

Newsflash

Trade Union Alliance to Combat Forced Labour and Trafficking



Dear friends,

This is a newsletter of the Global Trade Union Alliance to Combat Forced Labour and Trafficking. It is aimed at everyone interested and contains information about and for trade union activities to combat forced labour and human trafficking around the world. The Alliance is led by the International Trade Union Confederation and financially supported by the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour of the International Labour Organisation. It promotes decent work for all and, more specifically, geographical and institutional commitment and cooperation to eradicating forced labour and human trafficking as its very antithesis.

[ITUC](#) WTO reports on Core Labour Standards:

[Maldives](#)

[Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland](#)

[Georgia](#)

[Niger and Senegal](#)

[Chile](#)

The French [CGT](#), alerted the police to the situation of several Romanian and Polish women workers hired to harvest asparagus and strawberries in the Alsace region of France. Women were only paid about 18 Euros per month and housed in buildings that looked like caves. CGT spokesman André Hemmerlé said: "We know that one worker, who had been working for 10 days, received only six euro because she was charged for transportation, accommodation and food costs." CGT calls their labour conditions 'inhumane' and 'slave-like'. (Source: [Euronews](#))

The [Pan-European Council of the ITUC is working closely with Anti-Slavery and LaStrada to build a European coalition](#) to combat trafficking for labour exploitation in the region. Some officers [talk](#) about recruitments agencies. "The migrant workers are in debt and have to stay to earn money to help people back home. They are willing to work in slavery and these job agencies know that." Several groups have called for a crackdown on mafia-run job agencies.

The Dutch [FNV Bondgenoten](#) has published an [article](#) (in Dutch) on Polish women strawberry pickers on strike as they were sanctioned e.g. €250 when using the toilet or having visitors in the weekend outside "consultation hours". The Dutch FNV calls their living and working conditions "inhumane" and negotiates € 115,000 in back wages and provides the workers with transport home. Also see the [blog](#) (in Dutch) on modern slavery.

Despite the risk of torture and imprisonment, trade unionists operate underground to come to the aid of Burmese workers. They inform thousands of people about their rights and help to fight against forced labour, a scourge still widespread under the military regime. Burmese



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trade unionists also assist migrant workers in Thailand. **ITUC** published a [new report](#) and an additional [report](#) focusing on the specific impact on children. The ITUC has [accepted into affiliation](#) at its annual General Council meeting in Berlin on 6 – 8 October, the **FTUB** Burma, which is forced to operate in part outside the country due to the repressive policies of the military junta, and published an [interview](#) with Maung Maung, it's General Secretary. "The problem is that the regime's mindset has not changed. It wants everyone to think that it is doing everything it can to fight against forced labour, but it is not." The [Karen Human Rights Group](#) (KHRG) which is documenting the situation of villagers in rural Burma has published a [new bulletin](#) on the forced recruitment of child soldiers by the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). On the [AsiaNews website](#), we can read that a member of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma ([NCGUB](#)) set up by Burmese refugees who fled the country after the 1990 elections, Mr Tint Swe, said that the recent [UN resolution against Burma](#) and the report by the ILO accusing Burma of using [forced labour and child soldiers](#) are rituals that will not effect change in his country. ([Whole article](#))

In the [IUF](#) website, you can download a [report](#) of a roundtable on forced and child labour in Central Asia which took place in Geneva on 11 June 2009. On [Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#), you can read that the fifth International cotton fair involving 300 companies from 33 countries has been held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. "The participants do not care about many Western organisations that have called for the boycott of Uzbek cotton because it is produced involving forced child labour. They said that they would care only about the quality and price of cotton!"

The Italian [CGIL](#) (only in Italian) and **FLAI (Federation of Agriculture and Food Workers)** organised a [campaign](#) (only in Italian) on the farm workers' conditions in the southern region of Puglia, entitled "*Red gold, from fiction to reality*". Forty union representatives went around in rural Capitanata (Foggia province) to inform over 5,000 labourers harvesting tomato about their rights and to listen to them about particular needs and requests. Instead of the 46 euro for a 6.5 hour day, people were working 14 hours daily with 3 euro wage per 300 kilo basket.

A campaign to challenge countries to end abuse of migrants by protecting their human rights will be launched around the world on 18 December. The campaign is launched by the **International Steering Committee for the Campaign for Ratification of the Migrants Rights Convention**, a unique network of UN agencies, international organizations and global civil society organizations. [Launch of 20th anniversary Global Campaign for Migrants Rights Convention](#)

To combat the exploitation of migrant workers in Argentina the **Argentinean General Workers' Confederation (CGT-RA)** (only in Spanish) is calling for freedom of movement for all people on a par with the free movement of capital. In this **ITUC** spotlight [interview](#), they explain the unions' work in providing information to migrants at the workplace and call for general policies to help workers avoid having to leave their countries to survive. You can also



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read the [perspective](#) of the Migration department of the **Central de los Trabajadores Argentinos (CTA)**. (only in Spanish)

At the 12th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) session, the **Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of Slavery**, its Causes and Consequences, Ms Gulnara Shahinian, has delivered her first thematic [report](#) focused on Debt Bondage.

As part of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, the US Department of Labor [released](#) a list of 122 goods from 58 countries that are produced by **forced and child labour**.

The OSCE organized a [high-level conference](#) in Vienna. The overall aim of the 9th Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons conference is to provide examples of best practices in preventing trafficking in human beings, reflecting the commitment of the OSCE participating States to come up with cross-cutting solutions to address the economic, social and political root causes of, and the demand for, commercial sex and labour exploitation.

[Belarus](#) has pushed forward the adoption of the global action plan to fight **trafficking in human beings** at the UN General Assembly on 23 September.

[ILO-IPEC](#) (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour), [UNICEF](#) and the Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking ([UN.GIFT](#)) launched the *Training manual to fight trafficking in children for labour, sexual and other forms of exploitation*. This [manual](#) on fighting trafficking is unique in that it specifically focuses on children and includes a special emphasis on labour issues. It complements the resource kit on child trafficking that the ILO launched in 2008.

In conjunction with the global week of action against precarious work, [IMF](#) has released a new [report](#) of a survey that focused on the experiences of migrant workers in the metal industry. The report is available on the IMF website in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

The US [AFL-CIO Solidarity Center](#) is publishing several [articles](#) on domestic workers on its website. Domestic workers are in a particularly vulnerable position often informally working in and sometimes confined to private homes. A new ILO Convention could help regulate their working situation and empower them.

In a [report](#), entitled *Disposable Labour: Rights of migrants workers in South Korea*, [Amnesty International](#) documented how many migrant workers in South Korea are beaten, trafficked for sexual exploitation and denied their wages for long periods despite the introduction of rules to protect their rights.

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The **ITUC**, the IOE and 30 governments from all around the world have [agreed](#) to urge ILO Member States for further ratifications of Convention 181 on private employment agencies to help boost global employment at a time of economic crisis.

[ITUC](#) spotlight [interview](#) with Cheung Lai-Ha, vice president of the **Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)**. *"We are also dealing with the cases of increasing numbers of migrant domestic workers who are beaten and abused by their employers. One of the HKCTU federations is specialised in defending them. It assists the victims with the legal procedures and gives them material support. Without this aid, the employer wouldn't be at any risk as his victim would be forced to return to her country, not having a work permit."*

Speaking at the **Irish Congress of Trade Unions ICTU** Global Solidarity Summer School, the Irish Minister of State for Overseas Development, Peter Power, committed funding of 3 million Euros to combat child labour, human trafficking and debt bondage in the developing world, channelled through the **ILO**. See full [statement](#).

[ITUC](#) spotlight [interview](#) with Marcelina Bautista, General Secretary of the **CONACTRAHO Confederation in Mexico**. *"When the women [domestic workers] are organised into unions or associations they learn about their rights and can try to negotiate better pay and working conditions individually. Our union runs a placement service and employers recruiting domestic workers through us are informed of their obligations. The reaction is not always positive... We offer domestic workers good training before they go to their first interview; we advise them on what they should try to negotiate. We then stay in touch with the worker and the employer to make sure that everything is going fine."*

The Bahrain GFBTU hosted an ITUC/AP-ILO Meeting on trafficking for labour exploitation. Click here to see a PowerPoint [presentation](#) of The General Trade Union of Workers in Textile Garment & Clothing Industries ([JTGCU](#)) in Jordan on their work to combat labour trafficking and some press coverage ([Gulf Daily](#) , [Trade Arabia](#), [Gulf in the media](#)).

The **British Government** has conceded that existing legislation fails to protect people from modern day slavery. [Anti-Slavery International](#) and Liberty lobbied jointly with the Gangmasters Licencing Authority, [Unite the Union](#) and the **TUC (UK)** for this change in the law as it was needed to protect over 1,000 people estimated to be in forced labour in the United Kingdom. The full [debate](#) from the House of Lords can be found here. On 5 November, the House of Lords agreed to an [amendment](#) to the Coroners and Justice Bill which will make forced labour and forced servitude a criminal offence.

The **TUC (UK)** is backing recommendations made by the Migration Advisory Committee to prevent employers exploiting migration. "But the Government must resist the temptation to pull up the drawbridge on foreign workers who can contribute hugely to public services, to the economy and to our society as a whole and we must all be careful not to bolster the myths about immigration which fuel racism and cause division."



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The [UNODC](#) published an article speaking about the third [Global Forum on Migration and Development](#), where Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the positive contribution made by migration and underlined the dangers posed by human trafficking and smuggling.

[ITUC](#) spotlight [interview](#) ([FR](#), [SP](#)) with Sergejus Glovackas, the Vilnius Office representative for the ITUC's **Pan-European Regional Council (PERC)**. *"The Baltic states have lost a lot of their citizens to migration recently. Trade unions have lost a lot of potential members."*

The current [OSCE](#) Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms Eva Biaudet, was appointed in October 2006. This second [Annual Report](#), entitled *2007: A Platform for action*, covers her work between January and October 2007.

[IUF](#) - International day of mobilization for domestic workers

[Ibrahim Awad](#), Director of the International Migration Programme at the [ILO](#), has published a new [study](#) entitled "The global economic crisis and migrant workers: Impact and response". Another recent [ILO publication](#) gives insight on the gender dimension of migrant domestic workers in Europe.

CNN [reports](#) on bonded labour in Pakistan's brick kilns.

[MRCI](#), in conjunction with [ICTU](#) and the **Anti-Human Trafficking Unit** of the Dept. of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, held a [seminar](#) on Strategies for Tackling Forced Labour.

The Centre for Ethics & Value Inquiry of the University of Ghent in Belgium organised the [Labour & Global Justice Conference 2009](#) to draw attention to labour issues emerging as explicit justice issues within the context of globalisation.

ITUC [mourns](#) the passing of global trade union leader **Neil Kearney** in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Born in 1950 in Donegal, Ireland, Neil Kearney served as General Secretary of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation ([ITGLWF](#)) since 1988. In his long and distinguished service to the trade union movement, Neil Kearney achieved many notable successes in improving the wages and working conditions of some of the most exploited workers in the world, in a sector where workers have borne the brunt of the worst excesses of globalisation. Neil Kearney was among many other things instrumental in bringing about the Global Trade Union Alliance to Combat Forced Labour.

If you know other people interested in the issue please forward this newsletter and invite them to subscribe by emailing lyris@forum.ituc-csi.org and write "subscribe forcedlabour" in the message body or send an email to forcedlabour@ituc-csi.org.



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You are kindly invited to send any relevant information to be included in the next issue.

For more information please contact forcedlabour@ituc-csi.org

Website: www.ituc-csi.org/forcedlabour

