

International Solidarity Report

2023-2024

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Strength in solidarity

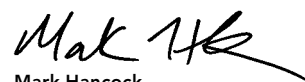
CUPE's 2023-2024 International Solidarity Report provides a snapshot of urgent global struggles and documents our union's efforts to build worker-to-worker solidarity around the world. This year has reminded us in so many ways that international solidarity is critically important.

On every continent across the globe, communities are mobilizing for democracy, justice, peace, self-determination and liberation. This report highlights how workers are struggling and resisting in Bangladesh, Burma, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Palestine, the Philippines and South Korea.

We are concerned about the safety and security of our partners and are inspired by their courage and determination. The past year has been terrifying in its intensity and violence. It has also laid bare the real motivations of Western nations that claim to support human rights and international law while promoting military conflict, resource extraction and anti-worker policies.

CUPE members continue to organize alongside our partners for peace and justice, for an end to war and against unwanted foreign intervention. For more than 60 years, we 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. We hope you read this report and join us in building our power with workers around the world. Together, we will overcome our collective challenges and build a better world.



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 2023-2024, CUPE's Global Justice Fund supported workers and community allies in Burma, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Philippines.

BURMA

The 2021 military coup in Burma created a human rights crisis that forced activists and organizations into hiding and exile. CUPE's partner, the Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU), was forced to leave the country and reorganize the way it fights for justice and equality in Burma. TWU provides tools and training for women and their families to fight for their rights and achieve justice.

TWU was founded in 1995 to fight the injustices against people living in the Tanintharyi Region of southern Burma. Land grabbing in the region has enriched members of the military and their cronies, while communities have not been compensated. So-called Special Economic Zones have facilitated land grabbing in the name of economic development, leading to human rights abuses and environmental destruction.

More than three years after the military coup, a people's movement is leading one of the strongest campaigns against the military in the country's history. At the same time, the military is oppressing young people with illegal military conscription laws that were introduced in late 2023. Thousands of young people, including high school students, have fled the country.

Burmese youth are facing high unemployment and insecurity because of their precarious immigration status in countries where they have gone into exile, including Thailand and Malaysia. Forced military conscription has particularly affected young people near the capital city Dawei (formerly Tavoy) in the Tanintharyi Region because the military has historically controlled the region.

Despite many challenges, TWU is determined to carry on and has established a team that has documented over 30 cases of human rights violations in the Tanintharyi Region.

CANADA

In December 2021, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mandated then-immigration minister Sean Fraser to “[b]uild on existing pilot programs to further explore ways of regularizing status for undocumented workers who are contributing to Canadian communities.” The Liberal government has repeated that promise many times while undocumented workers wait for meaningful change.

CUPE’s partner Migrante Canada and a national alliance called the Migrant Rights Network continue to push for permanent residence status for people with precarious immigration status, such as people who have a temporary closed work permit or who are undocumented.

MIGRANTE ALBERTA CONTINUES TO ORGANIZE EDUCATION FOR MIGRANTS TO KNOW THEIR RIGHTS.



Photo: Migrante Alberta

Migrante Canada is a Canada-wide alliance of Filipino migrant and immigrant organizations with chapters across the country. Migrante supports migrants fighting for their right to stay in Canada with immigration status and working conditions that allow them to live and work with the safety, security, dignity and respect they deserve.

In the face of government inaction, Migrante has continued its work, focusing on an education campaign about undocumented migrants and the global issues that affect migration. Migrante’s work is grounded in the knowledge that when workers understand their rights, they are empowered and better able to organize for their democratic and economic rights, and their right to stay in Canada.

Over the past year, Migrante raised awareness among its members about unions and built solidarity by joining workers and CUPE 40 members in CUPE Alberta’s education worker campaign. Migrante’s member education about the importance of trade unionism and solidarity is connected to Migrante’s “Education 4 All” campaign. Education and discussions also helped build understanding about issues facing international students, and the importance of building solidarity with local workers who are fighting for living wages and decent working conditions.

Migrante Canada also strengthened its global connections by sending 13 delegates to the 9th Congress of Migrante International in Bangkok to share their experiences about organizing work and the overall situation for migrants in Canada.

In addition to supporting migrant-led campaigns, CUPE is supporting the fight for migrant justice in Canada with a new toolkit, *Temporary foreign workers in our union: A solidarity and action guide*.

The guide will help CUPE bargaining teams and local executives support members who are temporary foreign workers at the bargaining table and in the workplace. CUPE will work with Migrante on the second phase of this important new tool.

COLOMBIA

The 2016 peace accords were an essential step in building a lasting peace in Colombia, but they have not ended violence and inequity in the country. Wealthy and powerful business interests are undermining the peace agreements. These people are linked to corruption, drug trafficking and illegal armed groups that fund their activities through illicit economic activities in mining, coca production and trade.

INTERCULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF THE PEOPLES STUDENTS
SHARE THE OUTCOME OF THEIR RESEARCH WITH MEMBERS
OF THEIR COMMUNITIES IN BUENAVENTURA, COLOMBIA.



Photo: Nomadesc



Photo: SINTRACUAVALLE

Violence continues to hinder the social changes President Gustavo Petro is trying to implement. Petro is Colombia's first left-wing president. His goal is to achieve what he calls a "total peace" country. Petro's social, economic, political and cultural changes have faced strong opposition, sabotage and criticism from oligarchs, politicians, military members and state officials linked to previous right-wing governments.

Petro's "total peace" project includes negotiations with armed groups and efforts to build a more equitable society through ambitious reforms to health care, pensions, labour, education, and agriculture.

One of CUPE's partners in Colombia is SINTRACUAVALLE, 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 is concerned about the 2023 provincial and local elections that brought

MEMBERS OF THE SOCIAL PLAN COMMITTEES OF JAMUNDI AND FLORIDA VISIT THE SARA BRUT DAM, VITAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT PROVIDES WATER TO BOTH MUNICIPALITIES IN COLOMBIA.

political parties with a neoliberal privatization agenda to power. It will be difficult to expand public services, and workers are planning to defend existing services.

SINTRACUAVALLE works to mobilize communities to defend public water. Despite the challenges, the union has seen a shift in people's views about water privatization and their commitment to defend their public water service. The union has reached an agreement with the water utility to maintain the infrastructure, protect water sources and include workers in decisions that affect service quality, coverage and continuity. SINTRACUAVALLE will continue strengthening ties with local communities and

international organizations such as CUPE to resist privatization and take action for climate justice.

Despite the national government's efforts and commitment, violence continues because the attorney general's office is negligent and state forces are slow to respond. Illegal armed groups continue to attack communities in southwestern Colombia, threatening people with forced displacement.

CUPE partner Nomadesc (the Association for Research and Social Action) works alongside other Colombian organizations strengthening community alliances to resist violence and support people's aspirations for peace and self-determination. Nomadesc is a human rights organization that advances social change through its Intercultural University of the Peoples and uses strategic legal work to fight for justice.

HONDURAS

The Honduran economy depends on maquila industry jobs marred by unsafe labour conditions and low wages. Maquilas are duty-free zones where workers assemble raw materials into final products for export. The legislative framework

CODEVELOPMENT CANADA AND HEU MEMBERS IN SOLIDARITY WITH INJURED GARMENT WORKERS AFTER GILDAN CLOSED ITS SAN MIGUEL FACTORY IN HONDURAS, OCTOBER 2023.



Photo: Hospital Employees' Union

and current occupational health and safety practices are woefully inadequate for protecting workers' health, safety and dignity.

Companies in the maquila sector earn high profits because of tax exemptions and "flexible" labour conditions exploiting economically marginalized women from rural and urban areas. The cheap labour of women is often used as a bargaining chip in international trade agreements, as weak democracies welcome job-generating economic activities that often do not end extreme poverty.

Canadian companies such as Gildan Activewear Inc. have imposed 11.5-hour workdays and unreasonably high production targets. These practices lead to high occupational injury rates and unfair dismissals.

Honduras's outdated national law on occupational health and safety is a fragmented system that barely responds to workers' issues. The law only recognizes 44 occupational illnesses and does not outline risk prevention measures or penalties for non-compliance. In addition to a weak OH&S system, labour and judicial authorities have an uphill battle enforcing labour law in the face of the maquila sector's power.

In 2023, CUPE's partner CODEMUH proposed a comprehensive "Health in the Workplace" law. The draft legislation covers 242 occupational illnesses and creates a unified occupational health system. It also includes a chapter on occupational risk prevention, and outlines employer duties and legal measures to enforce compliance. The proposal is currently in Congress, but workers must push elected representatives to approve it.

CODEMUH built the draft legislation working with universities in Mexico, Central America and Argentina, along with maquila workers and attorneys specializing in Honduran labour law.

CUBA

After more than 60 years of an illegal U.S. embargo against Cuba, Cuban workers and the entire population are facing mounting hardship and scarcity. This is the longest-lasting sanctions regime in history. It has blocked access to

SNTAP HAVANA SECRETARY GENERAL ARISLEYDIS HIDALGO LEYVA AND NATIONAL GLOBAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBER DARLENE HANSON AT THE CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION, OCTOBER 2023.



Photo: CoDevelopment Canada

essential medicines and medical equipment; basic school and office supplies like paper, computers and computer equipment; vehicles and automotive parts; assistive technologies for persons with disabilities and the elderly; and more.

The decision by former U.S. president Donald Trump to add Cuba to the State Sponsors of Terrorism List imposed a further 240 restrictive measures against Cuba, making life even more difficult for people in the country. Current U.S. President Joe Biden has kept Cuba on the list, leaving most of the additional restrictions in place. These punitive measures have worsened conditions for workers and prompted local and global activists and organizations to respond in an extraordinary display of unity.

There is resounding global opposition to the blockade. In 2023, for the 31st year in a row, the overwhelming majority of members of the United Nations General Assembly called on the United States to end the embargo. In addition, a global campaign is organizing to gather more than a million signatures on a petition demanding that Biden remove Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism List. CUPE members endorsed and promoted this campaign at our 2023 National Convention.

Despite these challenges, CUPE's partner the National Union of Public Administration Workers in the Municipality of Havana (SNTAP Havana) continues to consolidate and strengthen its membership through ongoing training and member education. SNTAP Havana is also working to improve labour conditions, which will ensure safety and fairness in the workplace.

HAITI

Haiti is experiencing a new wave of armed gang violence and political upheaval after years of instability. In March 2024, U.S.-backed prime minister Ariel Henry resigned. Henry had left the country and was unable to return because of an escalation of violence and lack of political support for his undemocratic appointment.

The Haitian government created a nine-member transitional presidential council in April 2024. The stated plan is for members representing political parties, the private sector and civil society to appoint an interim prime minister and hold democratic elections.

Unions are skeptical and critical of the transition council, saying its independence is threatened by foreign interference. Labour groups also say the council is made up of many of the forces responsible for the crisis in the first place. In addition, unions are very concerned the council only includes one woman who does not have voting rights, and that unions are not represented or invited to the negotiating table.

CUPE and our partner in Haiti are very concerned about the prospect of another multinational armed mission's imminent entry into the country. CUPE's partner in Haiti is the Confédération des Travailleurs et Travailleuses des Secteurs Public et Privé, or Confederation of Public and Private Sector Workers. In a media interview, CTSP President Jean Bonald Golinski Fatal is clear: "apart from the gangs, the problem is unemployment...We want to eradicate the gangs but you can't do that with weapons alone."

The country has lost more than 26,000 jobs in the textile sector and the state cannot even pay its civil servants at the moment. Jacques Belzin, President of the Confederation of Haitian Workers (CTH) and a close ally of the CTSP told the media that "there can be no peace without a functioning economy."

The country remains in crisis. CTSP leaders are unable to leave their homes, like most of the population in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Face-to-face meetings are impossible, so workers are forced to meet virtually to continue the work of the union. Thousands of Haitians have been killed in gang violence, and thousands more have been forced to leave the capital to find safety. People are desperately in need of security, food and an income.

Despite these struggles, national unions have made gains outside the capital. With support from CUPE, the CTSP education sector federation, the Fédération nationale des syndicats en éducation (FENASE), is focusing on a campaign to win benefits for its members.

The international community, including Canada, has an important role to play supporting Haiti's civil society efforts, as well as the Haitian peoples' demands for self-determination and an end to foreign intervention in their political and economic affairs.

CTSP PRESIDENT JEAN BONALD GOLINSKY FATAL AT THE CUPE NATIONAL CONVENTION IN OCTOBER, 2023.



Photo: Wendy D

Worker-to-worker solidarity



CANADIAN LABOUR DELEGATION, INCLUDING CUPE REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT, SASKATCHEWAN KENT PETERSON (TOP LEFT) AND CUPE 2191 LEAD STEWARD JUANITA FORDE (BOTTOM LEFT), WITH LEADERS FROM THE ALLIANCE OF CONCERNED TEACHERS IN MANILA, PHILIPPINES, JANUARY 2024.

PHILIPPINES

In January 2024, CUPE was part of a delegation of Canadian trade unionists and international solidarity activists to the Philippines. CUPE partners the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT), and the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE) hosted the delegation. The group included leaders from CUPE, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and the Ontario Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines.

Union leaders in the Philippines are under attack. The International Trade Union Confederation’s 2023 Global Rights Index ranks the Philippines as one of the 10 worst countries in the world for working people – a designation that is not new for the country. The ITUC reports that “Workers and their representatives remained particularly vulnerable to red-tagging, violent attacks, abductions, and arbitrary arrests. Workers across many sectors still faced significant obstacles when attempting to form trade unions.” Workers who are red-tagged are accused of being a communist or a terrorist.

Workers in the Philippines are struggling with low wages, precarious work and an underfunded public sector. Many ACT and COURAGE members and leaders told the delegation about the harassment and threats they endure when they challenge the government about these conditions.

The current Philippines president is Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., son of the former dictator. Like previous presidents, he shows disdain for the working class and poor people and is quick to attack anyone critical of his harmful social, economic and environmental policies.

Marcos Jr. is targeting anyone who criticizes state policies, including human rights defenders, social justice advocates, journalists, students and trade unionists. He is using the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict established by his predecessor, Rodrigo Duterte, to attack and silence critics.



EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE WORKERS MEETING WITH THE CANADIAN LABOUR DELEGATION AT THE WORKERS ASSISTANCE CENTER IN CAVITE, PHILIPPINES, JANUARY 2024.

Photo: CUPE

The delegation was alarmed to learn that during their visit, Canada signed a memorandum of understanding for defence cooperation with the Philippines. Our international solidarity and action are crucial to ensure the Canadian government is not complicit in ongoing rights violations.

Political prisoner Weng Rosales shared this message with the delegation: “We thank you for remembering us and most of all, thank you for keeping the torch of our struggle for justice and freedom alive and burning. Our thoughts are with you, and the people, always.”

PALESTINE

For decades, Palestinian trade unions have called for workers around the world to take actions that will stop arming Israel and end all complicity in the state’s illegal occupation and ongoing human rights violations. That call is more urgent than ever. Following an attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023, Israel retaliated with a disproportionate level of violence that many international law experts

say constitutes a genocide. Unions and workers want international law and Palestinian human rights to be respected.

The situation of workers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, who are trying to live and work under the state of Israel’s 57-year military occupation, is rarely discussed. The already dire situation for workers is now much worse.

Workers in Palestine navigate an apartheid system of segregation and discrimination to get to work every day. They pass through permanent and temporary military checkpoints and roadblocks and travel on segregated road systems with Palestinian-only roads and Israeli-only roads. The Israeli government requires Palestinians to carry Israeli military permits to move within the territories.

Thousands of workers are forced to travel daily from the West Bank into Israel to work. They must pass through checkpoints that guard the eight-meter-high wall that was illegally built to surround and contain Palestinian communities.



THE APARTHEID WALL CUTTING THROUGH BETHLEHEM IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK, TAKEN DURING A 2018 CUPE DELEGATION VISIT.

Photo: Ahmad Odeh

Illegal brokers and recruiters take advantage of the system and extract massive payments from workers for work permits.

There are illegal Israeli settlements throughout the West Bank, connected by segregated road systems that Palestinians are not allowed to travel on. Although the settlements are clearly in Palestine, they are governed by Israeli labour law and connected by segregated roads. These conditions prevent Palestinian unions from organizing Palestinian workers there.

In Gaza, where Israel imposed a land, sea and air blockade in 2007, the unemployment rate of 70% was among the highest in the world at the start of 2023. Israel controls Gaza's borders and the movement of all goods and people. This has devastated the Gazan economy and workers have very few options for survival.

The situation for workers has become exponentially worse in recent months. Most work permits for Palestinians working in Israel were revoked and thousands of workers, primary breadwinners for their family, lost their incomes.

Israel imposed hundreds of additional barriers and checkpoints in the West Bank, and checkpoint harassment and detentions increased. Thousands of workers were laid off or had their hours reduced. Public sector workers have not been paid or face pay delays because Israel has not transferred tax revenue for their wages.

In Gaza, many workers are among the tens of thousands killed by Israeli bombardment or digging through the rubble searching for their family members, neighbours, and co-workers. They are among the courageous health care workers and paramedics who stayed to tend to their patients, despite the risk. Entire neighbourhoods have been wiped from existence, infrastructure such as energy



Photo: Ahmad Odeh

A WORKER AT THE HIRBAWI TEXTILE FACTORY, THE LAST FACTORY TO WEAVE KEFFIYEH HEADSCARVES IN PALESTINE, TAKEN DURING A 2018 CUPE DELEGATION VISIT TO HEBRON IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK.

and water facilities has been demolished, and universities, schools, medical facilities and businesses have been destroyed. In March 2024, the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions offices were bombed by Israeli occupation forces.

CUPE has heeded the calls of the Palestinian unions and has demanded the Canadian government call for an immediate ceasefire in Israel-Palestine and stop selling military equipment to Israel. Our union has also called for all hostages and political prisoners to be released, and for the 57-year military occupation to end.

GUATEMALA

There has been significant political and social change in Guatemala over the past year. Hopes that human rights will be upheld are the highest they have been since the 1996 peace accords. CUPE's partner the Campesino Committee of the Highlands or CCDA, is cautiously optimistic.

The unexpected election in 2023 of anti-corruption reformist President Bernardo Arevalo is an important breakthrough. The CCDA is already seeing a difference in negotiations on land issues with the new government. However, Arevalo's scope of action is limited, as the judicial system remains largely in the hands of corrupt officials and Arevalo's party does not have a majority in the legislature. His agricultural pact with Indigenous and campesino organizations has been undermined, as prosecutors loyal to the corrupt attorney general order community evictions despite the government's commitment to freeze evictions.

Mass mobilizations to defend the democratic process after Arevalo's election were the biggest and longest since the 1944 revolution that established the modern Guatemalan state. The protests were led by people tired of decades of corruption and oppression, many of them residents of marginalized urban neighbourhoods reconnecting with their Indigenous identity. These people saw their actions could have an impact.

The mass mobilizations were unique because they arose under the direction of the ancestral authorities of Indigenous peoples. For centuries, under the veneer of the colonial state, traditional Indigenous authorities have quietly imparted justice and guidance in the Indigenous communities of Guatemala. But

when the democratic process was threatened, the ancestral authorities rose up in their communities and called on their peoples to join them in the capital, bringing powerful forms of resistance that urban residents did not know, or had forgotten.

Whatever happens to the Arevalo government, this change in the engagement and psychology of the Guatemalan people, and the renewed public leadership of the ancestral authorities, are significant developments that greatly improve prospects for recognition of human rights and land rights.



Photo: Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence

NATIONAL GLOBAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBER JENNIFER LEBLANC (CENTRE) MAKING TORTILLAS AT THE HOME OF COMMUNITY LEADER ISABEL OSORIO (LEFT) IN PACUX, GUATEMALA, MAY 2024. ISABEL AND HER HUSBAND JESUS TECU OSORIO ARE SURVIVORS OF THE RIO NEGRO MASSACRES.



CUPE REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT, NOVA SCOTIA NAN MCFADGEN WITH THEN-KPTU VICE-PRESIDENT JUNGIL YOON (LEFT) AND THEN-DIRECTOR OF THE KPTU EDUCATION CENTRE KYUNGKYU YANG (RIGHT), JULY 2023.

Photo: CUPE

SOUTH KOREA

A CUPE delegation exchanged lessons and experiences at an international labour forum on labour education held in Seoul, South Korea in July 2023. The forum was organized by the Korean Public Service and Transport Workers' Union (KPTU) and the KPTU Education Centre, "Woom."

The KPTU is South Korea's largest union representing workers in the public sector, transport industry, and social services. KPTU members work in many industries and occupations including energy, social protection (national pension and health insurance), health care, and education.

The forum aimed to help KPTU education activists understand international labour education programs, learn how international unions conduct and create education programs in changing political contexts such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the climate crisis, and build relationships with international union activists.

CUPE shared about how we transitioned from in-person to online learning during the pandemic. Our delegation also outlined our education philosophy, system and programs, and demonstrated our workshops with KPTU activists and staff.

Delegation members visited the Seoul Public Agency for Social Service and the Seoul National University Hospital and met with KPTU leaders and members in their workplaces. The visit coincided with KPTU members' successful campaign to stop the closure of several public community and child care centres, part of an important struggle in the social services sector.

Our visit reinforced the importance of international solidarity in our struggle to protect public services and strengthen union power.

BANGLADESH CENTER FOR WORKERS SOLIDARITY

April 24, 2024, marked 11 years since the collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This terrible and avoidable tragedy killed 1,134 workers and injured more than 2,600, exposing the horrific working conditions for millions of workers in an unregulated industry, not only in Bangladesh but in dozens of other countries as well.

This tragedy spurred years of global initiatives and campaigns. Echoing the demands of survivors and families of the victims, these efforts aimed to hold international fashion brands responsible for the horrendous conditions of work and poverty wages in their supply chains. Campaigns also called on governments to uphold global labour and health and safety standards and to enshrine human and labour rights protections, including the right to form unions and the right to collective bargaining, in trade and investment agreements.

Despite years of globally coordinated efforts to bring improvements to factory safety in the sector, progress in many areas has been far too slow for workers and activists. A hopeful step has been the coordinated pressure that forced international brands and retailers to sign the Bangladesh Accord for Building and Fire Safety and compensate victims of the Rana Plaza collapse.

To truly improve the situation, workers' rights must be addressed globally alongside ongoing commitments to ensure factory safety, starting with ensuring workers' ability to organize collectively. Bangladeshi workers and labour rights activists continue to be killed and criminalized for protesting poverty wages, for trying to join or form unions, and for calling for an end to discrimination against women workers.

CUPE and other Canadian unions have been working with Bangladesh labour organizations and unions since before the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster to promote better conditions of work in the garment sector. We will continue to do so for as long as it takes to realize the justice and respect they deserve.



BANGLADESHI WORKERS TAKE PART IN A GLOBAL ACTION TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, DECEMBER 2023.

Photo: Bangladesh Centre for Workers' Solidarity/X

Working with our allies

CUPE REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT, ONTARIO YOLANDA MCLEAN AND CUPE NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CANDACE RENNICK DURING UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN MEETINGS, MARCH 2024.



Photo: Hatnim Lee

DEMONSTRATORS RALLYING FOR AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE
IN GAZA, DURING UNCSW MEETINGS, MARCH 2024.

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The 68th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women concluded with governments across the globe committing to step up progress on women’s equality. CUPE joined over 100 other union women in an international labour delegation that held governments to account on ending and preventing women’s poverty, the key theme for 2024.

Governments spent two weeks negotiating an agreement to uphold international human rights for women and take meaningful actions that advance women’s equality and prevent women’s poverty. The labour delegation lobbied government negotiators to ensure our demands were reflected in their ‘agreed conclusions’ document.

Strong unions and quality public services are key to ending and preventing women’s poverty. The final agreement between governments includes a commitment to fundamental labour rights, including the right to form a union and the right to bargain collectively. It also recognizes the importance of International Labour Organization standards to end discrimination at work.

The agreement incorporates strong language on public services and the care economy and highlights the need for progressive taxation systems that make corporations pay their fair share. Specific language focuses on the need to end the systemic oppression experienced by Indigenous women, women of African descent, women with disabilities and migrant women.

CUPE delegates also joined a rally of women activists across from UN headquarters to express anger and anguish about the death and suffering of women, children and innocent civilians in Palestine, and to call for an immediate ceasefire.

PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL

People over profit in a world of multiple crises was the theme of the Public Services International 31st World Congress held in Geneva, Switzerland. CUPE is a member of PSI, the global trade union federation representing over 20 million public sector workers in more than 700 unions in 163 countries and territories.

CUPE GENERAL VICE-PRESIDENT, ONTARIO FRED HAHN SPEAKS DURING A PSI WORLD CONGRESS DEBATE THAT ESTABLISHED A GLOBAL LGBTQI+ COMMITTEE, OCTOBER 2023.



Photo: Public Services International



CUPE GENERAL VICE-PRESIDENT FOR THE EAST, SHERRY HILLIER, NATIONAL PRESIDENT MARK HANCOCK, AND EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ANNICK DESJARDINS IN SOLIDARITY WITH KPTU MEMBERS PREPARING TO STRIKE, DURING THE PSI WORLD CONGRESS, OCTOBER 2023.

Leaders and activists at the 2023 congress shared strategies and strengthened our collective struggle for quality public services and trade union rights around the world.

CUPE delegation members participated in forums for municipal and LGBTQI+ workers and spoke about the benefits of publicly owned care facilities on a panel about bringing public services back in house.

Delegates adopted a five-year action plan. The plan focuses on global issues including Israel's ongoing occupation of Palestine, union responses to the climate crisis, strategies to transform care work, the effects of digitalization on workers, the role of public services in the economy, and strategies for union organizing.

INC-4 NEGOTIATIONS

In April 2024, Canada hosted the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) on plastic pollution. The Ottawa meeting was supposed to advance the UN Environment Programme’s work to develop an international treaty to address the global plastic pollution crisis, including its impacts on oceans. CUPE joined a delegation that included representatives of PSI, the International Trade Union Confederation and the International Labour Organization.

Delegates from around the world negotiated language to stop the onslaught of plastics and microplastics choking the rivers, lakes and oceans that are essential for the survival of all life on earth. Indigenous delegates and members of the scientific community raised critical issues and urged states to take bold action.

The ILO and ITUC highlighted the importance of workers’ rights and called for the treaty to include just transition language to address workplace changes. PSI reminded delegates about the vital role public waste collection plays around the world protecting public health and the environment.

MEMBERS OF THE LABOUR DELEGATION TO THE INC-4
INTERNATIONAL PLASTICS TREATY NEGOTIATIONS IN
OTTAWA, APRIL 2024.



Photo: Public Services International

The negotiations ended without including the bold language and ideas from the labour delegation or Indigenous communities. Several negotiating countries used procedural tactics to delay any real progress. CUPE will follow the final negotiations in South Korea in November and will continue to advocate with our international partners for a strong treaty that protects the planet, supports workers and advocates for public services.

SOLIDARITY WITH TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS

CUPE has members working under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and their numbers are increasing. In April 2024, our union launched *Temporary Foreign Workers in our union: A solidarity and action guide*. The guide will help local executives and bargaining teams support temporary foreign workers and strengthen our union.

Canada brings workers from other countries to meet short-term regional and sectoral labour needs in sectors such as health care, agriculture, food processing, retail service and construction. When temporary foreign workers take a unionized job in a CUPE workplace, they are covered by existing collective agreements.

Temporary foreign workers working alongside CUPE members in the same local have different working conditions because of their precarious immigration status and work permits that tie them to one job.

CUPE's guide outlines specific actions locals can take to support temporary foreign workers and provides tools locals can use to monitor the treatment of migrant workers in the workplace. The guide is part of a broader fight for justice for migrant workers, and all workers, that must take place in our workplaces, in legislatures, and in the streets.

NATIONAL GLOBAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE
MEMBER CHERYL BURBIDGE READS CUPE'S
TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER SOLIDARITY
GUIDE AT THE CUPE NOVA SCOTIA DIVISION
CONVENTION, MAY 2024.



Photo: Kelly Clark

Mobilizing for a better world

International solidarity and worker-to-worker exchanges connect us to workers and activists on the front lines of vital struggles. We are always learning important lessons from our friends, allies and comrades all over the world, and their courage fuels our determination to keep fighting for a better world.

In a world fraught with conflict and intolerance, solidarity provides us with the opportunity to harness the potential of our shared humanity and the beauty of our shared aspiration for a world where justice and equality are the priority.

Without exception, where there are right wing and authoritarian governments, there are trade unions, social movements and courageous communities resisting in profound and significant ways with a vision of peace and solidarity. 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, democracy, peace and climate justice.

We are proud to stand in solidarity with the working class, trade unions, Indigenous peoples, women's groups, migrant workers, the 2SLGBTQI+ community and young people. 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.

COMMUNITY LEADER ISABEL OSORIO IN PACUX,
GUATEMALA, ACCEPTING GIFTS FROM CUPE PRINCE
EDWARD ISLAND, MAY 2024.



CUPE 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