

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY REPORT 2015-2016



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CUPE's International Solidarity Report 2015-16 is published by the Canadian Union of Public Employees, 1375 St Laurent Blvd., Ottawa, Ontario K1G 0Z7

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Union printed using vegetable-oil based inks on recycled paper that is 30 per cent post-consumer waste, recyclable and biodegradable, elemental chlorine-free and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

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ISSN# 1920-1443

Electronic copy of the International Solidarity report available at cupe.ca/isr2015-16

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY A YEAR IN REVIEW

The Global Justice Fund was created by CUPE National because we recognize as a union that our ability to defend public services and decent jobs in our communities depends on our ability, as a global labour movement, to defend those same services and good jobs in countries around the world. The adage *think local and act global* is a truism for international solidarity work.

Our fund supports worker-to-worker solidarity and the organizing efforts of our sisters and brothers in other countries. Through our commitment to worker-to-worker solidarity we have developed important relationships and opportunities for critical exchange between trade union members and activists in Canada and around the world.

Over the past year, CUPE has engaged in solidarity actions alongside those fighting against austerity and employer attempts to erode workers' rights, benefits, pensions and union protection. We have supported those who struggle against corporate attempts to drive down workers' wages and to gain control over public services

both in Canada and around the world. We have rallied against the suppression of dissent and activism. We steadfastly work to end inequality and the conditions that create low-paid and precarious jobs. We understand this to be critically important at home and abroad.

Our 2015-2016 International Solidarity Report provides an overview of our work with our partner organizations around the world. The report gives an overview of our work in Honduras, Nicaragua, Colombia, Cuba, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.

International solidarity is a way of understanding the world. It helps us understand the bigger picture as we prepare for bargaining, or when we become involved in elections. We are all connected and our struggles for justice and dignity are shared with our sisters and brothers around the globe.



Mark H. Fleck



Charles Fleck



INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS AND SOLIDARITY DELEGATIONS

◀ RED LINES MOBILIZATION AT COP21

21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) PARIS 2015

Events in Paris in 2015 captured the world's attention. The signing of the climate change agreement, referred to as the Paris Agreement, is considered by some as a defining moment for the world that affirms a universal commitment to challenge climate change and to limit global warming to well below 2°C with a global vision for 1.5°C.

CUPE sent a delegation to Paris in December 2015 to participate with the global trade union movement in the negotiations and discussions related to the climate crisis. The Paris Agreement is not as strong as trade unionists wanted, as it falls short of calling for a new review of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) targets by all countries before 2020 to stop warming in excess of 2°C. Others in civil society, including a significant and powerful indigenous peoples' contingent, were more critical and called the Paris Agreement a mechanism to facilitate the privatization and commodification of the land and environment by falsely suggesting market based schemes are the solution to address climate change.

Brother Charles Fleury, CUPE national secretary-treasurer, spoke at the Canadian Labour Congress forum entitled Trade Union Forum

on Climate Jobs about the critically important role of the public sector in the production of energy and in the transition toward energy production that is 100 per cent renewable. A Just Transition, where the importance of providing new, good jobs through social equity that includes racialized workers and communities was the focus of the trade union movement.

Canada was one of only a few countries to support the concept of a Just Transition, and now must fulfill the Paris Agreement by making ambitious national plans before 2020. How this unfolds will largely depend on the resolve of civil society and unions to put this on the political agenda of governments.

11th PSI Inter-American Regional Conference MEXICO CITY 2015

The Public Service International Inter-American Regional Conference (IAMRECON) takes place every five years with PSI affiliates attending from North, Central and South America and the Caribbean. CUPE participated in the 2015 conference in Mexico City under the banner: Advancing

with trade union rights in the fight for quality public services.

A series of activities and meetings preceded the conference itself including sector and issue-based meetings. CUPE's participation included presentations and union reports to the energy, education, municipal, health and water sector meetings; the women, racism and xenophobia and LGBT meetings; and the trade and investment, pension and climate change meetings.

The IAMRECON consists of pre-conference meeting reports, country and regional briefings, and deliberations on several resolutions and a five-year plan of action. At CUPE's initiation, PSI adopted a resolution that committed the global union federation, to:

- Register strong opposition to Bill C-51 the *Anti-Terrorism Act*, 2015, by writing to the Prime Minister of Canada and the Cabinet outlining the very real dangers to freedom of speech, assembly, human rights, and democracy posed by the Bill;
- Support all efforts of the labour movement in Canada to oppose the *Anti-Terrorism Act* by responding to urgent

CHARLES FLEURY LEADS CUPE DELEGATION AT THE 11th IAMRECON IN MEXICO CITY, APRIL 2015 ▶



calls for letters, emails and exposure through social media networks;

- Actively support the labour movement and civil society groups in Canada who share our concern that anti-terror legislation is being used as a tool to silence legitimate dissent to government policy, it disproportionately targets minority and marginalized communities; and it threatens to undermine our solidarity as workers.

Solidarity in Bangladesh DHAKA 2015

When you think of Bangladesh, the disaster at Rana Plaza may be the first thing that comes to mind. On April 24, 2013, a factory building on the outskirts of Dhaka collapsed, killing over 1,100 workers and injuring over 2,500 more. Canadians were appalled to find that familiar brands such as Joe Fresh, an off-shoot of Loblaws, had been sourcing from a factory where conditions were so bad that workers were beaten to go back to work after cracks had been seen appearing in the walls and ceiling.

The truth that Canadian consumers, all over the global north, had to face was that workers in faraway Bangladesh were paying the price for our cheap clothing. There are approximately 4.2 million workers employed by the Ready Made Garment's industry in Bangladesh.

CUPE participated in a recent trade union delegation to Bangladesh with trade unionists from the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), Unifor, United Steelworkers (USW) and the Canadian Labour Congress. We were hosted by our partner organization the Bangladesh Center for Worker Solidarity (BCWS) who facilitated meetings with workers, organizers and activists, and provided us with the opportunity to hear firsthand about the conditions under which they work.

Most of the millions of people working in this sector are young women from rural Bangladesh. Once they find themselves in the city, work in the RMG industry is often the only option for them. Workers in Bangladesh have been considered expendable, and their right to organize into unions is rarely respected by employers.

Transnational brands, including Joe Fresh, H & M, Adidas and the Children's Place, have been paying some attention to the structural safety of the factories from which they source the cheap clothing they sell but they do not do any more than they are legally required to.

Bangladeshi workers and activists were clear with us that they do not want boycotts of the industry. What they want is support and solidarity for their organizing. We need to stand in solidarity with those fighting to ensure RMG factory workers in Bangladesh have safe working conditions, decent wages and benefits and access to the services they need to live their lives with

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dignity. We continue to do this by supporting their efforts to organize and through our engagement with the Canadian and Bangladesh governments around trade policy and the development of building safety and workers' rights.

Frontlines Tour COLOMBIA 2015

The trade union rights situation in Colombia continues to be dire. The unionization rate in the country is only three to four per cent with constant attacks on union rights. CUPE participated in a delegation to Colombia called the Frontlines Tour in 2015 and in the 12 days we were in the country, two Colombian trade unionists were killed. Colombia persists at being

the most dangerous place to be a trade unionist.

The Frontlines Tour is a joint Colombian solidarity project of four national public sector unions – the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), and the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE). We initiate delegations to Colombia in solidarity with the trade union and social movements.

Buenaventura is known for being the most violent city in Colombia and is the site of the most important port in the Pacific and therefore a place where the impact of

several Free Trade Agreements are dramatically felt. Through CUPE's partnership with NOMADESC, we were able to visit with several Afro-Colombian community leaders and members of communities in and around Buenaventura.

Members of one community we met live in simple wooden homes, on stilts at the water's edge. They survive by fishing and clam digging, and are fiercely attached to their territories where their families have lived for over 200 years. As a result of free trade agreements, including one with Canada, the government is planning a massive expansion of the port of Buenaventura. There is also a highway expansion project through several Afro-Colombian

◀ FRONTLINES TOUR, COLOMBIA

communities underway. The past few years have seen an increase in violence, including assassinations.

Indigenous communities we met with are fighting for their territories and rights. There are 102 Indigenous nations in Colombia, representing 1.3 million people. They have been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict in the country because natural resources are located on their land. It was reported that 70 per cent of their land has been or is in the process of being given to mining companies (including Canadian companies) without any prior consultation. The communities are concerned about the impact on water, medicinal plants, their livelihoods and their sacred sites.

Participation in this delegation provided an important opportunity to witness firsthand the struggle of the Colombian people and the importance of CUPE's ongoing solidarity work in Colombia.

60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) NEW YORK CITY 2016

CUPE joined 160 trade unionists from 34 countries at the 60th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW60) in New York City in March.

CSW60
NEW YORK CITY, MARCH 2016 ▶

We were struck by the shared struggles of workers in Canada and the global south, and we learned about differences too. Judy Taguiwalo from ACT-Philippines, a CUPE partner, spoke about the connection between working conditions and learning conditions in schools, both undermined by colonialism, patriarchy and global capitalism. Kalpona Akter of the Bangladesh Centre for Worker Solidarity, another CUPE partner, described organizing 1,500 workers in her factory at the age of 16.

Many delegates linked gender rights and struggles against colonialism, racism, ableism, homophobia and other systems of oppression. Allison Julien of the Domestic Workers Alliance traced the exclusion of domestic workers from US labour protections to the legacy of slavery. Delegates in a session on Arab Women and the Human Right to Peace drew lines between foreign intervention, Islamophobia and conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

While delegates connected across social movements, marginalized women face barriers to participating in CSW60.



A highlight of the week was the #JusticeForBerta rally where hundreds gathered to protest the recent murders of Indigenous environmental activists in Honduras. CUPE has joined the international call for an independent investigation and protection of human rights defenders who remain at risk. Berta Cáceres and hundreds of other murdered human rights defenders did the dangerous work of defending land against powerful mining, infrastructure, agriculture and hydropower interests.

Sister Brittany Lambert, member of CUPE 2722 at Oxfam, and Sister Irene Jansen, CUPE Senior Equality Officer, attended on behalf of CUPE National.



PSI/AFSCME LEADERSHIP MEETING

Protecting the public interest from predatory privatization and out-sourcing WASHINGTON, D.C. 2015

The impact of austerity and privatization has been severe all over the world. Public Services International (PSI) held a meeting of international labour union leaders in December 2015 in Washington D.C. to develop an agreement on ways to strengthen the fight against the global push for privatization.

Participants to the meeting included CUPE and labour leaders from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Austria, Spain, Sweden, Norway, Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Of particular interest were the diverse strategies and tools used by trade unions around the world to fight back.

It is important that we approach privatization in a systematic way and employ strategies and tactics that change depending on whether we are targeting trade unionists, the broader public, politicians and legislators, the finance sector or the media.

The meeting also included sessions with officials from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB) and from the

United States departments of Treasury, Labor, and State.

Many options for potential collective actions were proposed, union leaders strongly emphasized that we need to focus on achievable and targeted priorities. Labour leaders committed to strengthen the capacity of PSI and affiliates and to campaign against privatization in the coming months.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE APPROACH PRIVATIZATION IN A SYSTEMATIC WAY AND EMPLOY STRATEGIES AND TACTICS THAT CHANGE DEPENDING ON WHETHER WE ARE TARGETING TRADE UNIONISTS, THE BROADER PUBLIC, POLITICIANS AND LEGISLATORS, THE FINANCE SECTOR OR THE MEDIA.



HUNDREDS OF GRANDMOTHERS FROM ACROSS UGANDA CAME TOGETHER FOR THE COUNTRY'S FIRST NATIONAL GRANDMOTHERS' GATHERING

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) MEXICO CITY 2016

Labour and civil society groups, including CUPE, joined activists and legislators from across the Americas in January 2016 in Mexico City to step up the fight against the massive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal.

The far reaching TPP covers 12 countries that represent 40 per cent of global trade. Like all free trade deals, the TPP gives rights and protection to the world's richest corporations, while workers and the environment lose more ground. The deal will expand privatization, drive down wages and increase the cost of health care

and education. It will further limit a government's ability to protect its citizens or the environment, and gives corporations the right to sue national governments if a policy decision interferes with their profit margin.

Coming out of Mexico City, civil society groups from across the Americas have launched a coordinated action plan focusing on four areas: education, mobilization, lobbying and legal challenges.

Mobilization in Chile, Peru and the US is already starting to bear fruit. With the massive job losses and rising inequality in the wake of NAFTA, as well as the 2005 defeat of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas as a backdrop, there is a

strong resolve to bring the TPP fight to the next level.

The deal was officially signed by the Canadian Government in February 2016 without the full and rigorous consultation the Liberals promised during the election campaign. The TPP still needs to be ratified by Parliament and there is growing momentum to push the government to reject the ratification.

PSI North America sub-regional meeting OTTAWA 2016

Throughout the Americas workers and their families are facing major challenges in their working and daily lives. There are increasing attacks on trade union rights and especially public sector trade union rights. These attacks have been experienced in every country in the Americas – large and small.

PSI affiliates from Canada and the US met for two days to discuss

the changing conditions in our respective unions and countries, and focused our discussion on labour rights, free trade agreements, privatization, tax justice and anti-corruption.

A presentation about pension fund investment in infrastructure and P3s generated a dynamic discussion about the contradictions we face when fighting for members' pension benefits, which in many cases are in turn invested in projects we do not support, such as P3s in Canada and around the world.

Uganda National Grandmothers' Gathering ENTEBBE-UGANDA 2015

Hundreds of grandmothers from across Uganda came together for the country's first National Grandmothers' Gathering in October 2015. The gathering was considered an unprecedented opportunity for older women diversely affected by HIV and AIDS

to voice their experiences, share their innovative strategies for responding to the pandemic, and collectively lay claim to constitutionally-protected rights too often denied.

The Ugandan grandmothers were joined by grandmother delegations from Kenya and South Africa, as well as 22 Canadian grandmothers representing thousands of members of the Stephen Lewis Foundation Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. The Stephen Lewis Foundation delegation included CUPE National Representatives Sister Veriline Howe and Sister Daria Ivanochko, managing director of national services.

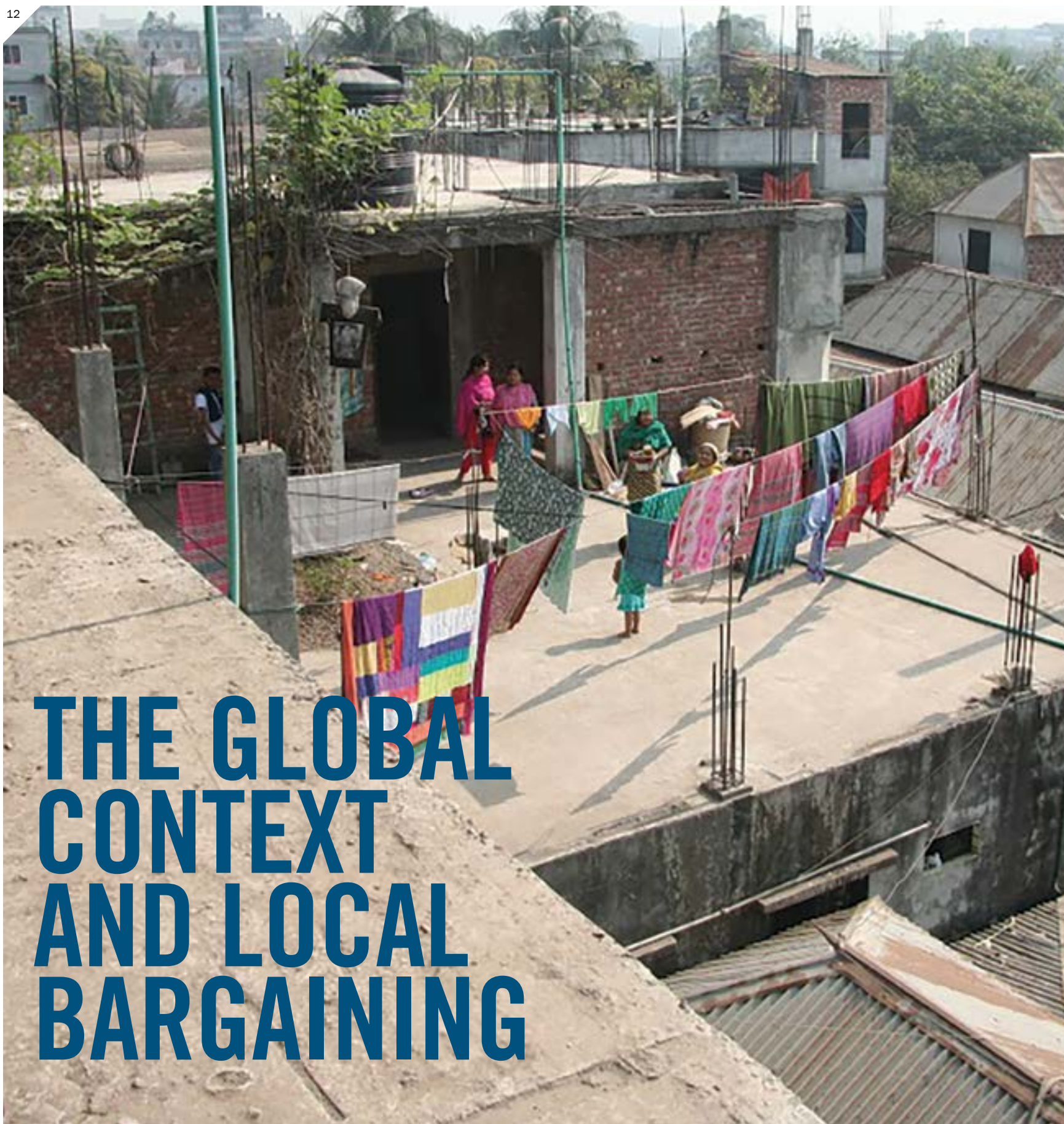
For the first two days of the gathering, the grandmothers met in workshops, to rigorously discuss the difficult issues affecting them and their communities. On the final day they mobilized in the streets of Entebbe, demanding access to education, health care, land, legal representation, and freedom from violence and theft. The Ugandan Grandmothers' Statement was released at the end of the day calling on government, the private sector, civil society, media, UN Agencies and members of the international community to support their collective vision for a future in which their grandchildren and communities are thriving, and have left the ravages of AIDS behind.



TPP RALLY MEXICO CITY



STEPHEN LEWIS FOUNDATION GRANDMOTHERS TO GRANDMOTHERS UGANDA



THE GLOBAL CONTEXT AND LOCAL BARGAINING

◀ TRADE UNION TOUR, BANGLADESH

ADVANCING AN AGENDA OF JUST PEACE

It is estimated that 9 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of the civil war in March 2011. Over 3 million took refuge in neighbouring countries, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, while 6.5 million are internally displaced within Syria itself. The United Nations (UN) estimates that more than half of Syria's pre-war population of 23 million are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

CUPE National Executive Board passed a resolution in 2015 that committed the union to:

Speak out, alongside refugee rights advocates, to change immigration and refugee policy and reverse the exclusionary, bureaucratic barriers implemented by the Conservative government that deny refugees entry into Canada.

Lebanon, a country of 5 million people, has accepted the entry of approximately 1.4 million refugees, nearly a quarter of their population, putting incredible strain on infrastructure and social services without much global attention. Much of the world has focused on the smaller number of people who have risked their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach the shores of Europe in order to declare asylum in the European Union. Many have watched in horror as bodies have washed up on Europe's shore while European Union (EU) member states such

as Hungary and Slovenia have aggressively closed down their borders.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, "...refugees fleeing the five year conflict face greater hurdles to finding safety while international solidarity with its victims is failing to match and reflect the scale and seriousness of the humanitarian tragedy." The civil war in Syria is of strategic geopolitical significance to world superpowers, namely the US, which is intervening (militarily and diplomatically) and is invested in an outcome that does not necessarily prioritize the interests or safety of Syrians.

After the October election, the Canadian Government pledged to resettle over 25,000 Syrian refugees in 2016 and in February announced they will "end Canada's combat mission in Iraq and Syria, refocusing Canada's efforts in the region on the training of local forces and humanitarian support." These announcements are a positive step toward addressing this humanitarian crisis in Syria and the trade union movement in Canada has an important role in holding accountable the Canadian Government and further advancing an agenda of just peace in the region.

CUPE is committed to supporting the Canadian Labour Congress Syrian Refugee Support Fund with the Canadian Council for Refugees, and will continue to speak out against Canadian militarism and involvement in unjust military aggression internationally.

GLOBAL JUSTICE IN ACTION 2015-2016

CANADA

Letter to the Honourable Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, John McCallum, regarding the case of Deepan Budlakoti

Letter of concern to the Honourable Minister Ralph Goodale, regarding the UN Convention refugee Mohamed (Moe) Harkat, who faces deportation from Canada to Algeria under a controversial Security Certificate

USA

Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations Headquarters – March 14 to 24, 2016

MEXICO

11th PSI Inter-American Regional Conference Mexico City – April 20 to 24, 2015

CUBA

Message of solidarity to the Secretary General of SNTAP, Maria Iglesia Suarez, regarding their 1st National Convention
Project: Strengthening solidarity between Cuban Public Sector Union (SNTAP) and CUPE

HONDURAS

Letter to the Right Honourable Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, regarding the condemnation of the assassination of Berta Cáceres

Letter to the Ambassador of the Mexican Embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Dolores Jimenez Hernandez and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Honduras regarding the condemnation of the assassination of Berta Cáceres

Project: Central America – Empowering women maquila workers, strengthening the Central American Network (CODEMUH)

Project: Empowering women maquila workers in occupational health and safety (CODEMUH)

NICARAGUA

Project: Taking action to defend the labour and gender rights of women maquila workers (MEC)

COLOMBIA

Letter of concern to the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, regarding the detention of Feliciano Valencia in La Augustina, Cauca

Letter of concern to the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, regarding the safety of the Director of NOMADESC, Berenice Celeita

Frontlines Tour to Colombia – July 7 to 19, 2015

Project: Global defence of human rights to

build policies for a transformative, holistic and participatory peace in the southwest of Colombia (NOMADESC)

Project: Community support against privatization of water (SINTRACUAVALLE)

FRANCE

COP21 United Nations Climate Change Negotiations – November 30 to December 10, 2015

UGANDA

National Grandmothers' Gathering – October 5 to 7, 2015

IRAN

Letter of concern to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Hassan Rouhani, regarding the wellbeing of Mr. Esmail Abdi, General Secretary of ITTA

Letter to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, regarding the workers' movement in Iran and condemnation of Shahkikh Zamani's death

BANGLADESH

Trade Union Delegation to Bangladesh – February 2 to 12, 2016

PHILIPPINES

Letter of concern to the President of the Republic, Benigno C. Aquino III, regarding the escalating attacks on public sector trade unionists, organizers and national staff working with COURAGE

Message of solidarity to COURAGE, regarding their 10th National Congress

Message of solidarity to the National President of LEAGUE, Erwin Lanuza, regarding their 1st National Congress

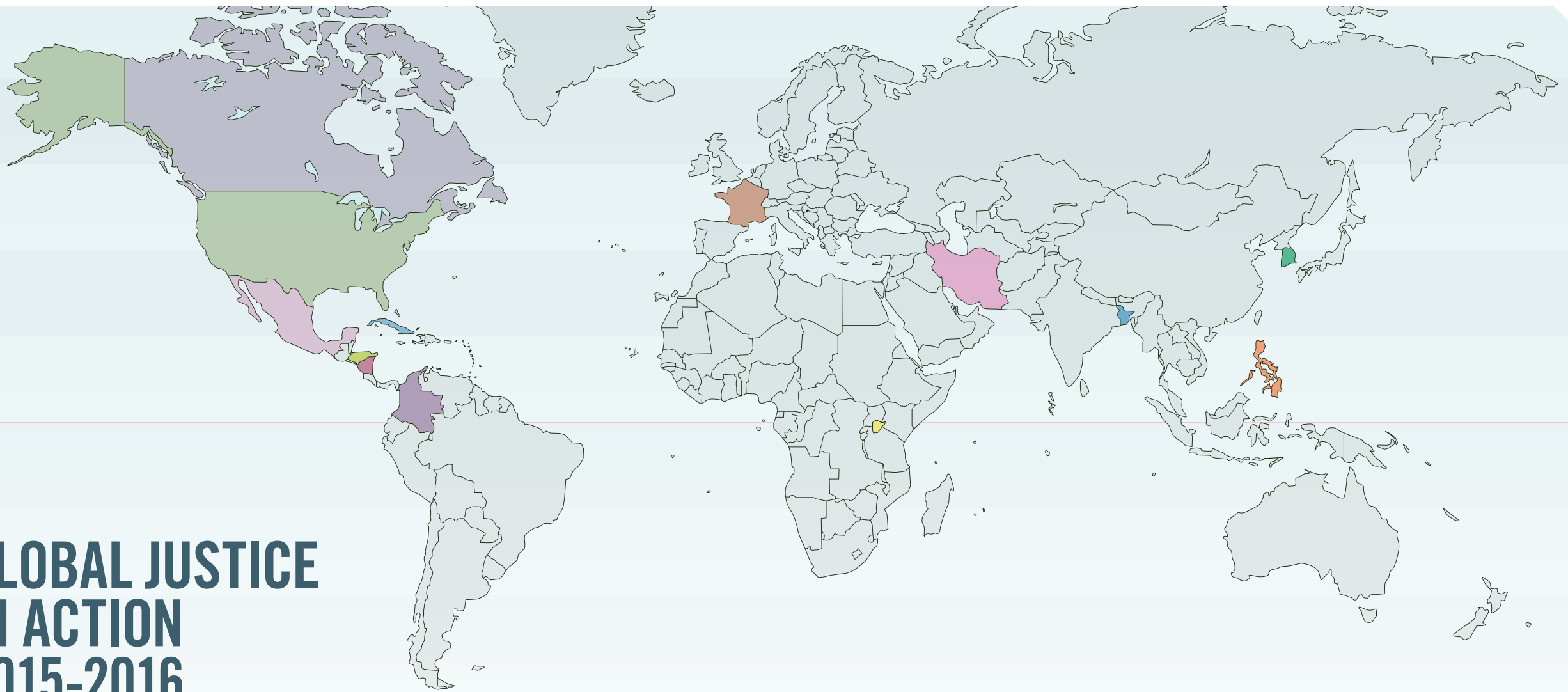
Project: Worker-to-worker solidarity with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers to build grassroots unionism in the education sector

Project: Defending human rights in the Philippines: A worker-to-worker solidarity project with COURAGE

SOUTH KOREA

Letter to the President of the Republic of Korea, Park Geun-hye, regarding the crackdown on trade unions and disregard for freedom of peaceful assembly and association in Korea

Letter to the South Korean Ambassador, Daeshik Jo, regarding the attempted police raid on the office of the Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union





UGANDA,
NATIONAL GRANDMOTHERS'
GATHERING

CUPE CONTINUES FIGHTING FREE TRADE ON THE CANADIAN FRONT

Free trade will be on the agenda of the Canadian Government for the next few years. Both the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) have been signed, and ratification is on its way.

A further and perhaps more dangerous threat to public services, the secretive Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), may also be finalized as early as this year. CUPE will help lead the charge against these trade deals within coalitions including the Trade Justice Network, Common Frontiers and Public Services International.

Despite the Trudeau Liberals' campaign promises to be more open and transparent, our new government's consultation process on the TPP has been anything but. That's why CUPE has been working with coalition partners to increase

the number of Canadians who are voicing concerns about TPP's threat to public services, Canadian sovereignty and Internet freedom, among many other issues.

CUPE recently organized a conference with Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz during which he suggested that the TPP "is the worst trade deal in history." We are also in the midst of launching a municipal campaign encouraging municipalities to introduce a resolution highlighting concerns with the TPP, especially the negative impact of the investor-state dispute settlement process on a government's capacity to legislate in the interest of the public and the environment.

Leaked text confirms that the TPP includes an investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism. These clauses exist in thousands of international trade and investment deals and are used by multinational companies from rich countries to sue governments when policy decisions interfere with their investments. Canada is already the most sued developed country in the world because of the North American Free Trade Agreement ISDS process. The

TPP will significantly increase the number of foreign investors eligible to sue.

While our government has clearly stated that it intends to ratify and implement CETA in the near future, the fight is not over. We are working with our partners both here and across the Atlantic to keep up the pressure and to amplify the growing chorus of citizens and politicians, especially in Europe, who are opposed to the investor-state dispute settlement process in all its forms.

Pension funds investing in privatization – a global trend

The first budget of the new Liberal Government of Canada sent several little noticed signals that one of the fixtures of neoliberal governments – privatization of infrastructure – will continue and expand. Equally troubling for the labour movement and for CUPE, the government announced plans to allocate a central role for large public sector pension funds as major investors in what will actually be a privatization programme. This linkage reflects an already established pattern of Canadian

pension funds buying up large chunks of public infrastructure – airports, roads, ports, water utilities – all around the world.

On the face of it, having workers' pension funds investing in much needed public infrastructure sounds like an ideal combination. In previous eras, pension funds were available to finance public investment needs through their purchase of long-term government bonds. But the emerging pattern is entirely different. Pension funds are being tapped as a source of finance for so-called public-private partnership (P3) deals that involve complete transformation of the ongoing ownership, control, and management of public infrastructure into for-profit and commercial mandates.

According to the March 2016 budget, the government plans some \$120 billion in infrastructure investment over the next ten years. As part of this plan, they propose to "engage public pension plans" in infrastructure investment initiatives that would include so-called "asset recycling", another term for privatization.

These Canadian policy shifts reflect a global infrastructure privatization trend that has already expanded tremendously in the past fifteen years, and Canadian pension funds themselves have been at the forefront. Having a friendlier and less cut-throat public face has allowed large Canadian pension funds to access outright ownership of airports, ports, water systems, railways, energy grids, and an array of other public assets.

In most cases, pension funds, workers' own deferred wages, are being used as key tools for privatization.

CUPE is actively resisting privatization in all of its forms, including those cases where CUPE members' own pension funds are seeking to profit from it. In some cases, we have used our voices on pension trustee boards to oppose or limit such infrastructure privatization deals – with some success. But we also know that the expanding project of selling off public assets and infrastructure is ultimately a political one that must be won politically.

As part of its work, CUPE is tracking the international dimension of these developments, and plans to work with colleagues in the international labour movement to strengthen all anti-privatization campaign efforts. We are well aware, for example, that our sister union in the UK, UNISON, has recently stated that their government should not be using pension funds as "replacement capital for the government's privatization programmes." Rather, like CUPE, they demand that any changes to the local government pension funds investment approach must be "in the interest of the members" of those funds.

Workers' pension funds must not become tools for privatization, whether in Canada or around the world. CUPE is committed to ensuring that our pension funds will be used to invest in the renewal and expansion of public infrastructure in a manner that enhances and protects its public ownership and its accessibility.



A BIG PORTION OF CUPE'S INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY WORK IS CARRIED OUT IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR GLOBAL PARTNERS. OUR GLOBAL JUSTICE FUND SUPPORTS VARIOUS SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS AROUND THE WORLD.

GLOBAL JUSTICE FUND PROJECT REPORTS

◀ UGANDA, NATIONAL GRANDMOTHERS GATHERING

HONDURAS

Honduras continues to experience extremely high rates of violence and impunity. Violence against women continues to rise, as does violence and intimidation against activists, particularly those involved in land disputes.

In March 2016, leading environmental and indigenous activist Berta Cáceres and co-founder of the Council of Indigenous Peoples of Honduras (COPINH) was assassinated in her hometown for her work with the Rio Blanco community against the construction of a hydro-electric dam on the River Gualcarque. Initial reports on the investigation into her death seem to indicate that her assassination is being framed as a result of internal conflict within COPINH, a particularly troubling development indicative of increased repression and criminalization of dissent. Ms. Cáceres' murder comes after the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ordered the State of Honduras to provide precautionary measures for Ms. Cáceres, orders with which the Honduran government, which behaves with impunity, did not comply with.

Empowering women maquila workers in occupational health and safety

CUPE's work with the Honduran Women's Collective (CODEMUH) aims to contribute to the transformation of practices that violate

human, gender and labour rights of women workers in maquilas in Honduras. A maquila is a foreign-owned factory at which lower-paid workers assemble imported parts into products for export. CODEMUH's work focuses on occupational health and safety and social security in the workplace, through research and advocacy to achieve systemic change at the national level, as well as providing direct legal and medical accompaniment to women workers who have suffered workplace injuries or labour rights violations.

Working with a specialist in occupational health and safety in the maquila industry, CODEMUH provided medical services to over 30 workers suffering from musculo-skeletal injuries and illnesses. In addition to providing medical care for injured workers, CODEMUH has been able to scientifically demonstrate the link between the working conditions in maquilas and various musculo-skeletal injuries and illnesses.

They have obtained permanent accommodations for maquila workers, and the Honduran Social Security Institute has recognized new musculo-skeletal injuries as work-related, a major accomplishment as this qualifies workers for state disability pensions.



**KALPONA AKTER,
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR OF THE
BANGLADESH
CENTRE FOR
WORKER
SOLIDARITY
DISCUSSING THE
RANA PLAZA FIRE
WITH CANADIAN
LABOUR
REPRESENTATIVES
ON TOUR IN
BANGLADESH.**

◀ **TRADE UNION TOUR, BANGLADESH**

**NICARAGUA – Taking action
to defend the labour and
gender rights of women
maquila workers (MEC)**

In January 2016, the government in Nicaragua passed legislation increasing the minimum wage in free trade zones by 8 per cent. With a core inflation rate of 5.85 per cent, this raise, while overdue, is significant. In 2015, maquila sector workers received a 0 per cent increase while other sectors saw their salaries increase. Given that women represent 75 per cent of workers in the maquila sector, this is a clear example of systemic discrimination against women.

CUPE supports the María Elena Cuadra Movement (MEC) as they seek to improve the ability of workers to defend their human and labour rights from a gender perspective. MEC works towards this goal by offering legal support on labour and gender rights through their legal clinic, and through education and organizing with maquila workers and activists.

MEC is a remarkable organization that has earned a national and regional profile in Nicaragua and Central America. From their origins as a small group of women organizing underground and facing violent repression for their work to improve conditions in the maquila sector, they have become a respected national organization to whom the media frequently call on for interviews, and who are capable of representing thousands of workers by dealing directly with officials from the Ministry of Labour

and the National Commission of Free Trade Zones.

This year, MEC's legal clinic served over 3,000 people, and resolved cases on labour rights violations in the maquila, service and household domestic sector. They provided legal services on cases of violence against women, and assisted women seeking enforcement of court-ordered child-support payments. These services are all offered free of charge. In addition to direct legal services, MEC also seeks to prevent abuses at the source by educating workers on their basic labour rights. MEC printed and distributed over 10,000 pocket manuals on the ABCs of labour rights.

**COLOMBIA – Global defence
of human rights in southwest
of Colombia (NOMADESC)**

Colombia is in the midst of ongoing peace negotiations between the Government of Colombia and the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). While peace negotiations continue, violations of basic human rights and social, economic and cultural rights are ongoing.

CUPE supports NOMADESC in Colombia in their efforts to empower grassroots social movements in the southwest of Colombia through the construction of a transformative, holistic and participatory peace proposal. Their work focuses on increasing the capacity of grassroots communities through education, research, legal support, public campaigns and advocacy.



UGANDA, NATIONAL GRANDMOTHERS' GATHERING

While the advances made in the peace process are encouraging, Colombia continues to experience high levels of human rights abuses. NOMADESC reports ongoing violence from paramilitary and criminal bands, state armed forces, and insurgency forces, and continued displacements of communities due to natural resource exploration and extraction, large infrastructure projects, and control of drug trafficking routes.

NOMADESC aims to educate and empower communities through their newly developed Intercultural University of the Peoples, where diverse social movements and communities come together to share their struggles for social justice, acquire tools to defend their human rights, and develop plans and actions to address human rights violations in their communities and to make their voices heard in Colombia's ongoing peace process. NOMADESC also provides legal assistance and accompaniment to communities and carries out strategic litigation and advocacy on cases of human rights violations. CUPE aims to raise

awareness amongst Canadians about the current context of Colombia, the role of Canadian corporations and government in Colombia, and the importance of international solidarity.

COLOMBIA – Community work to support public water (SINTRACUAVALLE)

The Colombian government continues to promote its program “Water for Prosperity” to hand over public water infrastructure to private corporations. The threat of privatization in Colombia is constant, and has accelerated with the numerous free trade agreements the Colombian government has signed since 2012. For example, the Colombian government recently sold a majority share of its public hydro company ISAGEN to a Canadian company, Brookfield Asset Management Inc. in spite of major protests throughout Colombia and allegations of corruption in the negotiation of the sale. Opponents to the government's neoliberal growth plan continue to suffer threats and attacks.

SINTRACUAVALLE, the union representing workers in the public water company ACUAVALLE, has a long history of successfully opposing attempts to privatize the public municipal water system in Valle del Cauca, Colombia. A key part of their strategy has been educating the public about the importance of water as a public service and the impacts of privatization of water. To build support for the public delivery of water, SINTRACUAVALLE builds alliances with the general public, civil society organizations and government workers and officials to increase awareness of the impacts of the privatization of water. They work to explain the role of SINTRACUAVALLE workers in ensuring all municipalities have access to potable water, and raise the alarm about the Colombian government's current plans for privatization of public water.

CUPE works with SINTRACUAVALLE to support their efforts to strengthen public support for water as a public service in the municipalities of the Valle del Cauca region of Southwestern Colombia. Our project work aims

to strengthen opposition to private investment and control of water infrastructure through public-private partnerships, and to build solidarity and awareness between Canadians and Colombians that water is a human right.

Margarita López, president of SINTRACUAVALLE has received numerous death threats for her work in defence of water as a public good, and cannot leave her home unless accompanied by bodyguards. In spite of these constant threats, SINTRACUAVALLE remains firm in their defence of water as a human right. In the coming years they plan to focus on outreach to recently-elected municipal leaders to build on their work for public support for public water.

CUBA – Strengthening solidarity between Cuban public sector union (SNTAP) and CUPE

CUPE has been working with the Havana local of Cuba's National Union of Public Sector Workers (SNTAP-Havana) for many years in order to deepen solidarity and to

strengthen the capacity of trade unions in Cuba to promote union activism and leadership.

Recent changes to Cuba's labour law create new challenges for Cuba's union sector. The Cuban state has formally opened several areas of the economy to private businesses, including small enterprises and self-employment, and converted numerous state enterprises into worker cooperatives. These workers are still able to affiliate with public unions, and SNTAP and SNTAP-Havana have been working to sign up members. The Cuban government has also introduced profit sharing for employees in income-generating enterprises, and has also decentralized decision making. These changes make SNTAP-Havana's training program highly relevant as union leaders and activists adapt to a changing context so that they may continue to effectively promote workers' rights.

SNTAP-Havana provides education and training to shop stewards, municipal and provincial level leaders on labour legislation,

workplace health and safety and negotiation of collective agreements.

In 2015-2016, SNTAP-Havana began refurbishing a new classroom in the provincial labour central's building. In Canada, CoDevelopment Canada (CoDev) works with CUPE BC to deepen members' understanding of the issues facing Cuban workers through reports and presentations and by facilitating participation in events in Cuba when possible.

PHILIPPINES – Worker-to-worker solidarity with the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) to build grassroots unionism in the education sector

Over the past few years, CUPE has supported the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) to build public sector unions throughout the country. ACT is now the largest union of public employees in the Philippines, with 133,910 members.

Beyond allowing union organizing and collective bargaining, ACT Philippines hopes the 2016 National and Local Elections will result in a temporary halt to the militarization faced by their indigenous brothers and sisters in Mindanao, and will allow for a review of the recently implemented K to 12 curriculum.

ACT is an active member of a civil society coalition called the Save our Schools Network who have been assisting teachers and students of the Indigenous Peoples' schools from Mindanao. The teachers and students fled due to the continuing militarization, threats, intimidation, harassment, and killings of their leaders and family members perpetuated by the members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and other armed groups associated with them.

The implementation of the K to 12 curriculum is a concern for ACT because it aligns the education system in the Philippines with the labour needs of other countries. The new curriculum is aimed at producing semi-skilled graduates needed abroad in the health and education sectors.

PHILIPPINES – Worker-to-worker solidarity with the Confederation for Unity, Respect and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE)

CUPE's work with the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE) in the Philippines has focused on

strengthening its anti-privatization campaign in the water sector, both at the municipal and provincial level.

Public sector workers' unions, concerned legislators, local government officials and other civil society organizations are now working more closely together in the Philippines to expose and oppose privatization in all forms. Workers' solidarity with communities became more pronounced when they realized that they cannot win the war against privatization by themselves. The unions who worked closely with various grassroots organizations have, over time, become more socially conscious and have realized that their wages, job security issues and union concerns are directly intertwined with the communities' problems and struggles.

Public employees are also realizing the importance of asserting their rights to organize themselves despite the risks of being tagged as anti-government.

In April 2015, union leaders from three affiliated unions of COURAGE received grave threats from unidentified men believed to be personnel of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police. They were tagged as members of the Communist Party of the Philippines and were directed to turn themselves in and cooperate with authorities or face the consequences of their supposed anti-government actions. From an initial six documented cases of direct threats, poison letters and unwelcome visits at these union leaders' homes, the

list grew to include not just the union leaders from the National Housing Authority, National Food Authority, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Social Welfare and Development, but also COURAGE office staff and organizers.

Cases were filed at the Commission on Human Rights and at the Supreme Court which sought the protective custody of the courts for the victims. Specific attention was also requested from the International Labour Organization and the United Nations' Human Rights Commission. International rights' organizations and trade unions also responded by condemning the threats on the life and liberty of the victims.

CUPE'S WORK WITH THE CONFEDERATION FOR UNITY, RECOGNITION AND ADVANCEMENT OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (COURAGE) IN THE PHILIPPINES HAS FOCUSED ON STRENGTHENING ITS ANTI-PRIVATIZATION CAMPAIGN IN THE WATER SECTOR, BOTH AT THE MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL LEVEL.





MOVING FORWARD

International solidarity is the antidote to fear. It is where workers can draw strength when we experience exploitation and the impact of economies built on oppression.

Working people are fighting back and we want to continue to support all efforts to create a better world that is just and economically and socially sustainable within the limits of the world's resources in 2016 and beyond.

CUPE's Global Justice work depends in part on the financial contributions of members through their locals. The Global

Justice Fund is an important tool we have to engage and mobilize workers in Canada with workers around the world in our common struggles.

As governments prioritize privatization, trade liberalization and the free movement of capital over basic human and labour rights, workers continue to join together to share strategies to defend public services and the right to decent working conditions.

Through project funding, CUPE members build relationships and are given the opportunity to link arms with workers around

the world who are suffering the consequences of the same neoliberal policies we are. CUPE supports the right to have a living wage, job security, a safe workplace, and access to affordable public services and vital resources both here at home and internationally.

If your local is interested in supporting the CUPE National Global Justice Fund and our international solidarity initiatives please visit cupe.ca/globaljustice, or contact our International Solidarity Officer Kelti Cameron at kcameron@cupe.ca.



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