his work permit as a result of his trade union activity. As a result of the case he was reinstated and WAC-MANN was recognised by the employers.

**Defending and Upholding the Labour and Human Rights of Palestinian Workers employed by Israelis in Agricultural Settlements in the Jordan Valley**

Working conditions for Palestinian workers on settlement farms are notoriously poor. Workers on date farms in particular spend long days on high platforms in high temperatures, without shelter. Many are injured but denied medical assistance from their employer. Wages are below the legal minimum and pensions and other benefits are denied.

This project, run by Kav LaOved worked to defend and build the rights of Palestinian agricultural workers in the Jordan Valley on settlement farms, by:

* Informing and educating them about their rights through information and workshops,
* Highlighting the denial of rights through the media, research and publications,
* Providing advice to workers and assistance through legal letters to their employers with official pay calculations
* Filing applications to the court in cases where employers refuse to comply with legal letters
* Campaigning for better implementation of the law by the Israeli government
* Promoting the value of joining a trade union

Kav LaOved is the only organisation conducting this type of work in the Jordan Valley. The project builds on previous work supported by UNISON to highlight the terrible working conditions on date farms. The project has just finished.

**Improving the socio-economic situation of Palestinian women in East Jerusalem**

This project, with the Workers Advice Center WAC-MAAN builds on their previous project ‘Defending and organising workers from East Jerusalem and Area C’.

The Palestinian population of East Jerusalem suffer from high levels of poverty, unemployment, discrimination ad a denial of workers rights. Women in particular are rejected when they attempt to access social benefits.

This project seeks to overcome these challenges by assisting women to:

• Access income support through legal support and awareness

• Develop advocates for women’s rights to support their peers, with advice, referrals and raise awareness

• Monitor and seek to improve the rights of women in the cleaning industry through training, support, monitoring and awareness.

The project is being carried out over two years and will handle 200 legal and paralegal cases of women, 700 consultations with women, 34 training events for 300 women and training and support for 10 rights propagators. The project will reach many more women through the multiplier effect. Overall it will contribute to reducing the high level of poverty amongst women in East Jerusalem by helping them access income support and improving workplace rights. After a year it had already exceeded all of the targets.

**Empowering Palestinian workers and trade union members to defend their labour rights**

This new one year project focuses on two areas:

1. A campaign to amend the proposed Palestinian trade union law to ensure that it meets ILO conventions and protections for freedom of association and the right to organise. This will involve awareness raising, training, lobbying and gaining the support of trade unionists.

2. Informing and educating trade unionists on the new Social Security law so they can push for the implementation of the law and ensure employers are complying with regulations on pensions, survivors benefits, insurance against work injuries and occupational diseases and maternity leave. This will involve awareness raising, training workshops and the provision of legal advice.

The Democracy and Workers Rights Centre (DWRC) is a Palestinian workers rights organisation working with trade unions in the West Bank (Ramallah) and Gaza.

**Ebola: A trade union response**

The project, coordinated by Public Services International, operates in the main Ebola affected countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, as well as DRC and Nigeria. Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea have not only been affected by Ebola (11,310 deaths including over 500 health workers), they are also recovering from civil wars and suffer from high levels of poverty. Trade unions, particularly in Liberia, are restricted and have limited resources in all three countries, making it extremely difficult to organise.

The project is helping workers have a voice in the response to future health crises; campaigning for quality public health services, including for improved workers rights and decent personal protective equipment; campaigning against privatisation; and contributing towards the prevention of future health crises.

It focuses on four key areas: research and exchange; respect for union rights and social dialogue; outreach and allegiances with wider civil society; lobbying of governments, regional and international institutions and communication.

The highest level of activity has been in Liberia with health union NAHAWL, who have campaigned for protective equipment and proved that the government has failed to pay health workers salaries or hazard pay. NAHWAL has also campaigned for the reinstatement of two leaders dismissed after national strikes in 2014. They have partnered with other unions and are now campaigning against privatisation, using the 2017 elections.

UNISON is contributing approximately 50 per cent of the total project funding, with the remainder provided by US, Swedish and Japanese unions.

**Legal support for trade unions in Colombia**

CCAJAR is a collective of human rights lawyers who have a long history of working with the Colombian trade union movement. This project focuses on collective reparations and justice for the trade union victims of state and paramilitary violence. CCAJAR were able to take a series of test cases establishing a direct correlation between assassinations and trade union activity. The project is supporting CCAJAR to take forward individual and collective cases to seek justice for trade unions, and support unions to advocate for rights and protections as part of the peace process.

**Bangladesh Accord**

Following the tragic deaths of garment workers in Bangladesh, UNISON passed policy in 2013 to support workers in the garment industry. We supported Labour Behind the Label to work with two federations in Bangladesh to help them build their capacity and engage with the Accord on fire safety and the Arrangement on compensation for the victims and their families.

The project supported two trade union federations to develop and deliver training for workers employed regarding their rights, to increase organising, and to ensure information, concerns and complaints are raised at national and international levels.

**LGBTI Public Sector Workers Project**

South Africa has one of the most progressive constitutions in the world for LGBTI rights. However, LGBTI people face high levels of discrimination, including violence. Public services are not responding to the needs of LGBTI people, both workers and users.

This project with the Foundation for Human Rights (FHR) worked to strengthen the voice of LGBTI workers in South Africa’s public service unions, and as a result ensure those unions are more responsive to their members needs. It provided training for activists, established committees in provinces across South Africa and developed dialogue with unions about the establishment of LGBT structures.It also worked to increase the understanding of LGBTI public sector workers of their constitutional and trade union rights, and input into wider national consultations on LGBTI rights.

**Building for growth with health and social services trade unions in the Americas**

The lack of access to health and social services in Latin America is a major barrier to development and social justice. There is growing support for Universal Health Coverage but some governments are promoting a greater role for the private sector in delivering this.

This project in collaboration with Public Services International is supporting unions in Latin America (Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Brasil) to campaign for universal public health coverage and assist PSI affiliates to organise workers delivering public services in both the public and private sector. The project supports unions in the health and social services sector to develop organising strategies and quality public health services campaigning.

**Cambodia project**

UNISON is funding a one-year project with an NGO called CENTRAL in Cambodia. Cambodia’s garment industry is expanding and the government is keen to bring in overseas’ investment. Unfortunately, workers’ rights are not respected and there has been state-sponsored violence towards workers fighting for a living wage.

This project is to build capacity and leverage of local unions and unorganized workers in key suppliers of major European brands through training and targeted organizing; provide protection for independent union leaders and key workers in and around these supply chains; and engage with international partners in lobbying and campaigning to support collective bargaining with all stakeholders to realize the benefits promised under law and initiatives of major European brands.

One of the project’s aims is to run ‘savings for self reliance’ workshops for workers. The workshops promote credit unions as a way of workers saving and borrowing at low rates. Workers who are not involved in trade unions get to find out about labour rights and how unions can help to achieve better pay and conditions at work.

**Current UIDF projects**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Partner** | **Description** |
| South Africa | Public Services International (PSI) | Strengthening the role of young workers in public sector trade unions in South Africa. Interaction between young members through a series of workshops and events including a young workers conference for the 40th anniversary of youth day in 2016. |
| Liberia  Guinea  Sierra Leone  Based in Ghana | Public Services International (PSI) | To build the capacity of health workers to engage as civil society partners to advocate for properly-funded public health systems, PPEs (personal protective equipment), training and education |
| Colombia | CCAJAR lawyers collective | The project will take a series of test cases through the Colombian court seeking reparations for the families of murdered trade unionists. |
| Colombia | USO oil workers union (with PASO Internacional and Justice for Colombia) | Supporting the oil workers union USO run an organising campaign in North West Colombia |
| Colombia | Sintracihobi and PASO Internacional | Support for Sintracihobi the national union for child-minders. Includes organising campaigns in 3 regions of Colombia and leadership and capacity building training for the national leadership. |
| Colombia | UNISON Northern Region and Sintraunicol | Capacity building for Sintraunicol and joint campaigning around defending public higher education |
| Colombia | UNISON Northern Region and Nomdesc | Human rights campaigning in south west Colombia. |
| Latin America | PSI | Capacity building for health worker unions in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico |
| Nicaragua | FETSALUD | Training for reps, especially women and young members. |
| Nicaragua | UNE (public employees) | Setting up a trade union education centre for UNE activists |
| Nicaragua | MECC | Health and safety training for women textile workers in Export Processing Zones |
| Palestine | Kav LaOved | Defending and upholding the labour and human rights of Palestinian workers employed by Israelis in agricultural settlements in the Jordan Valley |
| Palestine | Workers Advice Centre | Provide advice and support to Palestinian women in East Jerusalem who are denied access to social benefits and employment. |
| Palestine | Knowledge and Socialist Thought Institute | Education and training for a group of 20 potential trade union leaders. Assistance to establish the KSTI. |
| Bangladesh | BRGWF with Labour Behind the Label | BRGWF will continue to run the office in Gazipur for another year including staffing costs for 4 organisers. LBL and UNISON have launched an appeal calling for UNISON branches and regions to donate. |
| Cambodia | CENTAL | Build capacity of local unions and workers in suppliers of major European brands through training and organising. |

1. **UNISON’s international priorities 2017**

Approved by NEC international committee, January 2017

|  |
| --- |
| **Introduction** |

UNISON can be rightly proud of its long history of international work. UNISON is known, both in the UK and globally, as a union that has an international perspective on all areas of its work from organising, the fight against privatisation or the defence of employment and trade union rights.

UNISON is fortunate in having a unique network of branch and regional activists who play a vital role in taking forward its international work. The UNISON International Development Fund is a vital tool that enables the union to put in place concrete measures to compliment our policies and which is a genuine expression of international trade union solidarity.

The driving forces of the neo-liberal economic model behind privatisation and out-sourcing, cuts in public spending and taxation, the driving down of workers’ and trade union rights are global. UNISON has no option but to respond to these threats by working internationally as part of the European and international trade union movement.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * Promote an understanding of the international dimension to all areas of our work as a trade union and the necessity to fight neo-liberal policies both in the UK and globally. |

|  |
| --- |
| **OUR PRIORITIES**  At its meeting in November 2016 the International Committee agreed that in 2017 its main priorities will be:   * Palestine * Colombia * Qatar * Turkey   The committee also agreed that the issues of ethical procurement and supply chain management and public services in the global south were important policy areas for campaigning work and where UIDF resources should be used to support relevant projects. It also noted that changes in US policy on Latin America may mean a change of emphasis on Latin America work during the year. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Palestine** |

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the illegal occupation of the West Bank, the 10th anniversary of the blockade of Gaza and the centenary of the Balfour declaration. The Israeli government’s settlement building programme and demolition of Palestinian homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continues to erode the land allocated for a viable Palestinian State alongside Israel, further undermining the prospects peace and a two state solution. UNISON will work with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and others to highlight how these events continue to have a devastating impact of the lives of the Palestinian people.

We will campaign for the UK government to support the implementation of United Nations Resolution 2334, approved in December 2016 and other international resolutions, which reaffirm that Israel’s settlements have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law.

UNISON supports Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions as a legitimate and peaceful way to campaign for Palestinian human rights and encourage Israel to comply with international law. We will continue to oppose the Conservative government’s attempts to curtail BDS campaigning, and develop our work on pension fund engagement to make to more accessible to UNISON members in a broad range of pension schemes.

We will continue to work with Palestinian trade unions and organisations working to improve the rights of workers living under occupation.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * Campaign against the continuing occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the occupation and blockade of Gaza. * Use the 2017 anniversaries to highlight the continued denial of Palestinian rights, including supporting the Palestine Solidarity Campaign rally on 4 November and developing materials for branches to highlight the situation of workers living under occupation. * Build on our work to encourage companies to end their involvement in the illegal occupation by broadening our work on pension fund engagement to other schemes. * Campaign for the UK government to support the implementation of UN resolutions confirming the illegality of the occupation and settlements, and against the implementation of regulations intended to curtail BDS campaigning. * Support the work of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign Trade Union Advisory Committee. * Encourage branches to support and affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. * Help build and defend workers’ rights in Palestine and Israel, including through the UIDF. |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* To have contributed to the campaign for Palestinian justice and rights by opposing the illegal occupation and challenging UK government’s position on Palestine/Israel.
* To increase support for PSC from UNISON branches.

|  |
| --- |
| **Colombia** |

The conclusion and ratification of a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC is just the beginning of achieving social and economic justice for the people of Colombia. The agreement includes policies on land ownership and on gender that could lead to significant progressive advances. However, the continued attacks by paramilitary groups on human rights defenders, including trade unionists, towards the end of 2016 and at the beginning of 2017 show that vested interests in Colombia will seek to undermine or even bring down the agreement. Justice for Colombia plays a crucial role in coordinating the solidarity of the British trade union movement and their work was recognised by the role they played in advising on the peace agreement.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * support the implementation of the Peace Agreement * promote the work of Justice for Colombia and increase the number of branch affiliations * continue to campaign for the release of political prisoners * support the work of the Colombian trade union movement and human rights organisations through the UIDF |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* to have strengthened Justice for Colombia financially and organizationally and continue to work with them in delivering a just peace in Colombia.

|  |
| --- |
| **Qatar** |

Qatar claims to have ended the Kafala system of sponsorship with the introduction of Law 21 so UNISON could claim to have helped abolish Kafala. Sadly, Law 21 will not end the exploitation of workers in Qatar as many human rights groups say it is nothing more than a PR exercise in the run up to the March deadline by the ILO for Qatar to take steps to improve the current situation that allows abuses such as forced labour. Given the perceived improvements put in place by Qatar, it is very unlikely that the ILO will call for a commission of inquiry, therefore, it is imperative that the campaign continues.

International pressure has already paid some dividends as Qatar is sensitive to criticism and probably would not have introduced Law 21 without this pressure. A recent [Amnesty International report](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde22/5242/2016/en/) on the new law concludes that there is still a long way to go to end the exploitation of migrant workers. Withholding of passports and refusal to sign exit visas can still take place as there is ambiguity in the law which allows these practices to continue.

Unscrupulous recruitment agencies operating in source countries push migrant workers into what is effectively bonded labour which further exacerbates the exploitation of workers.

For the first time ever, Qatar will allow a trade union access to World Cup sites. Global construction union, BWI, who have established a relationship with UNISON, will be allowed to inspect World Cup sites after signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Qatar Supreme Committee which is overseeing the World Cup preparations. BWI have indicated that they will continue to support other workers in Qatar who are not working directly on World Cup construction, and have asked UNISON to support this work inside Qatar.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * work through the ETI and members to ensure a commitment to human and workers’ rights by British businesses operating in Qatar * support and encourage UNISON members to engage in campaigns in support of workers’ rights, including the TUC’s Playfair Qatar campaign * social media initiatives in build up to IAAF World Athletics Championship in London * work with the TUC, BWI, Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery and others on campaigns and initiatives highlighting workers’ rights violations in Qatar * work with Amnesty International and others on campaigns seeking improvements to Law 21 * support initiatives in sending countries to ensure workers travelling to Qatar and other parts of the Middle East are fully aware of the challenges facing them * work with partner organisations to expose unscrupulous recruitment agencies in sending countries |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* Qatar will remove the conditions that allow the exploitation of migrant workers. This is measurable by a reduction in deaths and allowing workers’ organisations to operate.
* To have built substantial relationships with organisations working to end the exploitation of workers.
* To have engaged UNISON members on issues in Qatar, and to have given them an impetus to engage in international issues in their branches.

|  |
| --- |
| **Turkey** |

The situation in Turkey deteriorated significantly in 2016, including the rapid erosion of workers and human rights. The government’s response to the attempted coup in July 2016 has been disproportionate. Over 100,000 public service workers were sacked or suspended, in most cases without evidence of wrong doing. Media outlets critical of the government have been closed and journalists arrested. The ongoing state of emergency continues to restrict fundamental human and workers rights, particularly in the south east of the country, where trade unionists have come under attack since the elections in June 2015 and the breakdown of peace talks.

Workers rights have been eroded over many years, long before the attempted coup. Freedom of association and the right to organise are heavily restricted and repressive laws are often used to limit freedom of speech.

UNISON will develop its work with Turkish public service unions and support their calls for workers and human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * Campaign for improved workers and human rights in Turkey, including for the government to comply with the ILO conventions it has agreed. * Support trade union demands for an end to the state of emergency, a fair hearing for dismissed and suspended public service workers, and the reinstatement of all workers where there is no evidence of a crime. * Call for the UK government and EU to prioritise human rights and democracy in its negotiations with Turkey. * Work with Turkish public service unions, PSI, EPSU and other organsiations to achieve this. |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* To have developed stronger links with Turkish public service unions and supported their demands for human and workers rights, democracy and the rule of law.
* Put pressure on the UK government to prioritise democracy and the rule of law in their negotiations with Turkey.

|  |
| --- |
| **Ethical procurement and supply chain management** |

Supply chain issues have become a higher priority for unions and NGOs as decent work is denied so many vulnerable workers. Slavery is increasing with estimates of 21 million people (up to 20,000 in the UK) forced to work.

Precarious work is becoming more widespread especially in supply chains producing goods destined for the UK, which includes public services. Workers in supply chains can be forced to work in extremely dangerous conditions, can be subject to intimidation and violence for joining a union and have to rely on insecure or low wages.

In 2016 the ILO debated decent work in supply chains for the first time in its history. The workers’ group are now pushing for a global ILO standard to specifically protect workers in supply chains. UNISON can get involved in this campaign.

The international unit will continue to work with UNISON officers on UNISON’s own procurement policy.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * support, through various means, including financial support, unions and NGOs campaigning for workers in supply chains in Asia to access their rights * sponsor a visitor from garment sector in Bangladesh to attend NDC * develop a strategy using written guidance for UNISON members to enage with their employers to ensure there is no exploitation in their supply chains * campaign for the loophole in the Modern Slavery Act to be closed so that companies doing business in countries such as Qatar are held to account for abuses in the supply chain * support campaigns for a new ILO standard protecting workers in supply chains * support the campaign for the Modern Slavery Act to be extended to public services * Work with Banana Link and UNISON health team on better hospital foods including welfare of workers down through the supply chain * campaign for ratification of ILO protocol on Forced Labour in countries where we have links (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar) |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* to have supported a number of branches who have successfully worked with their employer to develop an ethical procurement policy
* countries where we have links will have ratified ILO protocol on Forced Labour
* to have engaged trade unions, NGOs and labour groups in UIDF projects to help workers in factories producing goods for the UK to realise their rights.

|  |
| --- |
| **Public Services in the Global South** |

Quality public services have a significant role to play in the delivery of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, but this is being overlooked in the interests of multinational companies. The UK government is using the aid/development budget to promote the privatisation of education, health and other public services in the global south. This approach to development has significant benefits for multinational companies and consultancies but is highly detrimental to the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

UNISON will build on its support for PSI’s Ebola response work in West Africa by developing its links and supporting unions campaigning against privatisation.

We will support the Public Services International ‘Global Campaign for the Human Right to Health by making the case for Universal Public Health Coverage (UPHC).

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * Oppose the UK government’s aggressive promotion of privatization to governments in the global south. * Promote the value of quality public services in development and their contribution to achieving human rights and the sustainable development goals on health, education and water and sanitation. * Seek to support unions in the global south challenging the privatisation of public services through joint campaigning and the UIDF. * Work with PSI to contribute to the global campaign for Universal Public Health Coverage. |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

to have contributed to an increased awareness and opposition to the UK government’s privatisation agenda, making the case for decent public services and Universal Public Health Coverage.

|  |
| --- |
| **OTHER AREAS OF WORK** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Leadership in the European and global trade union movement** |

UNISON is affiliated to a number of European and global trade union federations, the most important of which are Public Services International (PSI) and the European federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

As one of the largest unions in the world representing public service workers UNISON has a responsibility to build and grow these global unions and take up leadership positions within them. UNISON must help shape their work so that they complement our work in developing alternatives to privatisation, develop bargaining across multi-national companies and share organising experiences amongst affiliated unions.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * shape PSI policy and strategy so that they are in line with UNISON’s objectives in the run up to, and at, PSI’s Congress in November 2017 * support UNISON representatives who hold leadership positions in PSI and EPSU so that they can play an effective role in shaping the global trade union agenda * work closely with EPSU to ensure that UNISON’s objectives with regard to the process of the UK exiting the EU are met |

**By the end of 2017** we hope**:**

* to have played a constructive role in developing PSI’s Programme of Action for the next five years and to have elected a leadership team capable of taking PSI’s work forward effectively.
* To work closely with EPSU to enable UNISON to secure its objectives with regard to the process of the UK exiting the EU.

|  |
| --- |
| **Bilateral links with European trade unions** |

UNISON has close bilateral relations with many European sister trade unions. The process of the UK exiting the European Union will mean that these links will become more important than ever as UNISON seeks to secure a Brexit that works in the interests of our members.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * Maintain close links with sister unions through regular meetings and briefings and work with them on UNISON’s key objectives with regard to Brexit |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* to have consolidated our links with sister trade unions across Europe to enable UNISON to secure its objectives with regard to the process of the UK exiting the EU.

|  |
| --- |
| **Latin America** |

The election of the Trump Administration in the US and a series of rightwing governments in Argentina, Brazil and other countries, may lead to a change in US policy in Latin America which could have a negative impact on the peace process in Colombia, that could reverse the Obama administration’s opening of relations with Cuba and which could lead to attempts to undermine the democratically elected governments of Nicaragua and Venezuela.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * respond to any changes in US policy towards Latin America * continue to affiliate to and support the Cuba, Nicaragua and Venzuela Solidarity Campaigns and Banana Link * work with sister unions through UIDF projects * sponsor the 2017 Latin America Conference * use our solidarity work in Latin America as an organizing tool amongst workers of Latin American origin in the UK |

|  |
| --- |
| **Middle East and North Africa** |

The situation in the Middle East remains volatile. The proxy war in Syria, the conflict in Yemen. and continued fighting in Iraq have forced millions to flee their homes and continues to affect neighbouring countries. Workers and human rights continue to be denied in a number of countries, particularly under the Kafala system of bonded labour.

The government of Morocco continue to seek to legitimise the occupation of Western Sahara, denying the Saharawi people their right to self determination. In 2016 the European Court of Justice ruled that EU Trade and Association Agreements with Morocco do not apply to Western Sahara, but the ruling continues to be ignored.

**In 2017 we will:**

* Continue to campaign for human and workers rights in Iran, Western Sahara and Syria, including through support for the Committee for Defence of Iranian People’s Rights and the Western Sahara Campaign.

|  |
| --- |
| **Philippines** |

The Philippines continues to be a source country for nurses destined for the UK. It is also a source country for the Middle East especially in construction and domestic work where abuse is rife.

After the inauguration of the new president mid-way through 2016 and the subsequent ceasefires announced by the NPA and the AFP (Philippines army), Norway is brokering talks between the government of the Philippines (GRP) and the CPP-NDF-NPA.

The presidency of the Philippines has caused great concern not least because of the president’s own admission that he personally took part in EJEs.

Labour rights abuses continue to cause concern with the ITUC ranking the Philippines as a country where rights are not guaranteed.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * continue to maintain our links with union federations in the Philippines * consider a UIDF project with human rights groups or unions on the escalating violence against workers * support workers’ groups in Qatar working specifically with Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* to see human rights violations addressed
* to have supported unions in the country to campaign on key issues for trade unionists

|  |
| --- |
| **Sub-Saharan Africa** |

UNISON has strong links with unions in southern Africa which stem from our support fot the struggle against apartheid. Those links have been further developed through our work on HIV/AIDS, rights and democracy in Zimbabwe and Swaziland, the UNISON International Development Fund and collaboration with Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA). We will continue to campaign against the denial of democracy and workers and human rights in Swaziland, including by calling on the UK government, European Union and Commonwealth to take a stronger role. In 2018 the UK will host the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), providing a platform to campaign for Swaziland to be suspended from the Commonwealth for non compliance with the Commonwealth Charter. Through our work with Public Services International (PSI) on the response to Ebola we are developing stronger links with unions in West Africa, including on anti-privatisation work.

**In 2017 we will:**

* Work with ACTSA and trade unions in Swaziland to encourage the UK government, EU and Commonwealth to take action on the denial of workers rights in Swaziland.
* Develop links with public service unions in Africa through our work against privatisation.
* Encourage branches to affiliate to ACTSA.

|  |
| --- |
| **Labour and Human Rights** |

UNISON’s policy on labour and human rights was evident in all its work programmes in 2016, and this will be continued throughout 2017

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * continue to ensure that trade union and workers’ rights remain central to the work of Amnesty International * support UIDF projects in countries campaigning for freedom of association and other fundamental workers’ rights * work with other partners on highlighting human and labour rights abuses * work with NGOs linking labour rights abuses with human rights abuses * promote workers rights as human right through our work on supply chain management and through our partners organisations |

**By the end of 2017** we hope**:**

* to have increased involvement of civil society organisations with trade union campaigns against legislation that seeks to undermine workers’ rights

|  |
| --- |
| **UNISON International Development Fund** |

UNISON’s International Development Fund is a unique resource in the British trade union movement which enables UNISON to be able to provide lasting support to sister trade unions as they develop their capacity and run successful campaigns against privatisation and in defence of workers’ rights.

However, the long-term funding of the UIDF is potentially under threat as income from UNISON affinity partners has begun to fall. The International Unit will need to work closely with Services to Members to ensure funding and identify possible new sources.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * work with Services to Members to stabilise the UIDF’s income * promote the successes of UIDF projects through UNISON publications and social media |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* to have secured the UIDF’s medium to long-term funding
* to have created greater awareness of the UIDF and used the success of UIDF projects to build support for UNISON’s international work

|  |
| --- |
| **Supporting regions and branches** |

UNISON is unique amongst British trade unions in having a strong network of international activists through our Branch International Relations Officers (BIROs) and Regional International Committees. However, the union faces a challenge in growing the number of activists and the role of branch International Officer should be seen as a way to bring in new activists and empower them to take on new roles in the union. The role of branch International Officer is potentially attractive to young and black members, two groups underrepresented amongst UNISON stewards. The mainstreaming of international policy and solidarity throughout all levels of UNISON is central to the work of the NEC International Committee.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * develop the role of Branch International Officer as part of the escalator to encourage new activists within UNISON * organize the annual International seminar in March/April 2017 * work with regions to help them organize regional seminars in the autumn of 2017 * meet with regional International contacts to brief them on national priorities and support them in their work * produce a guide for branch and regional activists, which will include the calendar of international days to help them structure their work through the year |

**By the end of 2017** we hope:

* to have developed a strong network of international acitivists at branch and regional level

|  |
| --- |
| **Communicating with UNISON members** |

UNISON’s international work depends on the support and commitment from our members and activists. However, as the union is faced with an increasing number of challenges we run the risk of losing support for this area of work. It is therefore essential that we constantly explain, justify and showcase our international work using all communication means.

|  |
| --- |
| **In 2017 we will:**   * organise the annual International Rally at National Delegate Conference * work with Service Groups and Self-Organised Groups to get International guests or speakers at their conferences and to encourage fringe meetings on the International Committee’s main priorities * produce 6 editions of the electronic international newsletter * enhance coverage of our work on UNISON websites * continue to grow the number of followers on twitter and Facebook * ensure regular coverage of international stories in both the hard and electronic versions of UNISON magazines |

**By the end of 2017** we hope**:**

* to have increased the understanding of and support for UNISON’s international work amongst activists and the wider membership.

1. **Links to solidarity organisations**

UNISON supports the following organisations and encourages branches and regions to support, and affiliate where there is an affiliation option

**Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA)** [actsa.org](http://www.actsa.org/)

**Amnesty International UK (AIUK)** [amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/)

**Anti-Slavery International** [antislavery.org](http://www.antislavery.org/english/)

**Banana Link** [bananalink.org.uk](http://www.bananalink.org.uk)

**Burma Campaign UK (BCUK)** [burmacampaign.org.uk](http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/)

**Campaign for Human Rights in the Philippines** [chrp.org.uk](http://www.chrp.org.uk/)

**Committee for Defence of the Iranian Peoples' Rights (CODIR)** [codir.net](http://www.codir.net/)

**Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC)** [cuba-solidarity.org.uk](http://www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk/)

**Global Justice Now** [globaljustice.org.uk](http://www.globaljustice.org.uk/)

**International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (ILGA)** [ilga.org](http://www.ilga.org/)

**Jubilee Debt Campaign** [jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk](http://www.jubileedebtcampaign.org.uk/)

**Justice for Colombia (JFC)** [justiceforcolombia.org](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org/)

**Labour behind the Label** [labourbehindthelabel.org](http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org)

**Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group** [nicaraguasc.org.uk](http://www.nicaraguasc.org.uk/)

**Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)** [palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org/)

**Tamil Solidarity Campaign** [tamilsolidarity.org](http://www.tamilsolidarity.org)

**Trade Justice Movement (TJM)** [tjm.org.uk](http://www.tjm.org.uk/)

**Venezuela Solidarity Campaign (VSC)** [venezuelasolidarity.co.uk](http://www.venezuelasolidarity.co.uk/)

**War on Want (WoW)** [waronwant.org](http://www.waronwant.org/)

**Western Sahara Campaign** [wsahara.org.uk](http://www.wsahara.org.uk/)

1. **International Newsletters**

**International Newsletter**

Update on UNISON’s international work

October 2016

**In this issue**

**Affiliation to Justice for Colombia**

**Latin America 2016**

**TTIP may be on its last legs but its Canadian cousin is just about to be ratified.**

**Unhealthy Development**

**This is Palestine**

**Lobby of Parliament for Palestine**

**Ethical procurement – does your employer have a policy? UNISON appeal for information**

**Attacks on workers in South Korea intensifies – sign the petition**

**Playfair Qatar weekend of action 14-17 October**

**UNISON International Seminar 2017**

**Dates for your diary**

**Affiliation to Justice for Colombia**

Voters in Colombia have narrowly rejected the peace agreement negotiated by the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas which aimed to bring to an end the longest running armed conflict in Latin America.

The result was a big disappointment, not least because the Colombian trade union movement had unanimously called for a “yes” vote. They knew that a peace agreement is essential to end the killings, kidnappings and harassment that have made Colombia the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist.

Justice for Colombia was founded over 10 years ago by the British trade union movement to provide solidarity with Colombia’s trade unions and human rights organisations. They have won themselves international recognition for their work and earlier this year they were asked to be official advisers to the peace talks.  Yet JFC relies solely on affiliations and funding from trade unions in Britain and Ireland for their work.

That is why it is more important than ever that UNISON branches affiliate to Justice for Colombia. It only costs £90 for branches with over 500 members and £60 for those with under 500 but it help pays for the vital work that Justice for Colombia does. You can affiliate online by clicking [here](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org/affiliate/affiliate-branches.php).

The peace negotiations will continue despite the referendum result. Our sisters and brothers in Colombia need an end to the armed conflict and UNISON branches can help play a part by supporting the work of JFC.

Please affiliate your branch.

**Latin America 2016**

The largest event of the year for Latin America solidarity in Britain – now in its 12th year –will feature an impressive line up of ambassadors, academics, MPs, trade unionists, activists, campaigners, journalists and artists to discuss the politics of the region including plenary sessions in the main hall and many smaller, interactive seminars, film and much more. It will take place in London at the TUC (Congress House) on Saturday 26 November from 10am onwards.

More information can be found here on the Cuba Solidarity Campaign website [here](http://www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk/events/68/latin-america-conference-2016).

**TTIP may be on its last legs but its Canadian cousin is just about to be ratified.**

Despite Brexit, the UK could still end up being subject to a toxic trade deal between the EU and Canada. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will allow big business to sue our government if they see their profits threatened by new laws. And CETA could threaten environmental protection and worker’s rights. If passed, we could remain subject to CETA for up to 20 years even if we decide to leave the deal. But we can stop CETA. Before CETA is implemented, it has to go through the European parliament.

**Write to your Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and make sure they reject CETA.** You can take action [here](https://action.globaljustice.org.uk/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=1784&ea.campaign.id=55082&ea.tracking.id=website&_ga=1.86269151.615920918.1470137088).

**Unhealthy Development**

UNISON's recent report 'Unhealthy Development' exposes how the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) is using the aid budget to promote health privatisation to some of the poorest countries in the world.

It forms the basis for a campaign to call on DFID to end its support for healthcare privatisation and for investment in quality public health services protect the most vulnerable in society.

To read UNISON’s summary of the campaign, and to download the report, visit the website [here](https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2016/09/government-told-to-rethink-promotion-of-private-healthcare/).

**This is Palestine**

In April 2016 UNISON took a delegation to Palestine and Israel to help develop our work. The delegation included members of the National Executive Council international committee and representatives of regions.

This is Palestine highlights some of the key issues that were raised by the organisations UNISON met with, and focuses on the occupation, workers rights and some of the projects UNISON supports.

You can download and read the final report on the delegation [here](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/07/UNISON-delegation-to-Palestine-final-report.pdf).

**Lobby of Parliament for Palestine**

Palestine Solidarity Campaign will hold a national lobby of Parliament on Tuesday the 15th of November from 12pm-6pm in London. Campaigners from all over the UK will ask their MPs to take action against Israeli illegal settlements.

Find out more and write to your MP – visit the Palestine Solidarity Campaign website [here](https://www.palestinecampaign.org/2016lobby/).

**Ethical procurement – does your employer have a policy? UNISON appeal for information**

Rana Plaza was a turning point for companies sourcing from the cheap, poorly regulated garment industry in Bangladesh. We all sat up and said ‘never again’. Companies (and the Bangladesh government) were shamed into action and it seemed that things had changed for the better. But three years on workers are still struggling for their rights. Last month at least 30 workers died when a boiler in a factory exploded, and all the promises made over the last three years have not yielded the hoped-for outcomes. The struggle continues in places like Bangladesh and other countries supplying manufactured goods for UK markets including public services.

The struggle for rights in the global south can be played out here in the UK too. UNISON is actively campaigning for public services to ensure that no goods used to deliver public services are tainted with abuses that range from slave labour to non payment of wages or very dangerous conditions at work. The Ethical Trading Initiative invites companies to adopt its [Base Code](http://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/www.ethicaltrade.org.files/shared_resources/eti_base_code_english.pdf?ppXz9ivoyynr1uTTo5e.Z5n.ZHaQvQfN) to ensure supply chains are free from abuse. We need this in public services too. A code of conduct or a policy ensuring suppliers are aware of their responsibilities to their workers should be a requirement for all organisations providing public services.

You can start by asking if your employer has an ethical procurement policy. Are the goods it uses in delivering key public services – whether that’s staff clothing or food, electronics, paper, or furnishings – produced without abusing workers? If not, your branch can work with them to develop a policy, and if there already is one, then UNISON would like to hear about it.

In particular, the union wants to hear of any clauses or statements used in tender documents, together with any other good practice.

UNISON will then use the information to develop guidance for branches talking to their employers about ethical procurement. So please talk to your employer or purchasing department and share the information with the union by emailing [i.relations@unison.co.uk](mailto:i.relations@unison.co.uk)**.**

**Attacks on workers in South Korea intensify – sign the petition**

Workers in South Korea have called on trade unionists across the globe to show solidarity as they continue strike action in the face of government plans to introduce discriminatory performance-related pay and a termination scheme that would pit worker against worker. The government policy is part of a grand scheme to further open up public services to private companies and to break the back of the independent trade union movement by criminalising strike action. This year saw the imprisonment of two trade union leaders: the president of KCTU (the equivalent of the TUC) and the vice-president of KPTU (public and transport union) for their part in strike action last year. This takes the number of trade unionists in prison to more than 20.

Since September there have been a number of strikes against the government’s proposals with tens of thousands of workers taking to the streets. The global call for solidarity for the strikes (which has already seen 5 trade unionists charged and a further 145 suspended from their jobs pending charges) has resulted in protests outside South Korean embassies in countries as far apart as Australia and Canada.

In the UK on Wednesday, UNISON joined a delegation representing global unions PSI and ITF as well as transport and public service unions. A letter was handed in by representatives of UNISON, PSI and ITF demanding the release of the imprisoned trade unionists and an end to the criminalisation of workers striking for their rights. UNISON’s NEC also sent a message of solidarity when they met on Wednesday morning at the UNISON Centre. The president, Eric Roberts, called for a stop to the criminalisation of workers taking legal strike action and a release of those already imprisoned. UNISON is calling on all activists to sign the [Labour Start](https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=3190) petition calling for the release of those imprisoned, and to share with UNISON members.

UNISON contributed to the call from unions in South Korean to share information on performance related pay. This was disseminated when a [PSI delegation](http://www.world-psi.org/en/union-mission-delivers-strong-statement-it-stands-alongside-korean-strikers) visited the country in September.

Photos and solidarity message from around the world are being shared on social media – UNISON members are invited to get involved.

**Playfair Qatar weekend of action 14-17 October**

If you are going to the footie this weekend - either playing down the park or going to see your team play (or even if you just intend watching on TV) – spare a thought for the 1.7 million foreign workers in Qatar; tens of thousands who are building the infrastructure for the World Cup in 2022. Show solidarity with them by taking part in a photo action calling on FIFA, the world governing body, to take action to stop the abuses in Qatar which is resulting in the deaths of hundreds of migrant workers.

There are a number of photo actions planned around the country from Friday to Monday. It’s a simple action: hold up a [poster](http://www.playfairqatar.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/PlayFairQatarColour.pdf) calling for fair play in Qatar; get some of your friends to join in; then send it to [photos@playfairqatar.org](mailto:photos@playfairqatar.org) Check [here](http://www.playfairqatar.org.uk/weekend-of-action/) to see if there’s an action taking place at your local club. The weekend of action is being supported by the FSF and the FSFS – the supporters’ federations in England and Scotland.

UNISON has been part of the TUC’s Playfair Qatar campaign since the beginning. Some concessions have been wrested from the Qatari government but the paper reforms are mostly just that – they need to be implemented and workers need to be treated with dignity and respect with access to their rights. We are currently funding a project in India with Anti-Slavery International helping would-be migrants become informed about their rights and what to do if they find themselves in a desperate situation when they arrive in the Gulf.

If you want to know more about the campaign and how you can get involved, email [I.Relations@unison.co.uk](mailto:I.Relations@unison.co.uk)

**UNISON International Seminar 2017**

The UNISON International Seminar 2017 will take place on Friday 31 March – Saturday 1 April 2017, at Croyde Bay, Devon. Further details will be available in due course, and the formal procedure for branches to make bookings to attend the seminar will begin in the New Year.

**Dates for your diary**

**Labour Behind the Label – Activist Training Day**

Saturday 29 October, Impact Hub Birmingham, 58 Oxford Street, Birmingham, B5 5NY – sign up for this event [here](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/activist-training-2016-tickets-27147105724?aff=es2).

**Nicaragua Elections – Trade Union Briefing**

Saturday 29 October, Unite the Union, 128 Theobalds Road, Holborn, London, WC1X 8TN– sign up for this event [here](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/trade-union-briefing-tickets-28221202376?utm_term=eventurl_text).

.

UNISON, 130 Euston Road, London, NW1 2AY, United Kingdom   
Tel: 0800 0 857 857. Web: [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)

This newsletter was produced by UNISON international unit. Please email any comments to:

[I.Relations@unison.co.uk](mailto:I.Relations@unison.co.uk)

Follow us:

[www.unison.org.uk/international](http://www.unison.org.uk/international)

[www.facebook.com/pages/UNISON-International](http://www.facebook.com/pages/UNISON-International/242756212467900)

<https://twitter.com/UNISON_global>

[Join UNISON](http://www.unison.org.uk/for-members/joining-unison)

Freephone 0800 0 857 857

**International Newsletter**

Update on UNISON’s international work

January 2017

**In this edition**

**International committee priorities for 2017**

* **Palestine**
* **Colombia**
* **Turkey**
* **Qatar**
* **Ethical procurement in global supply chains**

**International seminar 2017**

**London Recruits**

**Calendar of international days – a branch resource**

**Dates for your diary**

**International committee priorities for 2017**

The NEC International Committee agreed its work programme for 2017 at its meeting in January. The Committee has prioritised work on Palestine, Colombia, Turkey, Qatar, global supply chains and public services in the global south for this year.

**Palestine**

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the illegal occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the 10th anniversary of the blockade of Gaza and the centenary of the Balfour declaration. UNISON will be working with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to use these anniversaries to highlight the continuing denial of human and workers rights to the Palestinian people.

Since the inauguration of Donald Trump the Israeli government have committed to build even more settlements on Palestinian land; 566 in East Jerusalem and 2,500 in the West Bank. Demolitions of Palestinian homes have also increased.

On Thursday 9th of February, MPs have a chance to take part in a parliamentary debate about Israel's illegal and immoral settlements.  Please take part and circulate the [Palestine Solidarity Campaign action](https://palestinecampaign.iparlsetup.com/lobby/settlementsdebate) and ask your MP to speak out about the impact of settlement building on Palestinian lives and ask the government to take concrete steps to cease all trade and financial ties with settlements.

**Colombia**

The peace agreement means we have to redouble our support for the Colombian trade union movement.

The peace agreement between the FARC guerrillas and the Colombian government was approved by the Colombian parliament at the end of 2016 bringing the end of over 50 years of armed conflict even closer. Peace talks with the much smaller ELN guerrillas are underway. The civil war has meant that Colombia has been the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist as human rights defenders, environmentalists, peasant activists and trade unionists have all been targeted by the government and rightwing paramilitaries. The trade union movement in Britain and Ireland responded by setting up Justice for Colombia to highlight attacks on trade unions and to campaign for social and economic justice for the Colombian people.  In 2016 the Norwegian government, one of the external sponsors of the peace talks, appointed Justice for Colombia (JFC) to be part of the official negotiations recognising their expertise in the area. UNISON has actively supported JFC’s work on the peace agreement for several years.

However, the peace agreement doesn’t mean that we can stop campaigning and showing our solidarity with Colombian trade unions. UNISON has long argued that peace was a fundamental precondition to create a stable environment in which the Colombian trade union movement could begin to organise and grow. There have been some positive developments. The Colombian government has begun to release political prisoners including trade unionists Huber Ballesteros and Miguel Beltran for whose release UNISON has campaigned for several years. But there are many powerful vested interests who are opposed to the peace process and there has been a worrying increase in paramilitary violence. In their annual report, the Colombian think tank, the Institute of Development and Peace Studies (Indepaz), state that 117 social leaders and human rights defenders were killed in 2016. In addition, there were 350 individual and collective threats, 46 assassination attempts and 5 cases of forced disappearance.

We will need to provide solidarity with the Colombian trade union movement throughout the implementation of the peace agreement. Unlike other solidarity organisations we support Justice for Colombia is unique in that it only gets funding from trade union affiliations and donations. That’s why the NEC International Committee has agreed that one of its priorities for 2017 is to increase the number of UNISON branches affiliated to JFC. Only 93 UNISON branches are currently affiliated out of the nearly 1000 we have. We have over 300 branch International Relations Officers (BIROs) so if every branch with a BIRO were to affiliate we could treble our affiliation levels and significantly increase JFC’s funding.

You can affiliate online via the [JFC website](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org/affiliate/affiliate-branches.php).

**Turkey**

Human and workers rights are rapidly being eroded in Turkey, particularly since the failed coup in July 2016. Over 100,000 public service workers have been sacked or suspended, in most cases without any evidence of wrongdoing. In south east Turkey crackdowns and curfews have forced thousands from their homes.

In light of the worsening situation UNISON’s international committee have decided to make human and workers rights in Turkey an international priority. UNISON are supporting union demands for the government of Turkey to implement the international human and workers rights agreements it has agreed, and calling on the UK government and the EU to prioritise democracy and rights in Turkey. Read [Dave Prentis’ blog on Turkey](https://www.unison.org.uk/news/2016/12/solidarity-with-turkey-on-human-rights-day/) for Human Rights Day.

**Qatar**

Not enough has changed for migrant workers

The NEC international committee decided to keep Qatar as a priority area in 2017 because the international pressure is making a difference albeit not enough to stop all abuses of migrant workers involved in the biggest construction programme the state has ever seen. Since Qatar was awarded the 2022 World Cup the migrant population has risen to almost 2 million. They are all subject to the so-called Kafala system where they must have a sponsor to enable them to work. Kafala has allowed abuses such as withholding of passports and control over exit permits. The Qatar authorities have introduced a new employment law called Law 21 which supposedly replaces Kafala. This is not true. The abuse of migrant workers continues with an alarming number of deaths on construction sites and people being forced to live in labour camps.

UNISON has been supporting migrant workers inside Qatar and those hoping to travel to Qatar from India. During 2017 UNISON will continue to support migrant workers to attain their fundamental rights. UNISON activists are encouraged to get involved in the Playfair Qatar campaign and support Anti-Slavery International and Amnesty International who are working on campaigns supporting the rights of migrant workers in the Gulf States.

**Ethical procurement in global supply chains**

Does your employer buy responsibly?

Workers’ rights in global supply chains have become a big talking point at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UN agency that gives workers a voice and sets international standards to protect workers. In 2016 the ILO debated decent work in supply chains. This was the first time that the rights of workers the whole way down the supply chain were considered. This is partly why the NEC international committee has agreed to work on this area during 2017.

There is a move to develop an international standard protecting workers in supply chains. It is very timely, not least, after recent events in Bangladesh where the authorities attacked striking workers and arrested trade union leaders and activists as a way of breaking the trade union movement. All the promises after the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013 seem to have been forgotten as Bangladesh develops its economy at the expense of those at the bottom of the chain, therefore it is crucial that factory owners in countries like Bangladesh are made to take responsibility for their workers’ welfare.

In the UK, the government’s National Action Plan on human rights in business needs to be tested to make sure that there is transparency in the government’s own supply chain. Public services is a multi-billion pound industry. Everything from ‘procuring’ pencils to photocopiers are linked through the global supply chain. Businesses have a responsibility to ensure that there are no abuses anywhere in the chain. UNISON is calling for public bodies to also be transparent about where their goods are produced. UNISON is issuing guidance to help members who want to engage with their employers on buying responsibly. As a starting point we are requesting members to ask their employers if they have a code of conduct for suppliers that includes rights for workers (some codes refer only to ensuing there is no slavery or child labour but omit other fundamental rights including the right to organise). If your employer has a code, and you can get a copy of it, please send it to [I.Relations@unison.co.uk](mailto:I.Relations@unison.co.uk) so that we can include some examples of good practice in the guidance we are producing.

If you are going to Croyde for the international seminar at the end of March, you will have an opportunity to get involved in a session that is looking at workers’ rights in supply chains and how you might develop an action plan for getting your employer engaged. Please consider asking your employer for their code of conduct for suppliers and a copy of their procurement policy before coming to Croyde.

**International seminar 2017**

The annual international seminar is taking place at Croyde Bay, North Devon over the weekend Friday 31 March – Sunday 2 April 2017.

The seminar a great way to discuss implementing UNISON international policies in your branch or region and to network with other international officers from around the country. This year’s seminar will feature sessions on supply chain exploitation, Colombia, Palestine and Qatar among other areas. A training session focusing on the role of the branch international relations officer is also planned. The exact programme of activities is subject to change.

Registration is open to UNISON branch international officers and regional delegates. We are also encouraging young and black members to ask their branch to nominate them.

More about the seminar and how to register can be found [here](https://www.unison.org.uk/events/unison-international-seminar/).

**London Recruits**

In the 1960s and ’70s, trade unionists from London ran clandestine missions to South Africa to help the fight against apartheid. Now a film is being made about their remarkable contribution. Watch Dave Prentis’ message about the London Recruits and find out how branches can support the film. <https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2016/11/london-recruits/>

If you would like to invite a London Recruit to speak to your branch email [info@barefootrascals.com](mailto:info@barefootrascals.com)

**Calendar of international days – a branch resource**

The 2017 UNISON calendar of international days is now available to download.

This calendar of globally-recognised international days and key days for UNISON has been designed to be used as a resource when planning work in your branch. It gives some suggested activities and provides web links to organisations working on particular issues. UNISON is affiliated to some of the organisations and encourages regions and branches to affiliate also.

The PDF version of the calendar can be downloaded [here](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/01/International-Calendar-2016.pdf).

**Upcoming dates for your diary**

**International Women’s Day**

Tuesday 8 March – [internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com/)

**International seminar**

Friday 31 March – Sunday 2 April, Sheffield – [International seminar 2017](https://www.unison.org.uk/events/unison-international-seminar/)

.

UNISON, 130 Euston Road, London, NW1 2AY, United Kingdom   
Tel: 0800 0 857 857. Web: [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)

This newsletter was produced by UNISON international unit. Any comments, please email:

[I.Relations@unison.co.uk](mailto:I.Relations@unison.co.uk)

Follow us:

[www.unison.org.uk/international](http://www.unison.org.uk/international)

[www.facebook.com/pages/UNISON-International](http://www.facebook.com/pages/UNISON-International/242756212467900)

<https://twitter.com/UNISON_global>

[Join UNISON](http://www.unison.org.uk/for-members/joining-unison)

Freephone 0800 0 857 857

1. **Articles**

**Blog: Heart Unions, Heart Palestinian workers’ rights**

Posted on 17 February 2017 by Dave Prentis

It’s unlikely that the owners of the Zarfarti garage realised it was heart unions week when they signed a collective agreement with the trade union WAC-MAAN on Valentine’s Day. It was definitely a heart unions day for workers at the garage, who have finally won a four year struggle to gain recognition for WAC-MAAN.

The Zarfarti garage is one of 300 businesses in the Mishor Adumim Industrial Zone. According to international law it’s located in an illegal settlement on Palestinian land; but as this is Area C, which makes up over 60 per cent of the West Bank, it’s completely under the control of the Israeli authorities.

Most Palestinians don’t want to work in the industrial zone, but have little choice as the occupation means a viable Palestinian economy is virtually impossible. As such they endure low pay, long hours and precarious work in poor conditions.

In July 2014, after almost a year of negotiations that brought limited gains for workers but no collective agreement, the owners attempted to fire Hatem Abu Ziade, the head of the workers’ committee.

They falsely accused him of sabotaging a military vehicle and barred him from entering the industrial zone for “security based” reasons.

Hatem’s story is not unusual. He had worked at the garage for 17 years without any complaints. When Hatem attempted to organise his colleagues, the owners assumed he could dismiss him and shut down the union without any consequences. On this occasion they were wrong.

The UNISON International Development Fund (UIDF) supported WAC-MAAN to organise workers in the industrial zones, so when they approached UNISON’s international committee for assistance to fight Hatem’s case in the Israeli courts, of course we agreed to help.

Following strike action at the Zarfarti garage and a lengthy battle in the regional labour court, the judge ordered that Hatem should be reinstated and his union recognised.

Dissatisfied, the garage owner appealed to the national labour court. Again the court ruled in Hatem and WAC-MAAN’s favour.

The verdict sent shock waves through the industrial zone and has far reaching consequences. Few believed that a Palestinian worker, with the backing of his union, could win against the garage owner, who is a high ranking military reserve officer and a settler.

According to workers, at least one worried employer on the industrial zone increased salaries when he heard about the court’s decision.

Hatem Abu Ziade finally returned to work on 11 May 2016, and 10 months later, on 14 February 2017, the Zarfarti garage agreed to sign the first ever collective agreement for Palestinian workers in Israeli controlled industrial zones in the West Bank.

I am proud that UNISON supported WAC-MAAN to organise Palestinian workers in the illegal Israeli industrial zones, and we stood with them in their fight for justice for Hatem and the workers at the Zarfarti garage. Wins like this are rare for Palestinian workers living under occupation, so when they happen they should be celebrated. Especially in heart unions week.

**Blog: Solidarity with Turkey on Human Rights Day**

Posted on 10 December 2016 by Dave Prentis

Today is Human Rights Day, when we commemorate the signing of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Sadly, what should be a celebration of our hard won rights, is inevitably a day when we campaign against human rights abuses across the world.

Since the global banking crisis in 2008 human rights across the world have been eroded in the name of austerity. Here in the UK we have seen our rights undermined by the trade union act, cuts to social protection for the most vulnerable in society and a rise in xenophobia and racism rising from the divisive rhetoric around the decision for the UK to leave the European Union.

In June this year the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights raised ‘serious concerns’ that the UK government’s austerity policies are in breech of international human rights. Amongst these concerns were the damaging impact of cuts to social protection which disproportionately affects women, young people, ethnic minorities and disabled people.

As an internationalist union, in an interdependent world, we recognise the importance of working collectively with trade unionists all over the world to defend our rights.

In 1948, following the atrocities of the second world war, Turkey supported the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but today President Erdogan’s government is systematically undermining almost all of its international human rights obligations.

Since the failed coup on 15 July and the imposition of a state of emergency, the government of Turkey has arbitrarily dismissed or suspended more than 100,000 public sector employees, in most cases without evidence of wrong doing. Workers who have been sacked are banned from future employment in the public sector. Those working for the departments of education, health and justice have particularly been targeted, causing significant challenges for already overstretched key public services.

Many media outlets critical of the government have been closed down and the journalists who work for them arrested. MPs representing the HDP party, mainly from Kurdish areas of south east Turkey have been detained and local mayors replaced by government appointees.

For Turkey’s trade unions the denial of fundamental rights is nothing new. In October UNISON submitted evidence to the UK’s Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on Turkey highlighting how freedom of association and assembly are denied and how trade unionists are subjected to arbitrary arrests, detention and violence when trying to conduct legitimate trade union business. Police have routinely used teargas and water cannons to prevent May Day rallies, and trade unionists have even been arrested for sharing messages on social media, distributing leaflets or attending press conferences. Is it any wonder the International Trade Union Confederation gives Turkey a rating of 5, no guarantee of rights, in its annual global rights index, placing it amongst the worst countries to be a trade unionist in the world?

In this context you would hope that world leaders would speak out, but few have dared challenge President Erdogan’s position of power in the refugee crisis. Our own government in particular have prioritised cooperation with Turkey over highlighting concerns at the erosion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Whilst many decision makers appear to be turning their backs on the situation in Turkey, it is vital that we stand in solidarity with trade unionists who continue to bravely speak out against a crackdown by an increasingly authoritarian government.