



UNISON

## Scottish International Committee's Newsletter ...

Volume 4

Autumn 2013

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#### [Burma Campaign](#) **Campaign to free Burma's prisoners goes on ...**

Despite some welcome political change in Burma, including the release of high profile prisoners, hundreds of political prisoners remain in jail.

The international community must not forget those political prisoners still left behind in jail.



### Editorial

The purpose of this non-editorial driven publication is to keep readers fully aware on Scottish International Committee's work. Hence, neither the Editor nor the Publisher are liable for the accuracy of the content.

Editorial team members Hamid Rasheed, and Fahd Ali Asif (SBMC Rep) are keen to have your views to improve this publication. Please provide your feedback to: Simon Macfarlane. Regional Organiser UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street Glasgow G2 6RX  
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Email: [s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk](mailto:s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk)



Dennis Goldberg with members of the Scottish International Committee.

## Appeal to bring Denis Goldberg to Edinburgh ...

The proposal that Denis Goldberg should be the keynote speaker at the opening conference of the 2013 Edinburgh World Justice Festival was made by UNISON branch officers Allison Cosgrove from East Lothian and Matthew Crighton and Shauna Clarke from City of Edinburgh branch. It is hoped this year, to bring Denis Goldberg the founder of Community HEART to the EWJF from South Africa, to the 2013 Edinburgh World Justice Festival.

In accepting the proposal the organising group was conscious of taking on the responsibility for raising approximately £1,500 to cover the costs of Denis' flight and accommodation as well as the hire of the conference venue etc.

We are hopeful that we would receive offers of financial support from UNISON branches as well as the Scottish Region, in light of long-standing friendship with Denis and the support which UNISON has given the Festival in past years.

For more information about Denis Goldberg and the Festival, please see below. A copy of the festival programme will be circulated to Branches soon; it runs from 12 We are therefore making an appeal for trade union support for the Festival. We plan to run a workshop on the role of trade unions in achieving world justice during the festival.

If your branch would consider giving up to £300, it would be a great contribution towards the work of the Festival, and you would be supporting the voice of a world renowned figure in Peace and Justice.

Please can you give serious consideration to this request? Cheques should be made out to "Edinburgh World Justice Festival" and be sent to Allison Cosgrove, Treasurer, 13 Stories Park, East Linton, EH40 3BN.

Direct payments can also be made to the Festival's Bank Account, The Co-operative Bank, Sort code 089299, Account Number 65210709.



## Dundee Together Against Racism & Fascism ... by

Karen Grogran

Dundee Together Against Racism & Fascism 2013, event took place on Saturday 14th September 2013, from 11.00am-4.00pm in Dundee City Square.

Dundee Together Against Racism &

Fascism, brought together Faith Groups, Trades Unions, Political Parties and other Community Organisations, in a peaceful and inclusive celebration of the diversity of Dundee. The event was fully participated by families and members of the community together to enjoy music, food, dance, art and discussion from a wide variety of cultural influences prevalent in contemporary Dundee.

At the event, a parade took place up Reform Street to International Brigade Memorial to lay a wreath. Live music was presented by The Love Music Hate Racism; reggae covers from Buffalo Soldiers; Eclectic Sounds from the inimitable Hanney, plus The Boston Tea Party; Espire and Marley Davidson. There were fabulous performances by group of dancers from Bharatiya Ashram and Ovarian Cysters.

The event included many stalls, activities for kids such as face painting, banner making workshop, crafts, and giant puppets. Fabulous food was provided by the YYI and local Mosque.

Dundee City UNISON is a member of Dundee Together Against Racism & Fascism and is working alongside sister trade unionist and members of our local communities to organise this event. UNISON Dundee City Branch's International Officer Keren Grogan; Stuart Fairweather, Mike Arnott, Janice Aitken, Hamish Drummond and many other contributors did a fine job in organising the event, to mark Dundee's cultural diversity and proud anti-racist, anti-fascist tradition.



## Mahmoud Sarsak Joins UNISON ...



Palestinian International footballer Mahmood Sarsak joined the Public Service Trade Union UNISON, which has been a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause. Mahmood Sarsak – was not long ago released from

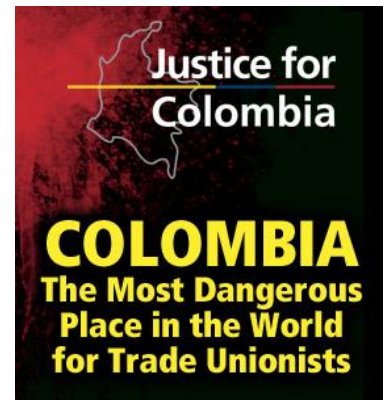
detention by the occupying Israeli forces after a three month hunger strike. Mahmood Sarsak spoke about his nation's struggle for international recognition at a UNISON hosted public meeting, in Glasgow.

Sam Macartney, Chair of UNISON Scotland International Committee, said: "It is a huge honour to welcome Mahmood Sarsak to Scotland. We share Mahmood's love of the beautiful game and we share his passion for justice for his people.

"We believe time is up for the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. The cultural boycott of Israel is taking off and now we need a real push on a sporting boycott.

"UNISON members value the contribution of sport to society – whether it be in Scotland or in Palestine. The detention of Mahmood Sarsak for three years without charge or trial or access to his family during his prime footballing years was an attack on him and on the spirit of football. Palestinian young people – and young Scots too - need sporting heroes like Mahmood."

For peace and social justice in Colombia



JfC campaigns for human and labour rights. They need your support.

## Divestment Conference / Workshops ...

A two day divestment conference is scheduled to take place on 19-20 October 2013 at Grassmarket Centre Edinburgh. The conference bringing international speakers and Scottish groups and organisations actively supporting the Palestinian call for a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) aims to build on boycott successes and growing civil society support for Palestine in Scotland and around the UK. Divestment of public, workplace and church pension funds from companies, Israeli or otherwise, complicit in Israel's daily violations of Palestinian rights is a vital part of our solidarity work. During the struggle



against South African apartheid, churches, trade unions and campaigners were part of the world-wide divestment movement. It is now time to follow the example of others by divesting from Israeli occupation, colonisation and apartheid. Please register for the conference [here](#) (£20 or £10 concession)

## International policy passed at National Delegates Conference...

The Motions passed at our National Delegates Conference, this year includes motions on Bangladesh, LGBT rights, [Nicaragua](#), [Colombia](#) and Palestine at this year's annual conference.

There were several 'asks' in the motions that BIROs might wish to get branch committees to consider including affiliating to [Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign](#) and raising awareness of the safety failures that caused the horrendous loss of life of Bangladeshi garment workers.



Check out [IndustriALL](#) (global union) and [War on Want](#) for updates on the issue. Your branch could consider [affiliating to War on Want](#) for £25 per year. In line with the motion, Dave Prentis is sending a solidarity letter to the Bangladesh National Garment Workers' Federation telling them that we support their struggle to work in a safe environment free from intimidation, and to receive a decent wage.

The Colombia motion calls for 'regions and branches to promote and organise campaigns that build a sustainable infrastructure, supporting community organising, protecting workers and their families'. A start in implementing the motion would be for your branch to affiliate to [Justice for Colombia](#). If you would like to see the full text of motions passed at NDC, please email [I.Relations@unison.co.uk](mailto:I.Relations@unison.co.uk) and we will send an electronic copy.

Burma Campaign UK calling for ALL political prisoners to be released. Add your name! Affiliate to Burma Campaign UK.

## International News ...

Trade unionists are increasingly coming under attack around the globe. In the UK we've seen attacks on facility time, discrimination against union reps and the appalling revelations around 'black lists' of known trade union activists. In other countries, the victimisation of trade unionists has included murder, disappearances, banning of unions and the introduction of anti-union laws. What we all have in common is our desire to protect the rights of workers, therefore, it is essential, despite the current economic climate that threatens all our livelihoods, that we stand together in solidarity.

### Swaziland

TUCOSWA is the new trade union federation in the small absolute monarchy, Swaziland. The organisation has 50,000 members. The Swazi government has chosen not to recognise TUCOSWA, effectively making it illegal, in violation of the rules of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that Swaziland has ratified. This means that the trade union movement in Swaziland, and therefore the workers in Swaziland, no longer have a voice and no longer have the means to demand their rights [Sign the petition](#) calling for the union to be unbanned.

### Banana workers in Peru

UNISON West Midlands have helped SITAG in Peru produce a 4-minute video on why banana workers need the support of trade unions to build their unions and campaigning for the repeal of anti-union laws. Here's the [link](#)

### Murder of trade union leader in Philippines

Antonio Petalcorin, the leader of the Network of Transport Organizations (NETO-APL-ITUC), was shot dead on 2 July 2013 in front of his home. He was part of group of transport leaders who exposed the corrupt practices of the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) and launched a campaign to oust the director in October 2012. Antonio's colleagues believe that his murder might be a part of a series of attempts to silence those unmasking corruption in the LTFRB office, which primarily victimizes small-time public transport drivers and operators. They gave as an example what happened to Emilio Rivera, former chair of an independent transport workers' group, the Matina Aplaya Transport Cooperative (MATRANSCO), who was shot dead; as well as that of Carlos Cirilo, who narrowly survived when a grenade was lobbed inside his home but fortunately failed to explode. The men have one thing in common - they were co-complainants in a corruption case filed against the director of LTFRB. Labour Start have started a campaign calling for the government of the Philippines to deal with the number of murders of activists and to bring the killers of trade unionists and human rights defenders to justice. Please sign [the petition](#).

## “Defending the Legacy of Hugo Chavez” ... By Louise Giblin

The Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign organised an event “Defending the Legacy of Hugo Chavez”, in Edinburgh. This event was organised to present facts about the situation in Venezuela today and to discuss the prospects for Hugo Chavez’s legacy in light of the election of his successor, Nicolas Maduro, as President and the threats to democracy from the right. The event was very well attended by the activists, and large number of UNISON members.



**SCOTTISH VENEZUELA  
SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN** 

Alvaro Sanchez Consul at Venezuela Embassy, spoke about the legacy of Hugo Chavez, and mentioned that “creation of social missions; bringing 80% decline in poverty to less than 20% now; putting 30 missions in place; providing of 6000 clinics via Barrio Adentro, and 15000 Cuban general medical practitioners; free health services; free of illiteracy Venezuela with one million adults completing their high school education. Success of housing Mission in building and delivering 400 000 homes, and build up of 1000 new homes per week – are all part of “Hugo Chavez Legacy” -- we must defend.

It was of Hugo Chavez who helped pass the new Labour Act 2012, which is a major progressive piece of legislation that undid many constraints, faced by Trade Unions & workers, in the past. In addition to that, weekends were respected; shorter working week, extended maternity

leave and paternity leave were introduced in this legislation, which Chavez championed whilst he was very ill. Chavez beat Neoliberalism; he dismissed privatisation of public services and cuts to social spending. He showed another way, by putting people first. He showed Venezuela could grow with state control & investment.

Francisco Dominguez of the Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, disapproved the demonisation of Venezuela in the UK press. He mentioned that deliberate distortion of the facts about Venezuela in British media is common. Venezuela needs people here in the UK, to support the solidarity campaigns. Neoliberalism implemented in Latin America by the US, paves the way for the markets to rules, and people are not important. There is evidence of 48-77% of poverty in Latin American countries that decided to implement this policy. The world has seen the assassination of many over the last 30 years who opposed this policy. Yet Hugo Chavez knew that the regions had to work together to combat this and as a result Chavez ensured that The Bank of the South make the IMF & World Bank unnecessary in the region.

The creation of CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) in 2010 consists of 33 sovereign countries in the Americas representing roughly 600 million people. Absent from the bloc are Canada and the United States, as well as the territories of France, the Netherlands, Denmark and the United Kingdom in the Americas. CELAC is being created to deepen Latin American integration and to reduce the once overwhelming influence of the United States on the politics and economics of Latin America. There are no US military bases present in Venezuela, Brazil or Ecuador. There is still much to do, there are still 46 US bases in Latin America.

The Scottish Venezuela Solidarity Campaign event was successful, and those shared the event, took home a simple message, that putting people first is at the very centre of “Chavez’s Legacy!”

## Denis Goldberg’s Celebrates 80th Birthday in Glasgow ...

Community H.E.A.R.T Charity Fundraising event was organised to celebrate Denis Goldberg’s 80th Birthday in Glasgow. The evening kicked off with a Civic Reception, followed by Gourmet Buffet, with entertainments, raffles, and auctions at the Banqueting Hall in Glasgow City Chambers.

Many UNISON branches actively took part in the event, and at the occasion Alison Cosgrove, Vice Chair Scottish International Committee gave a Birthday present to Denis Goldberg to mark his 80th Birthday.

A fundraising page has been set up for those people who cannot attend the events but would like to donate and send a birthday message to mark Denis’s 80th birthday and his commitment to the South African people and the struggle for freedom, justice and equality for all. <http://www.everyclick.com/denisgoldberg>.

