



Scottish International Committee's Newsletter ...

Volume 8 Summer Edition 2015

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Join Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign



Just a Wee Word ...

The summer edition of our newsletter is with you. The purpose of this non-editorial driven publication is to keep our readers fully aware on Scottish International Committee's work. Hence, neither the Editor nor the Publishers are liable for the accuracy of the content. Editorial team members Hamid Rasheed and Sam Macartney, Tony Caleary 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 Tel: 0845 355 0845 Email:s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk

Scottish International Committee Calls for Action against Pensions fund investments into Israeli Arms Trade...

Report by Sam MacCartney & Mick Napier

UNISON Scotland's Scottish International Committee calls for an action against Council Workers' pension's funds linked to Israeli arms trade, as Military-grade Israeli surveillance technology is deployed in Glasgow.

Glasgow City Council has earlier confirmed that the pension fund it manages on behalf of twelve local authorities and other partners, Strathclyde Pension Fund, has investments in a majority of the twenty largest arms companies in the world. This [includes Raytheon](#) and others who supply weapons that Israel uses to periodically devastate Gaza.

Whilst the Israeli technology known as 'NICE' is deployed in Scotland's biggest city; to justify this deployment the spokespersons for Glasgow City Council made three claims

1. NICE had no [connection to the Israeli military](#).
2. The [full capabilities](#) of the technology being purchased would not be utilised.
3. Opponents of the sinister Israeli technology were driven by 'anti-Jewish' malice. These claims, at least two of these are untrue and one raises lots of questions.

The fact remains, that NICE is a product of the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine and was developed by veterans of that military occupation. The company is [now owned by](#) Israeli arms company Elbit Systems which is tightly integrated into the structures and activities of the Israeli military this raises a question that why would a buyer not utilise the [full capabilities](#) of a product? Why buy it in the first place! [The smear](#), suggesting that opposition to a ratcheting up of state surveillance implies hostility to Jews, is itself anti-Semitic. The Herald front page carried an exclusive on 26 May 2015 that Police Scotland is using 'controversial face recognition software' that 'raises fresh fears over civil liberties'. The [Herald article](#) is welcome but the extent of the surveillance already being piloted in Glasgow is even [more alarming](#) than the Herald article reports; the NICE technology takes state surveillance to a whole new level. And this escalation of surveillance of citizens is being piloted in the city where Edward Snowden was elected as Rector last year of the largest university in protest at saturation surveillance of wholly innocent citizens.

UNISON has a very clear position on Israel. In line with this position the Scottish International Committee fully supports a continual build-up of awareness about BDS campaign, to ensure that UNISON's policy about Boycott Disinvestment and Sanctions against Israel remains alive and kicking. Scottish International Committee urges upon its publics to take action and visit [www.coordin8.org.uk](#) to send a letter to your councillors to demand a public enquiry into this Israeli military-grade technology already deployed in Glasgow City Centre. And build a lobby in all other Scottish Councils to refuse, to install NICE technology in their council area. Organise to End Scottish Arms Trade with Israel (ESATI). For further information see [www.scottishpsc.org.uk](#) / [www.esati.org](#)



Elbit System headquarters in [Haifa](#). Photo: Courtesy Wikipedia

Help re-build the Kobane Health Sector



Heyva Sor a
Kurdistanê



After a long battle ISIS has been pushed out of Kobane. However this has come at a tragic cost. Many lives have been lost and there has been massive damage to the infra-structure of Kobane and the surrounding villages.

Prior to the attack by ISIS there were 4 hospitals in the city. 2 have been completely destroyed with the remaining 2 severely damaged and inoperable at present. All the pharmacies have been badly damaged with the loss of all medicines and most of the medical equipment. Laboratories and clinics have also suffered either total destruction or severe damage.

In the re-building of Kobane, and to look after the welfare of its people, there is an urgent need to start re-building the health services. The immediate need is for medical supplies, necessary medicines, health staff with surgical experience, ambulances and new hospitals and clinics.

You can help in this effort by

1. Donating money to our Kobane Health Services Appeal (see details below)
2. Donating medical equipment. If you can help with this please contact us for details of the most necessary equipment.
3. Ask your union, union branch, faith group, etc., to donate to our appeal.
4. Write to the EU, UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Governments and ask that they assist with medical equipment
5. Ask that the UK government contact the Turkish Government and the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq to demand that medical and other supplies for the re-building of Kobane be allowed to pass their borders to reach the city.

This appeal is supported by UNISON, Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê (Kurdish Red Moon), the Kobane Reconstruction Board, Scottish-Kurdish Society, Peace in Kurdistan Campaign, RE-BUILD, Kurdish People's Assembly, Roj Women's Assembly, Women in War, Kurdistan National Congress (KNK), Femaïd, Widows for Peace. Charity Registration No. 1093741

Make donations to Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê

By bank transfer to: Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê

Sort Code 20 46 60 Account No 40 91 23 87 Please mark the donation as Kobane Health Appeal. <https://www.justgiving.com/Kobane-Health-Appeal/>

Send cheques to: Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê, Fairfax Hall, 11 Portland Gardens, London, N4 1HU

Mark the back of the cheque – Kobane Health Appeal

If you are a UK taxpayer, the value of your donation can be increased by 25% under the Gift Aid scheme without costing you a penny more.

*Yes, I am a UK taxpayer and want Heyva Sor a Kurdistanê to reclaim the tax on this donation, any donations I have made in the past four years and all future donations. **

Name

Address

** To qualify for Gift Aid, you must pay an amount of UK Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that you donate to reclaim on your donations in the appropriate tax year (currently 25p for each £1 given). Other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not apply.*

For more information telephone 01698 454690 or email stephen_fs59@hotmail.com

Scotland Against TTIP ...

Report by Allison Cosgrove and Sam McCartney

UNISON along with a number of other trade unions, community groups and NGO'S participated in the launch of Scotland against TTIP, to oppose this trade agreement which would have a huge and very negative impact on the whole of the EU and Scotland. The launch took place at a public meeting held in Renfield St Stephen's Church, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow on Saturday, 11 April 2015. At the launch there were excellent crowd of over 150 activists and members of the public heard presentation's from a wide variety of speakers, many of who have had first-hand input on the issue of trade agreements and the impact they can have on many economies.

Allison Cosgrove of the Scottish International Committee observed, that the speakers from the STUC, Global justice now, war on want and many other groups made this launch a very informative day and the workshops enabled question and answer sessions to take place where individuals where able to share information and ask questions of others within the groups. This was an exciting and very interesting event, beginning with platform speakers from a variety of backgrounds, including UNITE, RMT and the STUC. The background to TTIP was explained for newer members and we then broke into workshops looking at the effect TTIP might have on our particular service or interest. Both Sam McCartney and I were in the Public Services workshop session, ably led by Dave Moxham from the STUC.

Some present were very knowledgeable while others had had only an introduction to the complexities of TTIP, and it was important for members to realise that merely "taking the NHS out of TTIP" was not sufficient, as so many other public services were affected. War on Want had an excellent summary on their leaflet: " 1 Million Jobs to Go; NHS Lost for Ever; Food Safety Trashed" which brought home the effects TTIP could have on areas we might not have thought of.



Food Safety was a new area for many of us, and it was explained how food standards could be drastically reduced with the lower requirements from the USA applied to imports, instead of the current high EU standards. According to UNITE, over 90% of beef produced in the USA has bovine growth hormone added that have been linked to cancer in humans. The EU has restricted the import of this beef since 1988 but business groups have asked for their removal under TTIP. Would you feel happy eating beef with growth hormone added?



TTIP would remove the barriers on the use of toxic chemicals; will see more private firms involved in running public services, including education, water and environmental services; and will dash any hope of renationalising the railways. War on Want goes on to say that it will cause devastation on the environment, pushing up greenhouse gas emissions and increasing the export of shale gas and tar sands oil, increasing our dependency on fossil

fuels when Scotland, in particular, has taken a lead on alternative energies.

The Morning Star produced an excellent edition specifically on TTIP, where it was described as "A neoliberal dream that offers little to workers", emphasising that any future government that tries to bring back privatised services into the public sector – parts of the NHS in England for example – could be sued in secret, unaccountable tribunals, completely bypassing the normal court proceedings in this country. An excellent day, albeit with frightening prospects for workers and ordinary people if TTIP as it stands goes ahead.

UNISON Scotland is a founding member of the Scotland against TTIP Campaign. TTIP is a proposed trade treaty between the US and EUROPE, which is being negotiated - in secret - in Brussels at the moment. UNISON is opposed to this treaty in its entirety as we believe that along with well-publicised threats to the NHS, it will also threaten jobs, workers' rights, other public services, environmental standards. There is a particular clause, called the Investor State Dispute Settlement which provides for global corporations, such as tobacco companies, private health companies, etc. to sue individual countries who pass any legislation which could be deemed to affect their profits. For more detail on TTIP and the new UNISON briefings see <http://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/unison-campaigns/stop-ttip/>

UNISON International Seminar – March 2015...

Report by Allison Cosgrove

The Seminar was very well attended with many delegates from around the regions and nations.

We began with a film “The King and the People” about Swaziland and the despotic regime run by an absolute monarchy. This was an eye opener to many people, especially as the King of Swaziland had been welcomed to this country for royal events in recent years. The first session on Saturday welcomed Vincent Ncongwane, the General Secretary of Swaziland TUC, who told us that his country had the highest rates of HIV and TB in the world, and two thirds of the population live in poverty. Political parties are banned and “tribute” or slave labour for the King and many chiefs still flourished.

However, Vincent also told us of the work that ACTSA was doing in Swaziland with the Women’s Rural Assemblies to try and improve women’s empowerment. The TUC was “de-registered” in 2013, but there are still some trade unions, chiefly for public service workers, nurses and teachers. Support from the EU had been important, and an EU Mission had been opened in the Capital as Swaziland is a sugar exporter to the EU.

Vincent asked us to work with ACTSA by signing a petition on its website at www.actsa.org/sendemail-1043.html asking for Swaziland as a member of the Commonwealth to be referred to the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group which has the power to exert pressure for change.



Sam McCartney Chair Scottish International Committee builds awareness on Bhopal Disaster Campaign

There are two other actions on the ACTSA website for the release of activists, and members were encouraged to take part in these.



Scottish Branch International Officers at the Seminar

Next, Polly Jones from Global Justice Now updated delegates on the different trade agreements, TTIP, TISA, and CETA, noting that few African countries were party to these agreements. There is a national day of action on 18 April. There was discussion on the changes within political parties and the TUC position to oppose the whole of TTIP (after initially supporting it) was explained.

Merely asking that the NHS be exempt from TTIP was not sufficient, as other areas were threatened by ISDS, a secretive dispute resolution system which would bypass a country’s own legal system. Following this, Linda McAvan MEP spoke on the EU’s role in international development and TTIP, unfortunately showing support for the proposed treaty which did not extend to the audience. The afternoon session began with Charles Cochrane from the Palestine Solidarity

Campaign, who spoke on Pension Funds and the need for awareness of individuals as to how their individual pension funds were invested. The next session was on Colombia, and Hasan Dodwell from Justice from Colombia outlined the background to the country and its relations with the USA which dated back to Colombian troops participating in the Korean War, and the fact that the US had always had a base there. Violence against trade unionists continued against a background of support from the US and the UK, although this had been denied by UK Ministers. Aid of \$100m per year came from the US, the third largest after Israel and Egypt, which indicated its significance, and the UK has £20m worth of military deals every year. It was noted that there was a cross party group on Colombia in Westminster.

The last session of the day was on Cuba, and this included a short film. Steve Ludlum from Cuba Solidarity Campaign updated delegates with the achievements Cuba had made, particularly noting that the country spent 40% of its income on caring for its citizens. Cuba medical aid, provided free to West Africa to help with Ebola, Mission Miracle in the British West Indies and Africa to restore eyesight, and frequent intervention of Cuban doctors to international emergencies was warmly welcomed.



Scottish delegates Steps up Playfair Qatar Campaign ...

Questions were asked about Cuba’s position in the world recession, and if there was any improvement after recent discussions with the USA. There was some movement with the US, although slow, and hampered by Obama not having a majority in Congress. The embargo has not been repealed. It was noted that Brazil was now investing in Cuba. Trade unions’ positions have improved, and policies cannot be implemented without their agreement. It was also noted that maternity rights were better than those in the UK. Steve finished by saying “No other organisation has done as much for Cuba as the British Trade Union Movement” which was heartening for delegates.

UNISON International Seminar – March 2015...

Sunday morning was a session of reports from four areas – Scotland, West Midlands, Greater London and Eastern on specific areas of work they had undertaken. Our own Sam McCartney reported back on his visit to Bhopal last December, with accompanying photographs, some of which were quite harrowing and showing the suffering the people of Bhopal still endure, 30 years after Union Carbide released tons of chemicals into the atmosphere. Five million people were still at risk, and many birth defects have become genetic with generations of families suffering. The Union Carbide site has never been cleared and there is still open contamination, with the Indian Government not acknowledging the ongoing problems.

Roy and Mark from the West Midlands outlined Nicaragua’s background, from the Sandino Revolt and its overthrow by the Somoza dictatorship, followed by the Sandinista revolution, opposed by the US. There has been support from UNISON for more than 30 years, with a legal office being supported for the last four years and assistance to FETSALUD capacity building project. Density of TU membership was something we all envied, often 100% in workplaces. Rommel Abellar from Greater London, told us about his work with Filipino workers in the UK, mostly in the care sector. He had taken part in the Adopt Albuera Campaign following a typhoon. Mark Trask from Eastern Region, had attended May Day celebrations in Cuba in 2014. He referred to the Pan American Games in Cuba, where workers helping to build apartments for the athletes were given an apartment afterwards. It was an excellent session, where delegates could really understand how support for a particular country, from their region could make a difference.

The last session was on Anti Slavery International, with particular reference to the World Cup in Qatar. We were astounded to hear that 21 million people worldwide were still in slavery in 2015, and 5.5 million of these were children. Delegates were asked to contact their MP to demand that the UK Government become more informed on anti-slavery policy and practice.

The seminar schedule was fully packed but an extremely interesting and worthwhile weekend, with plenty of new information for delegates.

Affiliate your Trade Union Branch, Council or Committee to Trade Union Friends of Bhopal (*Bhopal Saathi*)

In 2014, on the 30th anniversary of the world’s most deadly industrial disaster, a trade union delegation from Scotland and Wales visited Bhopal and met with survivors who continue to struggle for justice. Trade union Friends of Bhopal (*Bhopal Saathi*) was set up to continue solidarity work by British trades unions with the survivors of Bhopal and other victims of toxic industry, corporate crime and occupational and environmental hazards. *Saathi* is a Hindi word that means ‘friend’ or ‘comrade’ and reflects a relationship of solidarity and commitment.

The Bhopalis tell us that ‘we all live in Bhopal’ because we are all affected by the toxic chemicals and health hazards that profit-maximising and austerity-chasing employers impose on workers the world over. Justice for Bhopal means a better world for all. Trade Union Friends of Bhopal was initiated by the trade union activists of the 2014 delegation, established by Scottish Friends of Bhopal

and is administered by the Bhopal Medical Appeal.

Affiliation fee: £50 £100 Other (please specify amount)

.....
.....
.....

Trade Union branch / council etc

Contact Designation

Email

Telephone number

Please send your affiliation fee with this form to: Trade Union Friends of Bhopal, c/o Bhopal Medical Appeal, Unit 2, The Foundry, 8/9 St George’s Mews BN1 4EU Brighton. Make cheques to ‘Bhopal Medical Appeal’ (with ‘Trade Union Friends of Bhopal’ on the rear side). To pay by Direct Debit, use the attached form.

Many thanks for your support. Further information from Scottish Friends of Bhopal:

Eurig Scandrett (UCU) escandrett@gmu.ac.uk or

Kathy Jenkins (Unite) kajenkins@blueyonder.co.uk

www.bhopal.org

www.bhopal.net

<http://sfobhopal.org/>

Swaziland: Attacks on trade unionists intensify...

Africa's last absolute monarchy has intensified its attacks on trade unions and activists. Political parties are banned in Swaziland and the President of the People's United Democratic Movement Mario Masuku and the party's youth leader, Maxwell Dlamini are subjected to arbitrary detention. Swazi human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko and journalist Bheki Makhubu received a two year sentence for writing articles critical of the lack of independence in the judiciary. On 19 March 2015, Thulani was moved to solitary confinement after the publication of a prison letter marking the one-year anniversary of his detention.



SIC Sets Focus on Playfair Qatar Campaign ...

In its recent meeting Scottish International Committee focused its attention on the ethics of FIFA. It was agreed that we should have no complacency about the moral standing of the game. In June Scotland is hosting a 'friendly' with Qatar. UNISON is supporting the Playfair Qatar campaign and will be participating in campaigning events around this game. You can send a message to the SFA and Qatar that we oppose the abuse of workers in the name of the beautiful game.



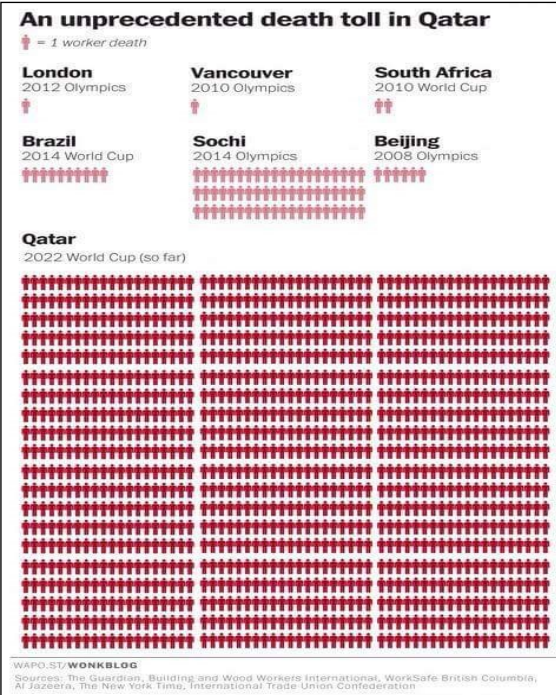
There will be an opportunity to find out more about the Playfair Qatar campaign at a fringe meeting at National Delegate Conference at lunchtime on Thursday 18th June – please also bring your club football top or scarf that day and have a go at our beat the goalie competition!

Qatar is dragging football's name through the mud. Hundreds of construction workers, preparing the country to host the 2022 World Cup, have already died, with thousands more at risk. Disgusting living conditions, unsafe worksites and long hours and Kafel based slavery are few of the issues that makes Qatar's World Cup a dangerous thing to build.

If Scotland v Qatar was a World Cup '22 match, 62 workers would have lost their lives to stage it – that's how many will die for each game played in the tournament.

The Scottish FA claims it is offering Qatar "practical support, not public soundbites," as an excuse for its silence. But Qatar knows what it needs to do – It's just refusing to do it.

Cosy friendlies like this don't send the message that Qatar's time-wasting is unacceptable when 40 people are dying every month. Tell the Scottish FA to speak out. Support the action at the game in Edinburgh (contact billgilby@gmail.com for details), or print off a protest sign and send a selfie to photos@playfairqatar.org <http://playfairqatar.org.uk/#section-get-involved> #reclaimthegame



Shifting Ground: the fightback against corporate power in Scotland and the world ...

Global Justice is organising an event on June 13 in Glasgow. The event will start in the afternoon at 1pm-6.30pm, *The Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4JP*. Global Justice will be holding a TTIP Assembly. It's aimed at people who already know a reasonable amount about TTIP and are keen to meet other activists to discuss and plan action. If you were able to circulate details to anyone who you think might be interested then that'd be much appreciated. Click for [more info here](#)



Links to International News: LabourStart - [Hungarian workers at Hoedlmayr need our support today;](#)

PSC update: [the ongoing Nakba \(catastrophe\);](#)

SCCS partner The Climate Coalition is also holding [a lobby of MPs and a rally](#) at the House of Commons on Wednesday 17 June.

More details of how to take part are [here](#).