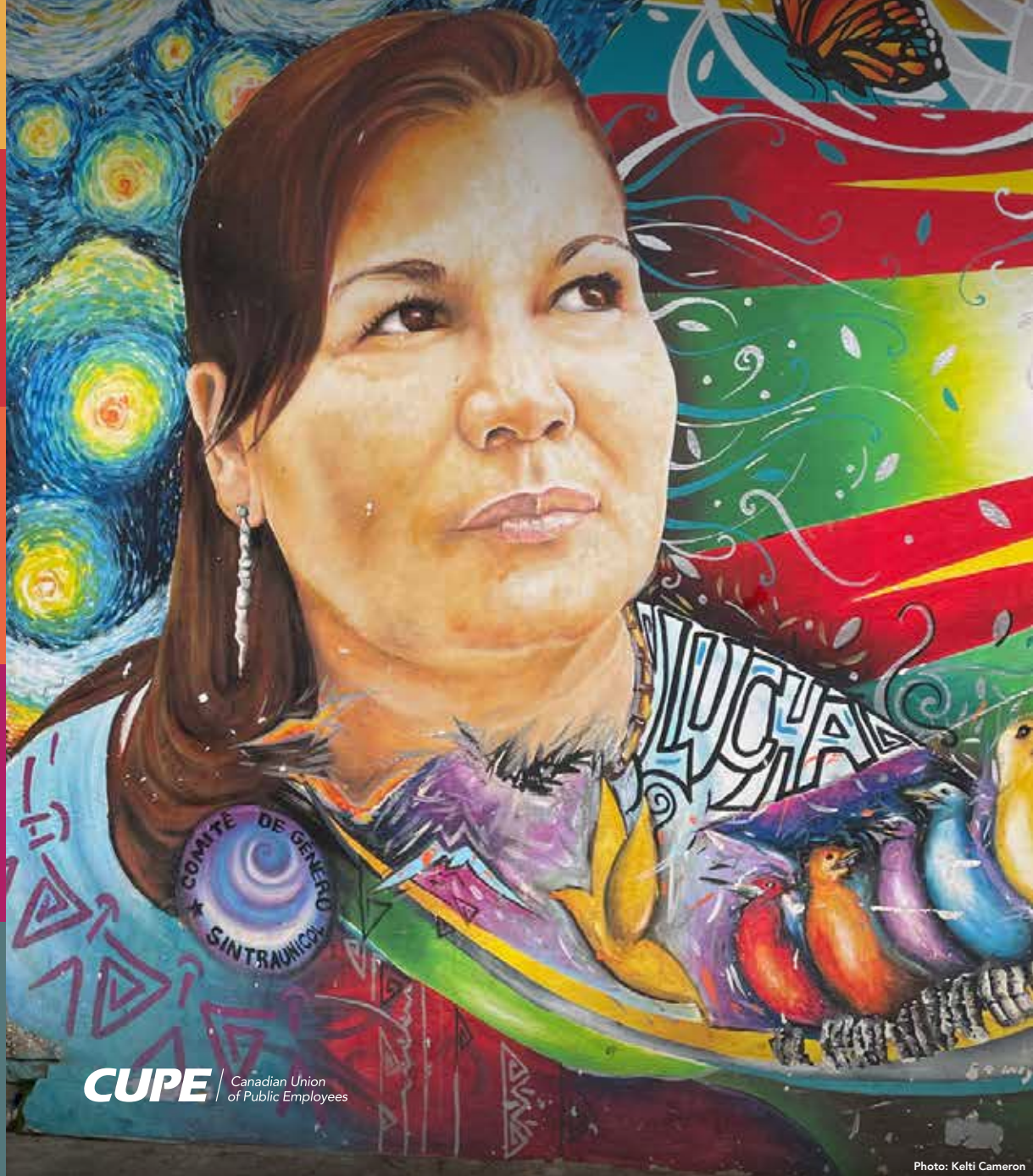


International Solidarity Report

2022-2023



COVER PHOTO: A MURAL CELEBRATES THE GENDER COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF COLOMBIA UNIVERSITY WORKERS, SINTRAUNICOL, IN CALI, COLOMBIA. STREET ART AND GRAFFITI ARE POWERFUL TOOLS OF COMMUNICATION AND RESISTANCE IN THE COUNTRY.

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Celebrating 60 years of international solidarity

On CUPE's 60th anniversary, we're looking back at the importance and impact of our international solidarity work. From day one, building alliances with labour and social movements in other countries has been a priority for our union.

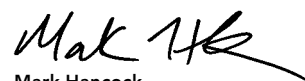
At our founding convention in 1963, delegates voted to join Public Services International. Affiliating with the global federation of public sector unions united our members with workers struggling against military and colonial rule, facing arrest for being union activists, and striking for decent wages and the right to form a union.

Our international work is grounded in building worker-to-worker solidarity because when we unite across borders, we are a powerful force. Over the years, CUPE members have organized for peace and opposed apartheid, and have backed workers and social movements fighting for their rights and defending vital services. Those struggles continue to this day.

There is strength in solidarity. And there is so much that needs to change in the world today. While we may be emerging from the pandemic, the soaring cost of living and unbridled corporate greed are worsening the collective trauma many are facing.

The impact of war and occupation is unbearable for many in Ukraine, Palestine, Burma, Yemen, Syria and Sudan. Along with war, the climate crisis and poverty are fueling migration. Activists and communities defending public services, land rights, democracy and justice are fighting for their lives and liberation.

These are enormous challenges. But we are not facing them alone. We are deeply inspired by recent global uprisings and strikes including in Iran, France, the United Kingdom and Haiti. We are proud to continue the work that began six decades ago, building unbreakable connections with social movements and unions around the globe. Here's to the next 60 years of building a better world. Solidarity forever!



Mark Hancock,
CUPE National President



Candace Rennick,
CUPE National
Secretary-Treasurer

Global Justice Fund in action

This year, CUPE continued to work in solidarity with workers and social movement allies in many countries, strengthening long-term partnerships through our Global Justice Fund. The fund is one way our union supports global movements for human rights, labour protection, peace, and justice.

In 2022-2023, CUPE's Global Justice Fund supported workers and community allies in Burma, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Nicaragua, and the Philippines.

BURMA

Burma has endured one of the world's longest civil wars, after gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1948. A 1962 coup put the country under military rule for over 53 years. Reforms began in 2010, and by 2015 the political and democratic situation had improved dramatically. Unfortunately, this was short-lived.

In 2021, the military seized power from the elected government based on false accusations of election fraud. Since the coup, nationwide demonstrations, civil disobedience, and an armed resistance movement have fuelled an ongoing political crisis in Burma.

Thousands of activists, students, young people, members of civil society organizations, and union members have been targeted. To date, the military junta has killed 3,509 people and arrested 22,252 activists, with 17,948 of them still in detention.

CUPE works with the Tavoyan Women's Union, which is based in the southern city of Tavoy (also called Dawei). The anti-coup movement here is led by civil society organizations and student unions. Tavoy is deeply affected by human rights violations, and there are over 4,000 internally displaced people who lack shelter and food.

The TWU is opposing the coup through non-violent actions such as strikes, community education and the promotion of collective leadership. The union is also providing humanitarian aid for people who have been forced to leave their communities, and social services in response to COVID-19.

TWU leaders continue to place their lives in danger. Over the past year, the union has assessed its situation, reorganized, and been able to continue its work. The organization is working to document widespread human rights violations in the region, which will help ensure justice in any future transition to democracy.



Photo: Migrante Alberta

CANADA

Migrant workers have fought long and hard to have their rights recognized in Canada. They made a breakthrough in 2021 when the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship was mandated to create a regularization program for undocumented migrants. A unanimous parliamentary motion followed, supporting a plan to provide undocumented migrants with access to permanent residency status.

CUPE supports this campaign through our Global Justice Fund project with Migrante Canada. The project brings together undocumented/non-status workers to learn about their experiences, provide guidance to support their organizing efforts, and find ways to share workers' stories without putting them at risk.

Migrante Canada has gained credibility and the trust of temporary foreign workers through years of work. Many undocumented/non-status migrants come to Migrante Canada for support without fear of being reported to authorities and deported.

Regularization and permanent resident status are important not only for migrant workers but for everyone in this country. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, migrant workers have cared for our elderly, staffed our hospitals, cleaned

PARTICIPANTS IN A WESTERN CANADIAN MIGRANT WORKERS' CONSULTATION ORGANIZED BY MIGRANTE ALBERTA IN AUGUST 2022.

our public spaces, and grown our food despite these jobs being some of the most insecure and exploitative in Canada. The pandemic exposed how essential the labour of migrant workers is to our society, and how precarious and vulnerable these workers are.

Most migrants come to Canada under temporary permits, not as permanent residents, and are denied basic rights and benefits like job protections, access to health care and education, and the right to join a union. Many work permits tie them to one employer which increases their vulnerability and limits their ability to speak out about bad working conditions. Providing permanent residency to all migrants is an essential first step in ensuring that our country can respond to future crises in a more just and equitable way.

CUPE supports calls for a comprehensive program that includes the experiences and expertise of migrants. It's time to regularize all undocumented people without exception and to ensure permanent residency for all migrant workers, particularly those in low-waged jobs.



Photo: Jim Hodgson/Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network

GUATEMALA

In the two decades that followed the 1996 Peace Accords that ended Guatemala's 36-year armed conflict, there was important progress fighting impunity and state corruption. But since 2016, organized crime and the extreme right have carried out a powerful counter-offensive that has co-opted almost all aspects of the Guatemalan state. Many say this is the worst period of repression and corruption since the accords were signed.

Dozens of judges, prosecutors, investigators and other state officials who spearheaded the anti-corruption fight are in prison or exile. Anti-corruption and left-wing political candidates with any chance of winning elections are disqualified based on false accusations. Media outlets critical of the regime's ties to organized crime are shut down and publishers and journalists are jailed.

Democratic and legal avenues to fight back are almost completely closed for grassroots social organizations such as CUPE's partner in Guatemala, the Campesino Committee of the

LUIS XEP OF THE CAMPESINO COMMITTEE OF THE HIGHLANDS IN GUATEMALA HOLDS A CHILD'S DRAWING OF CERRO DE GALLO (ROOSTER'S PEAK), A COMMUNITY LANDMARK. THESE DRAWINGS, TOGETHER WITH STORIES FROM ELDERS, MIDWIVES AND LOCAL LEADERS, HELP SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY'S LEGAL ARGUMENTS ON LAND RIGHTS.

Highlands, or CCDA. The CCDA was established in 1982 to defend the rights of Mayan farmer communities and workers on large coffee plantations. When the civil war ended, the CCDA was granted land and coffee plantations for its members. Former workers now run these coffee plantations and their coffee is processed in several coffee mills collectively owned by the organization.

The committee uses the profits from coffee sales to buy land for members and to fund community development projects and education bursaries. The revenues also support actions protecting the environment and strengthening the rural economy. About 800 communities are involved

with the CCDA, including 73 cooperatives operating on lands recovered by the organization for its landless membership. Since the end of the war, the committee has advocated for policies favouring comprehensive land reform and rural development in Guatemala.

In the past decade, the expansion of industrial scale agriculture growing African palm and sugar cane in the countryside has led to increasing conflict. Plantation owners hire private paramilitary groups to drive Mayan farmers off their land and harass or kill community organizers. Local authorities are sometimes bribed to “criminalize” leaders, and six CCDA organizers are in prison, with more awaiting trial. There are more than 1,000 arrest warrants for CCDA members.

CCDA was on the front lines of the decades-long armed conflict. Its activists disappeared, its villages were burned to the ground and its people slaughtered. The organization has no desire to return to those times, so it continues to hold on to the possibility of democracy and the rule of law, seeking support from a handful of congresspeople who remain honest and training their communities to prepare cases for the small minority of uncorrupted judges who have not yet been arrested.

CUPE’s partner in Canada, the Maritime-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network, is focused on supporting grassroots community education and organizing. The network sees this as the best approach to building a culture of democracy over the long term, when changing the government is unlikely and democracy is highly threatened. A recent Breaking the Silence delegation met with CCDA representatives

who reinforced both publicly and privately the critical need for Canadian allies in this extremely challenging moment.

HONDURAS

Honduras is in a critical period of change with many opportunities and challenges for progressive social organizations. In her inauguration speech the country’s first woman head of state, President Xiomara Castro, expressed her commitment to women and to human and labour rights. Soon after, the Honduran government repealed the ‘hourly employment law.’ CUPE’s partner CODEMUH, the Honduran Women’s Collective, played an integral role in the lobbying and activism that led to this win. The change means precarious workers now have permanent employment, and more workers have access to social security and labour rights protections.

CODEMUH focuses on workplace health and safety of mainly women workers in garment factory sweatshops (maquilas) in Honduras. Their work includes training women maquila workers as shop floor health and safety advocates and public campaigners. These workers are then equipped to improve working conditions and to lobby governments to enforce the labour code and uphold labour rights in the maquila sector.

The collective’s focus on occupational health and safety helps advance women’s rights and prevent workplace violence and harassment. The collective accompanies workers with wrongful dismissal cases, workplace accommodation requests, or who need medical care for occupational illness or injury.

In 2022, companies laid off 20,000 maquila workers. Maquilas have stepped up efforts to shed legal and financial liability by closing and reopening under new corporate names. CODEMUH has asked the labour ministry to address this along with several other issues.

Recent CODEMUH studies show 81% of maquila workers are migrants from rural areas vulnerable to climate disasters who are experiencing general and gender-based violence. These workers face unjust dismissals, demotions, low wages, non-payment of benefits, poor physical and mental health, abuse, non-existent safety and hygiene measures, and many other labour issues that highlight their precarity, vulnerability, and unequitable position in Honduran society.

WORKERS WHO LOST THEIR JOBS WHEN THE JASPER GARMENT FACTORY IN HONDURAS CLOSED MEET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE HONDURAN WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE, OR CODEMUH, IN NOVEMBER 2022.

CODEMUH's studies also show children are at risk of abuse, exploitation, and health problems because of their caregivers' living conditions. Most are single mothers forced by financial need to work overtime and leave their children in the care of others. Children of maquila workers who work long hours or who suffer from occupational injury or disease are also more likely to take on caregiving and other unpaid domestic work in their families.

The collective has documented the mental health impacts of these exploitative conditions. The information they have collected shows anxiety is common and has many symptoms and impacts. Understanding the emotional and physical toll of maquila work on women's mental health is an important contribution to occupational health and safety research and CODEMUH's organizing strategy.



Photo: CODEMUH



IRAN

2022 was one of the most significant years in Iran's recent history. Major labour protests and strikes were followed by a massive uprising after the brutal murder of Jina (Mahsa) Amini.

On May 1, 2022, International Workers' Day, the labour movement called for national days of action. CUPE's partner, the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, was part of the call to action. In response, the Iranian government and its security and intelligence forces unleashed an aggressive campaign to suppress the country's growing trade union movement.

The crackdown targeted leaders of the teachers' movement and the bus workers' union with raids and arrests. Union organizers and leaders were arrested and charged with national security crimes. False allegations were broadcast on

A PARTICIPANT HOLDS A SIGN THAT SAYS "WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM," IN SOLIDARITY WITH ONGOING PROTESTS IN IRAN, AT AN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RALLY IN NEW YORK CITY DURING THE 2023 UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN.

national television, and several leaders were put in solitary confinement and repeatedly interrogated without visitation rights. Intelligence forces also arrested several bus workers who had gone on strike in Tehran for wage increases, and more than 200 teacher trade unionists.

In September 2022, Iran's "guidance patrol" or so-called "morality police" brutally murdered Jina (Mahsa) Amini for not wearing a 'proper' hijab. This sparked massive uprisings across Iran against longstanding repression of women. Months of protests drew hundreds of thousands of high school and university students and many others including teachers, women and young people. Security forces reportedly killed more

than 500 protesters, thousands were injured and approximately 20,000 were arrested including many students and teachers. Several young protesters, most of them workers from working-class backgrounds, faced the death penalty.

The uprising, which used the rallying cry “Woman, Life, Freedom,” brought women’s liberation and gender equity to the forefront of struggles in Iran. Teachers’ unions, university students’ organizations, the Tehran bus workers’ union and other unions have all publicly supported the movement. The uprising over Amini’s murder has led to a significant shift in the Iranian labour movement, which has traditionally been male dominated because of decades of anti-women government policies and a patriarchal culture.

PHILIPPINES

In January 2023, the International Labour Organization brought a High-Level Tripartite Mission to the Philippines. Unions and labour organizations had demanded this mission since 2019. CUPE partners the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, and the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of the Government Employees (COURAGE) were part of the campaign.

ILO missions investigate violations of international labour standards and labour rights. The ILO is a United Nations agency that sets labour standards and develops policies on decent work for all.

ALLIANCE OF CONCERNED TEACHERS MEMBERS MARCH ON MAY DAY 2023 IN THE PHILIPPINES, HOLDING SIGNS DEMANDING HIGHER PAY, BETTER WORKLOADS AND A LOWER COST OF LIVING. DEMONSTRATORS ALSO CALLED FOR AN END TO RED-TAGGING AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.



Photo: Alliance of Concerned Teachers - Philippines

MEMBERS OF THE CONFEDERATION FOR UNITY, RECOGNITION AND ADVANCEMENT OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES CALL ON THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION TO INVESTIGATE ATTACKS ON LABOUR RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES DURING A HIGH-LEVEL MISSION IN JANUARY 2023.



Workers have faced years of violence, exploitation, and “red” or terrorist tagging. ACT and COURAGE called on the ILO to investigate extra-judicial killings of trade unionists and other violations of freedom of association, which is a right protected by ILO Convention 87.

Unions brought over 300 cases of violations of freedom of association before the mission. These included cases of extra-judicial killings of trade unionists, forced disappearances, arrests and detentions. Unions also highlighted cases of state interference with the right to self-organize through threats, harassment, intimidation and forced disaffiliation, and “red” or terrorist tagging. ACT presented several cases including the abduction of the union’s regional organizer Dyan Gumanao days before the mission arrived.

During the mission, unions called for the state’s counterinsurgency arm to be abolished. The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict continuously red tags workers

and unions and undermines workers’ ability to organize and join unions without fear of repression and violence.

The mission met with unions, government authorities and employer groups. The final report validated union claims about the shrinking democratic space for workers to organize. The mission’s most significant concluding recommendation was the call to create a presidential commission to investigate extrajudicial killings and ensure freedom of association. Unions were pleased with the ILO’s support of many of their recommendations. Unions and labour organizations in the Philippines are committed to holding the government accountable to follow up on these recommendations.

Worker-to-worker solidarity



THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNAL OF SILOÉ INVESTIGATED VIOLENCE AND KILLINGS DURING COLOMBIA'S 2021 NATIONAL STRIKE. IN 2023, THE TRIBUNAL CONCLUDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT PERPETRATED MOST OF THE VIOLENCE, TARGETING YOUTH IN POOR COMMUNITIES AND VIOLATING PEOPLE'S RIGHTS INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO PROTEST.

Photo: NOMADESC

COLOMBIA

In 2022, CUPE renewed our solidarity with Colombian labour and human rights defenders, joining leaders from the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, the National Union of Public and General Employees, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada in the Canada-Colombia Frontlines Delegation.

It was a critical moment to stand with targeted leaders in Colombia, after years of relentless attacks on trade unionists and human rights and land defenders. In 2022, for the first time in the country's 214-year history, Colombians elected a progressive government led by President Gustavo Petro and Vice-President Francia Márquez, who is the first Black woman to hold power.

Canadian public sector unions have participated in worker-to-worker solidarity exchanges with Colombian unions, social movements, and human rights defenders for nearly 20 years. On this trip, the delegation met with CUPE partners NOMADESC and SINTRACUAVALLE, as well as union and community leaders in Bogotá, Cali, Buenaventura, Medellín, and Villagarzón.

NOMADESC (the Association for Research and Social Action) helps protect and promote leaders and human rights defenders from Indigenous, Afro-descendant, peasant, and urban communities. The organization works in a region plagued by armed conflict and violence. NOMADESC's Intercultural University of the Peoples trains leaders to defend life, land, and culture. It also strengthens violence prevention plans and supports victims of forced displacement.

SINTRACUAVALLE is the union representing workers at ACUAVALLE, the public water utility serving more than 700,000 water users in 36 municipalities in the province of Valle de Cauca. The union continues to lead the struggle against water privatization through their campaign: *Unions United for Water in Public Hands with Social Management*. SINTRACUAVALLE's work builds labour-community alliances that fight for community control of public services, which in turn builds a stronger movement and advances human rights.

The delegation visited the rural coastal communities and mountains where transnational corporate and paramilitary activity is causing displacement and



A 2022 COMMUNITY MEETING LED BY THE WATER WORKERS' UNION, SINTRACUAVALLE, IN JAMUNDÍ, COLOMBIA. MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN FRONTLINES UNION DELEGATION MET WITH COMMUNITY AND UNION MEMBERS ORGANIZING AGAINST WATER AND WASTEWATER PRIVATIZATION IN THE VALLE DE CAUCA REGION.



Photo: SINTRACUAVALLE



Photo: SINTRACUAVALLE

A PARTICIPANT IN A WORKSHOP BUILDING LABOUR-COMMUNITY ALLIANCES TO PROTECT PUBLIC WATER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF FLORIDA, COLOMBIA, PART OF A MAJOR EDUCATION PROJECT LED BY SINTRACUAVALLE THAT REACHED 400 PEOPLE IN 40 WORKSHOPS IN 2022.

violence for Colombia's Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities. They met with leaders of the 2021 national strike that ignited massive youth-led mobilizations challenging regressive government policies and confronting the severe state violence that followed.

The International Trade Union Confederation 2022 Global Rights Index once again ranks Colombia as one of the 10 most dangerous countries in the world for union leaders. Activists know these conditions will not change overnight or by simply electing a new government. The delegation shared the hope of many Colombians that the country can start repairing the damage caused by severe right-wing policies, and offered solidarity to workers, human rights and land defenders, and social movement leaders in their pursuit of peace and justice.

CUBA

A CUPE delegation returned from Cuba in 2022 more determined than ever to support our union partner and the Cuban people in their ongoing struggle against a harsh United States economic blockade.

CUPE's partner the National Union of Public Administration Workers (SNTAP) hosted the delegation, which was led by CoDevelopment Canada. For over 20 years, CUPE and SNTAP have found many ways to build solidarity, inspired by the Cuban revolution's spirit of international cooperation and solidarity, known as internationalism.

The delegation met with leaders of the Workers' Central Union of Cuba, SNTAP and SNTAP Havana. Members visited SNTAP Havana worksites and a training centre that CUPE supports, named after beloved revolutionary leader Celia Sanchez.

CUPE's Global Justice Fund project with SNTAP Havana, representing the city's municipal workers, supports union members sharing strategies and strengthening health and safety. It also delivers much-needed supplies they are unable to access because of the blockade.

The Cuban people rose up in a revolution against a military dictatorship in 1959. At the time, there was stark inequality between rich and poor people, as well as racial segregation targeting Black people. When the new government nationalized U.S.-owned oil refineries as a step towards building a more equal society, the U.S. imposed economic sanctions on Cuba that are still in place.

In November 2022, for the 30th year in a row, the United Nations General Assembly voted on a non-binding resolution against the embargo that won the overwhelming support of UN member states. Many believe the blockade is a violation of the Cuban people's human rights.

The cruelty of the embargo affects every aspect of workers' lives. Examples they shared included hospitals being unable to access necessary medical supplies and scarce school supplies. Farmers do not have machinery to



CUPE MEMBERS WITH LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WORKERS IN 2022, IN THE UNION TRAINING CENTRE NAMED AFTER BELOVED REVOLUTIONARY LEADER CELIA SANCHEZ, IN HAVANA, CUBA. BUILDING AND CLASSROOM SUPPLIES WERE PROVIDED BY A CUPE GLOBAL JUSTICE FUND PROJECT.

Photo: CUPE

increase their production and the country lacks the materials required to advance technologically.

Despite the pressure on their working conditions and livelihoods, the Cuban people have shown they are extremely capable, engaging in what they call creative resistance to overcome the embargo—the longest economic blockade in history. They overcame a lack of supplies to create five COVID-19 vaccines that they shared at cost with countries around the world. Life expectancy in Cuba is higher than in the U.S. and the country has one of the world’s highest doctor-to-patient ratios. All education including post-secondary education is free, and the Cuban literacy rate is 99.8%.

CUPE returned to Cuba in May 2023, joining 1,400 other international activists at an International Workers’ Day conference and celebration on May 1st. Delegations to Cuba are a powerful way to dispel myths and boost morale, when so much information about Cuba is filtered through the lens of hostile media and the U.S. government’s effort to shatter their economy and break the people’s spirit.

HAITI

In January 2023 CUPE attended a gathering led by Haitian unions that reinforced the need to respect Haitian peoples’ right to decide their own future, and to support their efforts to end the crisis that has gripped the country.

CUPE joined unions from 10 other countries in the meeting organized by the Confédération des Travailleurs Haitiens and our partner union the Confederation of Public and Private Sector Workers (CTSP). The meeting was held at the border of the Dominican Republic, in the community of Ouanaminthe.

International and media attention are focused on the economic, political, and social instability in the country, and whether foreign governments, including Canada, will intervene militarily. The crisis includes a rise in gang violence and power, the resurgence of cholera, a lack of access to health and social services, low wages, food insecurity, and the spiralling cost of scarce goods. Haitians are migrating to other countries, including the United States and Canada, in search of safety and stability.



PARTICIPANTS IN A SOLIDARITY MEETING WITH HAITIAN UNIONS, HELD IN JANUARY 2023.

What draws far less attention is that Haitian people are organizing for solutions led by them, including local community and faith-based organizations and trade unions. The global gathering aimed to raise awareness about the importance of this organizing, and to rally support.

The meeting ended with a joint declaration which states “the crisis in Haiti is due to bad governance, international interference, the absence of the rule of law and social justice, and a model of society where the economy is for the benefit of the elite.”

It further adds that “any solution to the crisis in Haiti must begin with the recognition of the sovereignty of the country, the State, and the people of Haiti. It is up to the people of Haiti to choose their leaders and their form of government. In the current context, any international armed intervention would go against the right to self-determination of Haitians.”

CUPE has called on Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly and the Canadian government to respect Haitian democracy and self-determination, and to not get involved in military intervention. Our union shares steadfast solidarity with workers and

community members in Haiti as they plan for a future that meets the needs and aspirations of all Haitian people.

MEXICO

CUPE is part of a coalition of Mexican and Canadian unions supporting labour rights and better working conditions in Mexico. The Mexico Labour Solidarity Project has Canadian government funding and unites four unions and labour rights organizations in Mexico with five unions and labour federations in Canada.

The project seizes the opportunity presented by recent and ongoing labour reforms in Mexico. The reforms are supporting a resurgence of independent, democratic union organizing. Changes to Mexican labour law in 2019 have made a big difference in leveling the playing field, where pro-employer unions that sign “protection contracts” with corporations have long been the norm.

There are still many obstacles to a fully democratic and independent labour movement. These include fiercely anti-union employers, considerable political influence of pro-employer unions, state governments that obstruct



A MAY 2023 MEETING BETWEEN CUPE LEADERS AND LABOUR LEADERS FROM MEXICO VISITING CANADA TO SHARE UPDATES ABOUT 2019 LABOUR REFORMS AND THEIR ONGOING WORK EDUCATING MEXICAN WORKERS ABOUT THEIR NEW RIGHTS AND STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC UNIONS.

labour law reform, the limited capacity and experience of new labour justice institutions, and a climate of violence and insecurity that makes organizing very difficult in some regions.

In 2023 Canadian representatives visited Mexico, and Mexican representatives visited Canada. The project is an important opportunity to strengthen alliances between the Canadian and Mexican labour movements, especially now that the renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement, known as the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, includes a labour chapter.

WORKING TO FREE POLITICAL PRISONERS

Some governments are using legislation and the prison system to repress and silence progressive movements and activists who criticize government policies and actions. A vague accusation of “terrorism” is often used to detain activists with impunity. CUPE members have experienced this repression firsthand.

After nearly two years of unjust detention as a political prisoner in Turkey, CUPE 4600 member Cihan Erdal returned home in September 2022. Erdal is a queer youth activist and Carleton University PhD student who was unjustly detained on trumped-up charges in September 2020, when he was swept up in a mass arrest of politicians, activists, and academics. He was jailed for nine months, including time in solitary confinement, before being conditionally released in June 2021. Harsh bail conditions limited his freedom, preventing him from leaving Turkey for over a year. The struggle continues to ensure all political prisoners are freed in Turkey.

The case of CUPE 4600 member and Carleton University instructor Dr. Hassan Diab has taken many turns since he was first arrested in 2008

on unfounded charges that he was responsible for a 1980 synagogue bombing in France. Despite a Canadian court finding the case against him to be weak, he was extradited to France and spent more than three years in pre-trial detention. After French judges found significant evidence that exonerated him, and deemed other evidence to be faulty and unreliable, he was released and returned to live with his family in Canada. But French officials pursued a new trial. In April 2023, a French court conducted a trial in absentia using the same flawed evidence and found Diab guilty of the bombing, despite documentary proof that he was not in France at the time. Many critics are calling the trial a sham that was politically motivated and unfairly conducted. Progressive organizations and hundreds of supporters are working to ensure Diab is not extradited again to France.



Photo: CUPE



Photo: Justice for Hassan Diab

MEMBERS OF CUPE'S NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD CELEBRATE THE RETURN OF UNJUSTLY DETAINED CUPE 4600 MEMBER CIHAN ERDAL IN SEPTEMBER 2022 (TOP). OUR UNION ALSO CONTINUES TO CALL FOR JUSTICE FOR CUPE 4600 MEMBER HASSAN DIAB, PICTURED WITH HIS FAMILY WHEN HE RETURNED TO CANADA IN 2018 (BOTTOM).

Working with our allies



UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is the global intergovernmental body dedicated to promoting gender equity and women's empowerment. Every year CUPE participates in the commission's meetings, joining the Canadian delegation led by the Canadian Labour Congress and the global delegation led by Public Services International.

This year, the UNCSW 67th session's theme was *"Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls."* This was a timely topic as we emerge from the global pandemic. It generated rich discussions and information-sharing about the ownership of data and access to technology, as well as the impact of digitalization and technological change on women in all their diversity.

Unions raised the alarm about Big Tech's influence over national governments. These corporations are facilitating privatization and outsourcing through tech 'solutions' for public

AN INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RALLY DURING THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN MARCH, 2023.



Photo: Hatnim Lee

services. Digitalization and technological changes lead to further deregulation, while also making work more precarious and subject to heightened surveillance. Artificial intelligence and algorithms are being used predominately for profit. Digital monitoring exploits women's sexual and reproductive health for profit. These pressures undermine women's human and labour rights and reinforce gendered and racist stereotypes.

CUPE participated in a Public Services International event calling for a "digital new deal" that advances gender justice. Our union presented on how trade unions can push for digital policies that support gender equity. CUPE's delegation had many powerful experiences meeting with women from around the world. We prioritized sessions focusing on the perspectives and struggles of Indigenous peoples, in addition to attending trade union forums and workshops.

This annual global gathering is an important opportunity for the trade union movement to highlight our demands, influence UN global policy, and strengthen our alliances with global trade unions and major civil society organizations.

MARIAMA DIALLO, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNION DÉMOCRATIQUE DES TRAVAILLEURS DU SÉNÉGAL (DEMOCRATIC UNION OF SENEGALESE WORKERS), TAKES PART IN THE LAUNCH OF TRADE UNIONS FOR ENERGY DEMOCRACY SOUTH IN NAIROBI, KENYA IN OCTOBER, 2022.



Photo: TUED

TRADE UNIONS FOR ENERGY DEMOCRACY SOUTH

In October 2022, 70 trade union leaders from nearly 30 countries met in Nairobi, Kenya, to launch a new group focused on public solutions to climate change. Trade Unions for Energy Democracy South is a union platform advocating for a global South-led “public pathway” approach to a just energy transition. This approach calls for public ownership of key sectors, particularly energy, to equitably decarbonize the world instead of relying on private corporations.

CUPE is a TUED member, and our union supported the platform’s formation. TUED South’s focus is critically important, ensuring public ownership guides the energy transition instead of the “privatize to decarbonize” agenda of the G7, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and similar institutions. Countries in the global South will bear the brunt of forced privatization, known as green structural adjustment, so unions must lead the fightback.

The meeting brought together representatives from three global union federations, seven national trade union centrals and two dozen trade unions with members in sectors including electricity, oil, mining, nuclear energy and transport. Participants had important discussions based on their union experiences and analysis from their countries. Countries represented at the meeting were: Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique, Zambia, South Africa, Tunisia, Namibia, Senegal, Benin, Uganda, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Niger, Tanzania, Gabon, Philippines, South Korea, Argentina, Brasil, Uruguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia, and Mexico, as well as allied unions from France, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

One of TUED South’s first priorities is to develop a shared analysis of the challenges and opportunities for a just energy transition in the South.

The first meeting after TUED South’s launch was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in May 2023. Participants focused on energy poverty and the inability to generate enough electricity to meet basic needs in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the green structural adjustment agenda pushed by Just Energy Transition Partnerships in South Africa, Senegal and countries in the Asia Pacific region. These ‘partnerships’ are new funding mechanisms that use the energy transition to facilitate privatization.

BANGLADESH CENTER FOR WORKERS SOLIDARITY

On April 24, workers in Bangladesh and across the globe gathered to mark the 10th anniversary of the Rana Plaza garment factory collapse, one of the world’s worst industrial disasters. More than 1,100 workers were killed, and thousands live with the aftermath of serious injuries.

On the day the building collapsed, workers refused to enter the factory because they could see cracks in the walls. They were ordered to work to avoid costly production delays. Rana Plaza exposed the unimaginable levels of exploitation garment workers experience making clothes for the most profitable global corporations.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CANADIAN NETWORK ON CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY DELIVER A 43,000-SIGNATURE PETITION TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN APRIL 2023. THE PETITION CALLS FOR A LAW REQUIRING CORPORATIONS OPERATING OVERSEAS TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT.



Photo: CNCA

After this preventable tragedy, CUPE joined other Canadian unions to back Bangladesh workers in their struggle for decent working conditions, health and safety protection and the right to form independent unions.

Our union works with the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity. The centre's organizing program addresses poor wages, unsafe working conditions, precarious work, and intimidation and harassment in the workplace. The centre trains garment workers to increase awareness of their labour rights, which supports long-term unionization efforts. The centre joined forces with the union movement in Bangladesh and internationally to create the *Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh*, which dramatically increased health and safety inspections and repairs to thousands of factories.

CUPE and other Canadian unions are part of networks, including the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, that are calling for governments to protect garment workers in Bangladesh and around the world. Our demands include human rights legislation that requires Canadian companies and companies that import goods into Canada to respect and report on human rights throughout their supply chains. We are also calling on Canadian clothing brands to sign the *International Accord for Health and Safety in the Textile and Garment Industry*. The accord ensures workplace safety and recognizes the rights of workers to organize, refuse unsafe work and raise health and safety concerns.

Mobilizing for a better world

International solidarity is our most powerful tool to build a better world. As this report shows, it is needed more than ever. Whether it's resisting repressive right-wing governments in Guatemala and the Philippines, or organizing to build on the hope that comes with new leadership in Colombia and Honduras, the courage of our friends, allies and comrades fuels our determination to keep fighting for a better world.

We are facing a rising tide of hate, exploitation and fear. Old and new patterns of violence, harassment, criminalization, and imprisonment are emerging, and so are the movements that challenge and resist these forces. Our union will keep working with allies at home and around the world to advance workers' rights and human rights, and to challenge growing corporate power and rising inequality.

International solidarity and worker-to-worker exchanges connect CUPE members with people on the front lines of vital struggles. We learn important lessons and make the links between what we are confronting at home and around the globe.

We are proud to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, women's groups, migrant workers, young people and unions. People around the world are organizing and resisting in profound and significant ways to challenge repression and demand genuine democracy and justice.

It will always be a privilege to struggle alongside these workers and community members in our collective fight for human and labour rights, decent work, strong public services, land rights, peace and climate justice. We will keep building support for global movements through worker-to-worker connections and CUPE's Global Justice Fund.

If your local is interested in supporting the Global Justice Fund and our union's international solidarity work, visit cupe.ca/international-solidarity or contact International Solidarity Officer Kelti Cameron at kcameron@cupe.ca.



NATIONAL GLOBAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Natalie Webber, Newfoundland and Labrador
- Cheryl Burbidge, Nova Scotia
- Jennifer LeBlanc, Prince Edward Island
- Darlene Hanson, New Brunswick
- Miguel Lima, Ontario
- Gord Meneer, Manitoba
- Clayton Gordon, Alberta
- Jas Parmar, British Columbia
- Louella Vincent, Hospital Employees' Union
- Deanna Fasciani, CoDevelopment Canada
- Charlene Armstrong, Cuso International
- Judy Henley, National Executive Board liaison
- Kelti Cameron, Staff Advisor

CUPE GLOBAL JUSTICE FUND SUPPORTERS

- CUPE
- CUPE British Columbia
- CUPE Saskatchewan
- CUPE Ontario
- CUPE Québec
- CUPE Prince Edward Island
- CUPE Nova Scotia
- CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador
- Hospital Employees' Union (HEU)
- CUPE staff
- CUPE 40 – Calgary Board of Education workers, Calgary, AB
- CUPE 382 – Greater Victoria School District workers, Victoria, BC
- CUPE 8443 – Board of Education of Saskatoon School Division No. 13 workers, Saskatoon, SK
- CUPE 4600 – Part-time education workers of Carleton University, Ottawa, ON
- CUPE 2440 – Cuso workers, Ottawa, ON
- CUPE 3260 – PEI School Board – Provincial teacher assistants, Charlottetown, PEI
- CUPE 8920 – Nova Scotia Acute Care workers, Amherst, NS
- CUPE 3067 – New Dawn Guest Home workers, Sydney, NS
- CUPE 1876 – Northside Community Guest Home workers, Sydney, NS
- CUPE 1779 – East Prince Health Authority
- CUPE 9105 – Vancouver Island District Council



CUPE GLOBAL JUSTICE

cupe.ca/international-solidarity