



credit: Tom Lebert



credit: Tai King



# up front

spring / summer 2016 waronwant.org

## DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK CRACKDOWN ON BDS

## Guns for hire: the return of the 'dogs of war'

TTIP, CETA & Tax update



FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

# WELCOME



As War on Want turns 65, the brutal reality facing human rights defenders across the world has never been starker. We dedicate this edition of *Up Front* to the memory of indigenous activist Berta Cáceres, a courageous leader shot dead in her home in Honduras simply for defending her community. In this edition, read about the UK government's assault on our democratic rights and how the crackdown on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is intensifying. Read too about how a Colombian trade unionist is fighting back against the violence of 'Big Oil', and how garment workers in Sri Lanka are paying a high price making cheap clothes for the UK high street.

After 65 years, we're still fighting strong. It's only thanks to our supporters that we can continue to be independent and fight for a better world. I hope this edition of *Up Front* inspires you with evidence of the impact we make together.

*John Hilary*  
John Hilary  
Executive Director



FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

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# DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK

One of the convictions that has inspired War on Want since its founding 65 years ago is that 'Poverty is Political'.

**We see the injustice and inequality that plague our world as a direct result of political choices made by government and corporate elites in their own interest.**

By the same token, we know that it is organised political action by movements of ordinary people that can change the world for the better. That is why War on Want considers the right to protest so important: without it, we will never realise our vision of a world free from poverty and human rights violation.

Today, our right to protest is under attack. The Lobbying Act introduced in 2014 has already functioned as a 'Gagging Law', making it more difficult for civil society groups to campaign in the run-up to elections. In addition, charities such as War on Want are now to be banned from using public money to lobby for better laws and regulations, despite the fact that the Charity Commission says this is one of the best ways we can bring about long-term change.

War on Want was born out of the labour movement, and we are proud that all major UK trade unions are affiliated to War on Want today. The right of ordinary people to take collective action in defence of better working conditions is a cornerstone of our democracy. Yet the government's new Trade Union Bill will torpedo basic freedoms such as the right to withhold labour, undermining the very principle of collective bargaining. Even the government's own regulatory committee has condemned the Bill as "not fit for purpose".

The reality facing trade unions in other countries around the world is worse still. Many courageous women and men on the front line in the fight for workers' rights have been physically attacked by state forces for standing up to the power of capital. Several have faced long jail sentences, and some have paid with their lives. Yet still the struggle continues, and War on Want is



proud to work in partnership with trade unionists in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, China, Colombia and more.

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people is also under attack. As you can read in this issue of *Up Front*, the UK government is cracking down on local councils' use of ethical procurement guidelines against companies that trade with Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories – despite the fact that the government recognises those settlements to be illegal. This is nothing compared to the brutal repression faced by the Palestinian people themselves at the hands of the Israeli occupying forces, but it is a clear threat to the movement for peace with justice in Palestine.

Nor is it just these attacks on our basic freedoms. Under the government's Prevent strategy, widely seen as an attack on Muslim communities in the UK, police questioned a 17 year-old boy in Luton for wearing a 'Free Palestine' badge at school. In addition, the USA has now stipulated that EU countries must ban local BDS action as part of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – yet another reason for rejecting an agreement that spells the end of democracy.

War on Want will join with trade unionists, Palestine solidarity campaigners and other activists to fight back against these attempts to silence us. Only by protecting our right to dissent and free expression will we be able to continue our work for social justice around the world.

## Berta Cáceres: shot dead for defending her community



© Goldman Environmental Prize

For human rights defenders across the world, the fight for justice is frequently met with brutal repression and all too often the tragic and needless loss of life. War on Want pays tribute to indigenous Lenca leader Berta Cáceres, shot dead in her home in Honduras in the early hours of 3 March 2016. Berta Cáceres was a leader of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras (COPINH), and led the successful grassroots resistance to the Agua Zarca dam that threatened the Lenca community of Rio Blanco. Her courage and determination won her the Goldman Environmental Prize in 2015, whose commendation recognised the continuing threat to her life. War on Want had consistently called on the Honduran authorities to guarantee the safety of Berta Cáceres and other human rights defenders from the Lenca community. We will honour the memory of such an inspirational and courageous leader, and will demand an end to all violence against human rights defenders and indigenous activists in Honduras.

**Read more: [waronwant.org/Berta-Caceres](http://waronwant.org/Berta-Caceres)**

# “They’d kill me if I went back to Colombia”

‘Big Oil’ is a violent business, Colombian trade union activist, Gilberto Torres, knows only too well.

*Kidnapped and tortured by paramilitaries in 2002, Gilberto was held for 42 days and released after fellow oil workers shut down pumping stations and refineries across Colombia in protest.*

Gilberto believes his abduction was ordered and assisted by the security arm of Ocesa, a joint venture pipeline company at the time part owned and operated by BP. Seeking justice, and with support from the Oil Justice initiative – a collaboration between War on Want, UK law firm Deighton Pierce Glynn and Colombian grassroots organisation COSPACC – he is taking the oil giant to the High Court in London.

Colombia possesses huge natural wealth and is the second most biodiverse country in the world. However, its natural bounty has proved a curse. Against the backdrop of civil war, big oil companies are devastating rural communities: their operations have forced people from their land, polluted the environment and led to widespread human rights violations.

According to the Colombia Human Rights Data Analysis Group, since BP and other companies began operating in the oil rich state of Casanare, central Colombia, in the

early 1990s, some 12,000 people have been murdered or disappeared.

During a recent speaker tour of the UK, organised by War on Want, Gilberto spoke of the human rights abuses in the extractive industry, and how time and again community activists and trade unionists are targeted. “Since the oil companies came, every time a community activist or trade union member stands up to challenge human rights abuses or damage to the environment, they are threatened, attacked and in some cases murdered. I hold the multinationals responsible for this,” said Gilberto.

His lawyer, Susan Willman of Deighton Pierce Glynn, said: “Stricter laws are needed in the UK to deter multinationals like BP from investing in conflict zones like Colombia where their presence will be associated with atrocities. At the very least, victims like Gilberto deserve access to a remedy in our courts.”

Gilberto now lives in exile. “They’d kill me if I went back to Colombia,” he says. Find out more on our website: [waronwant.org/profitting-conflict](http://waronwant.org/profitting-conflict)



credit: Kristian Buus



# Sri Lanka's garment workers: paying a high price for cheap clothes

*Behind the electrified fences of Sri Lanka's free trade zones are factories full of women, paying a high price for making the cheap clothes sold on the UK high street. War on Want's Thulsi Narayanasamy explains.*

I met Disna at the union headquarters close to one of Sri Lanka's many free trade zones. The two-storey building sits along a narrow pot-holed path, lined with coconut trees and humming with mosquitoes. She was already there when I arrived: sitting carefully holding her bandaged fingers with her left hand. Disna has been a garment worker in factories since she was 16. There were few options for paid work in her village.

On the day of her accident, her boss told her she was not to take her usual place at the sewing machine. Instead, she was ordered to operate the notoriously dangerous button machine: a large steel contraption which operates by rapidly punching buttons onto clothing. Everyone knew the risks of operating the machine: there was no safety equipment. Disna refused at first but was told if she wanted to keep her job, she'd have to work the machine.

Slowly and deliberately she set to work. Soon after, she stopped to check whether a button was properly attached. Without warning the machine punched down, crushing her hand. Disna collapsed in pain.

It took her fellow workers some time to free her from the tangle of wires that lay on the floor around her work station. Today, Disna keeps her arm tightly bandaged, and is in constant pain. She completely lost the use of her right hand and arm, and the extensive nerve damage gives her permanent migraines. In what should be a straightforward

case, the factory and brand are refusing to offer compensation. Disna's case is one of many.

Sri Lanka is a signatory to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions which require all workers to have the right to organise unions in their workplaces. Yet despite the rhetoric from local and foreign clothing brands on their commitment to workers' rights, the stark reality for women like Disna remains long hours, poverty pay and scant regard for safety.

Most of Sri Lanka's garment factories are located within the country's free trade zones. Here security is tight and intent on keeping workers insulated from the influence of trade unions, and so learning about their rights enshrined in national and international law.

Disna would be alone, with ongoing medical expenses and no support, if it were not for the union fighting her corner and taking her case to court.

The ongoing work of War on Want partner Free Trade Zones & General Services Employees Union (FTZ&GSEU) has been vital in raising awareness of workers' rights. Thanks to training, garment workers are now refusing to accept unsafe working conditions or abuse by their bosses: together they are fighting back.

# Government crackdown on local democracy

In November 2015, the government announced a proposal to block local councils in England and Wales from deciding how to invest their pension funds. Under the new plan, the government will have the power to veto investment decisions made locally on ethical grounds in relation to human rights, arms trade, fossil fuels and other issues of concern.

Local authority divestment campaigns were a central part of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the 1980s and an effective response to the Thatcher government's failure to act on the systematic racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa. Across the UK, ordinary people stepped up, organised, and by 1985 over 120 local councils had taken action to end their ties with Apartheid. The people were winning, Thatcher was losing. Her answer: shut down the democratic space. In 1988 she imposed broad new restrictions on councils taking 'political action'.

Thirty years on, the government is once more trying to shut down local democracy.

This is an outrageous assault on our democratic rights and War on Want is leading the fightback. Our campaign to 'Protect Local Democracy' prompted over 26,000 people to respond to the government consultation, rejecting the anti-democratic plan. The fight to protect local democracy is only just beginning.

The government proposal comes at a time when the BDS movement is having unprecedented success.

More people than ever are taking action in their universities, churches, trade unions and local communities to end their complicity with Israeli Apartheid. Recently, the American United Methodist Church declared the five largest Israeli banks off-limits for investment, French telecom giant Orange terminated its Israeli contracts, and Irish multinational CRH divested its share from the Israeli company supplying concrete for the Apartheid Wall. We've had great news that G4S has also bowed to pressure, and is selling its entire Israeli business. You can read more about this fantastic win on page 11.



All of these victories are the result of hard-fought public campaigns. Watch this space for the next phase of the fightback.

More questions? Our 'Protect Local Democracy' Q&A has the answers: [waronwant.org/local-democracy](http://waronwant.org/local-democracy)

## What does the government's 'boycott ban' really mean?

The government recently announced new guidance for public bodies concerning which companies get public contracts. The media machine went into overdrive, coining the phrase 'boycott ban' and reporting that local councils, university student unions and other institutions would be criminalised for boycotting suppliers on ethical grounds. However, while the guidance is clearly designed to have a chilling effect on boycott campaigns and to satisfy an Israeli government that is demanding, and in some cases bankrolling, crackdowns on BDS around the world, it does not ban boycotts. The imminent threat to BDS remains the government's plan to block local councils from divesting on ethical grounds.

Find out more: [waronwant.org/boycott-ban](http://waronwant.org/boycott-ban)

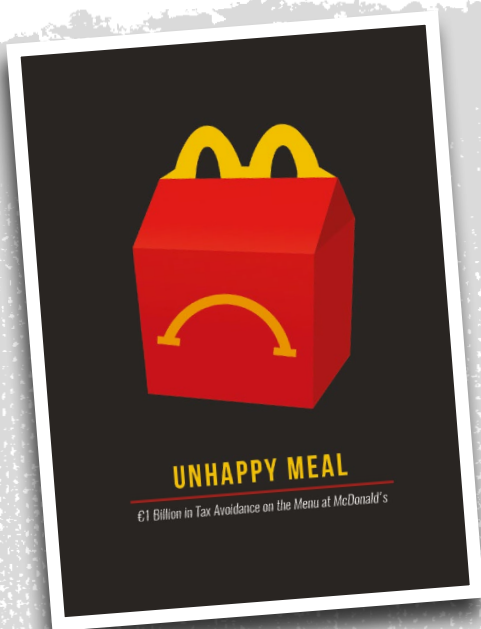
# Workers' rights on the menu: "I believe that we will win"

The chants thundered across London as War on Want joined UK and US fast food workers at McDonald's, Whitehall, as part of a global campaign for fast food workers' rights. Workers in the US fast food industry have mounted a record number of strikes in recent years, leading walk outs in over 200 cities and inspiring fellow workers from over 30 countries to join their call for a living wage and right to join a union. War on Want is proud to offer our solidarity to the US FightFor15 and UK Hungry for Justice campaigns. Watch our video and find more photos at: [waronwant.org/fast-food-rights](http://waronwant.org/fast-food-rights)



## 'Spoof' tax video: The horrors of a future where companies don't pay tax

Our recent video stretched reality to illustrate what the near future might look like if the government really did go all the way and get rid of tax on business. The spoof showed how this would be at the expense of us all. The reality is when tax revenue goes down, essential services such as health and education are cut ever deeper. It doesn't have to be this way. **Share this video and join our struggle for Tax Justice!** [waronwant.org/tax-justice-now](http://waronwant.org/tax-justice-now)



## Taxpayers are Lovin' It: European Commission investigates McDonald's

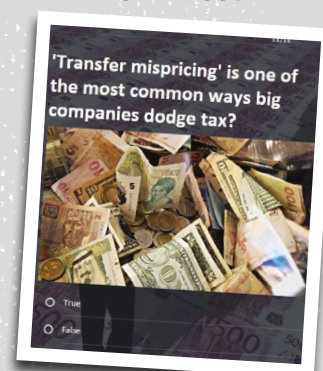
Our campaign for tax justice notched up another win when the European Commission announced its investigation into McDonald's shady tax affairs, following a War on Want report. We revealed a €1 billion tax dodge that couldn't be ignored! Owen Espley, Senior Economic Justice Campaigner at War on Want, said: "For too long McDonald's has been driving-thru without paying; creaming off profits and serving an unhappy meal of poverty wages and zero hour contracts. While public services are cut, the EU allows multinationals to pitch country against country in a race to the bottom. It's high time the EU supersized action on tax." Read our report: *Unhappy Meal - €1 Billion in Tax Avoidance on the Menu* [waronwant.org/unhappy-meal](http://waronwant.org/unhappy-meal)

## TAKE ACTION

Support our Tax Transparency Now petition calling for the EU to introduce country by country reporting that would give the public, not just tax authorities, access to information about where companies do business, earn their profits and pay their taxes. [waronwant.org/CbC](http://waronwant.org/CbC)

## Are you a tax justice super sleuth?

Take our online quiz to find out:  
[waronwant.org/TaxQuiz](http://waronwant.org/TaxQuiz)



# Business Against TTIP

British business owners have joined the growing campaign against the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The launch of the new Business Against TTIP platform in Britain, fronted by Entrepreneur of the Year Titus Sharpe, follows similar anti-TTIP initiatives in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. TTIP will force UK businesses into unfair competition with US firms with lower standards and lower costs, with the predicted loss of at least 680,000 jobs across Europe. Hundreds of UK businesses have already signed up to Business Against TTIP, calling on the UK government and European Commission to halt TTIP negotiations. Why not approach a local business and ask them to join the initiative?

Find materials online [waronwant.org/order-free-materials](http://waronwant.org/order-free-materials)



## CETA: destroying democracy

CETA is a major new trade deal currently being finalised between the EU and Canada. It stands for the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, and it represents one of the 'new generation' of trade treaties set to undermine our democracy and destroy our basic rights. Only multinational corporations stand to benefit from it. CETA is a dry run for TTIP, so if you're worried about TTIP, you need to be worried about CETA. Members of the European Parliament will soon be voting on whether or not to ratify CETA. We need to keep up the pressure on them to reject this dangerous deal.

More about CETA: [waronwant.org/ceta](http://waronwant.org/ceta)



Petition hand in: War on Want member, Teresa Loy, with War on Want trade campaigner, Mark Dearn. European Commission offices, London.



## TTIP and CETA: 3.4 million say NO!

Thanks to members, supporters and activists across Europe we collected a record 3.4 million signatures, including 500,000 in the UK alone, in opposition to TTIP and CETA, the EU-Canada trade deal.

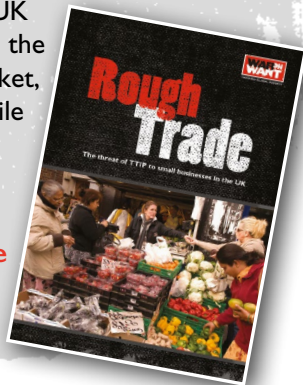


# TTIP offers small businesses nothing

War on Want's new report *Rough Trade: The threat of TTIP to small businesses* reveals why TTIP is a bonanza for big business, but a nightmare for everyone else. TTIP will grant US corporations greater access to the markets of Europe without having to comply with the same level of social and environmental regulation as in the EU. Thousands of firms could fold if US corporations are allowed into our markets without having to abide by EU rules.

Only a tiny minority (0.5%) of UK small businesses are involved in the export of goods to the US market, according to official figures, while most are more concerned with protecting their home markets.

Read our new report: [waronwant.org/RoughTrade](http://waronwant.org/RoughTrade)



# Food safety rules in danger: **Death on a plate**

TTIP poses a grave threat to the food we eat, and it is why War on Want has teamed up with trade union UNISON to produce the hard-hitting film 'Death on a plate: TTIP, meat inspections and your food'. As part of the trade deal, the EU wants to end port inspections of imported meat products, even when lives are threatened by new outbreaks of BSE, e-coli, salmonella and other fatal diseases. At the same time, the EU is planning to put an end to independent meat inspections in Britain and other European countries, despite fears this will lead to new outbreaks of food poisoning and thousands of food-related deaths. **Watch and share the video: [waronwant.org/death-on-a-plate](http://waronwant.org/death-on-a-plate)**

Norah Nash, whose daughter Joanna died from eating contaminated meat.



# T-TIP that dirty deal **down the plughole**

War on Want teamed up with cosmetics store Lush and fashion designer Vivienne Westwood to launch a unique TTIP 'shower powder' which promised to help "T-TIP that dirty deal down the plughole". The TTIP 'showder', sold in a box designed by Vivienne Westwood, was launched at the Lush flagship store in Oxford Street, London. In total, 276 Lush shops across 14 European countries promoted the box and No TTIP campaign in their store windows. Proceeds from sales provided much needed support to groups campaigning against TTIP in Europe.

Watch our video [waronwant.org/showder](http://waronwant.org/showder)



## Battle tested on Palestinians, on sale in London

● Every two years one of the world's biggest arms fairs comes to London. More than 1,000 companies showcase their weapons and make deadly deals. The Israeli military industry plays a leading role. Israel's brutal military occupation of Palestine is only made possible through international support: from governments and from the many international corporations that profit from the Occupation. That's why we are calling for the UK to stop trading arms with Israel. Watch now: our video from the 'Stop Arming Israel' day of action [waronwant.org/stop-arming-israel](http://waronwant.org/stop-arming-israel)



## Hunger: a political problem

● The crisis in the global food system is a result of deliberate political choices that favour corporate interests while condemning small farmers, fisher folk, pastoralists and indigenous people to despair. Food sovereignty returns control over the global food system to small scale producers, and can feed the world with nutritious, healthy food produced sustainably at a fair price. Supported by the Alistair Berkley Charitable Trust, War on Want has just completed a two year project in Kenya and Mozambique to help farmers trade seeds and knowledge, learn about sustainable agroecology and fight land grabs by big business. War on Want believes in food for people, not food for profit. **Find out more: The seven principles of food sovereignty [waronwant.org/food-sovereignty](http://waronwant.org/food-sovereignty)**

## No to nuclear: Scrap Trident

● War on Want says no to replacing Britain's nuclear weapons system. 2016 is the key year because parliament will decide on Trident renewal. Trident is a waste of over £100 billion: enough to fully fund A&E services for 40 years, employ 150,000 new nurses, build 1.5 million affordable homes, build 30,000 new primary schools, or cover tuition fees for 4 million students. Trident renewal is a criminal act and the UK should make a clear statement for global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation by not renewing the system. We must create genuine security for now and future generations through non-military solutions to conflict, and tackling the root causes of poverty and human rights violations worldwide.

**Find out more: [waronwant.org/profitting-conflict](http://waronwant.org/profitting-conflict)**

## Solidarity: Free the Chinese labour rights activists!

● War on Want was proud to join a global day of action calling for the release of labour rights activists in China. Bangladeshi garment workers and our partner the National Garment Workers' Federation (NGWF) showed their support too. The recent government crackdown on the labour rights movement in China is another body blow for workers already forced to work excessively long hours in appalling conditions, for poverty pay. Meanwhile, UK high street retailers such as Disney Store continue to profit from the repression of labour rights activists and trade unions which keeps wages low. Our partners in China are working hard to defend the rights of workers.

**Find out more: [waronwant.org/workers-rights](http://waronwant.org/workers-rights)**



Bangladesh garment workers send messages of solidarity

credit: Rainbow Collective



War on Want outside the China Embassy, London

# Campaigning works: G4S bows to public pressure



● G4S, the world's largest private security company, is to sell its entire Israeli business. The announcement follows a four year long global campaign, targeting G4S over its complicity in Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. G4S provides equipment and services to Israeli prisons, where Palestinian political prisoners are held in violation of international law, often without charge or trial, and subject to torture. G4S also provides equipment to Israeli military checkpoints along the illegal Apartheid Wall. Campaigners have repeatedly exposed G4S abuses, and successfully organised student unions, universities, charities, restaurant chains, United Nations agencies and others, to boycott and divest from G4S until it ends its complicity in Israel's brutal regime. Whether it's supporting Israeli Apartheid, abusing children in its care or stoking violence against asylum seekers in the UK, for too long G4S has raked in the profits with scant regard for human rights.

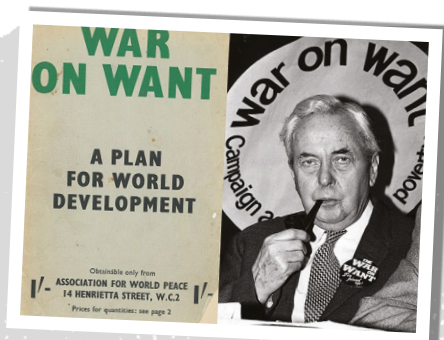
Find out more: [waronwant.org/g4s](http://waronwant.org/g4s)

## Sri Lanka: Two wins for the workers

● Thousands of Sri Lankan workers have successfully protested a government proposal to amend legislation that would seriously affect workers' pay, conditions and rights. This comes hot on the heels of the Sri Lankan government agreeing to pass minimum wage legislation for the first time for private sector workers. The Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Union (FTZ&GSEU) has been integral to these wins. War on Want is proud to call FTZ&GSEU our partner.

Find out more: [waronwant.org/workers-rights](http://waronwant.org/workers-rights)

## War on Want at 65:



Harold Wilson and his plan for world development

## The fight goes on

● On 12 February 1951, the *Manchester Guardian* carried a letter from Victor Gollancz calling for people to join him in an urgent campaign against world poverty and militarism. Britain was at that time fighting an imperialist war in Korea, and Gollancz asked all those who agreed with his call to end the conflict to send him a postcard marked with the single word 'Yes'. Within a month he had received 10,000 replies. The Association for World Peace was formed to meet the response and future Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson was tasked with drawing up a plan for world development. His report cited the yawning gap between the world's rich and poor and called for a popular movement to address that challenge. War on Want was born, and we've been fighting for justice ever since.

Find out more: [waronwant.org/our-history](http://waronwant.org/our-history)

## Guns for hire: the return of the 'dogs of war'

● Our new report, *Mercenaries Unleashed: The brave new world of private military and security companies*, reveals the changing face of warfare and how UK companies are reaping enormous profits from exploiting instability and conflict around the world.

Private military contractors ran amok in Iraq and Afghanistan, leaving a trail of human rights abuses in their wake. Today, we are seeing the alarming rise of mercenaries fighting on the front line in conflict zones across the world: it is the return of the 'dogs of war'. For too long this murky world of guns for hire has been allowed to grow unchecked. Private military and security companies remain unaccountable and unregulated. It is time the government introduced binding legislation and banned these companies from operating in conflict zones. It is time to end the privatisation of war. **Read our report: [waronwant.org/mercenaries-unleashed](http://waronwant.org/mercenaries-unleashed)**

