



up front

spring / summer 2015 waronwant.org

GENERAL ELECTION
**MAKE YOUR
VOICE HEARD**

TTIP we are
winning!

BDS+10 & Gaza update

**WAR
ON
WANT**

FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

WELCOME



The general election is upon us, and this edition of *Up Front* outlines the

key issues we should each raise with politicians when they come calling for our vote. We are also ramping up the campaign against TTIP, starting with our unmissable Manchester conference on 21 March. This July marks the 10th anniversary of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) call from Palestine, and you can read about our plans to use this moment in our campaign for justice for the Palestinian people. Plus a big welcome to all our new members receiving their first edition of *Up Front* – thank you for joining War on Want!

John Hilary

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Executive Director



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GENERAL ELECTION

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

The UK general election takes place on 7 May, and this means we have a unique chance to make politicians listen to our concerns. **Here are six War on Want questions to ask anyone who comes calling for your vote.**

On 7 May 2015, the UK goes to the polls. War on Want believes that poverty, inequality and injustice (in Britain and around the world) stem from political decisions made by elites, and that the only way to challenge them is through organised political action. The period leading up to a general election offers a golden opportunity to quiz parliamentary candidates on their politics, and to push our issues up the agenda.

How you vote is entirely up to you. However, each one of us should put our prospective parliamentary candidates on the spot when it comes to the key issues of global justice. Here are six of the best for when they call round asking for your vote – just make sure you get a straight answer from them, and please tell us of any positive commitments you receive!

SAY NO TO TTIP



1 No TTIP

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) currently being negotiated in secret between the EU and USA is one of the most dangerous threats to jobs, democracy and our common future. TTIP will undermine our most important social and environmental standards, and will hand big business new powers to challenge any policies that could limit their profits. Worse still, TTIP is designed to be the template for all future trade deals around the world, requiring other countries to grant transnational corporations the same powers even if it will destroy any chance of their future development. **The claims made for TTIP are entirely bogus, and any MP who believes in democracy and the rule of law should commit to voting against it when it comes to ratification.**

2 Mandatory living wage

Being paid a living wage guarantees every worker a basic standard of living and the chance to work their way out of poverty. Because it is still a voluntary option, 5.2 million UK workers are paid less than a living wage, and that number is growing. Together with its trade union affiliates, War on Want believes that the living wage should be changed from a voluntary measure into a mandatory requirement, both in the UK and in the global supply chains serving British retailers.

This single move could do more to eradicate poverty than any other action, and your MP should support it.



THE TAX DODGING BILL



**STOP
COMPANIES
DODGING TAX
IN THE UK**

**STOP
UK COMPANIES
DODGING TAX IN
POOR COUNTRIES**



TAX DODGING
REAL

3 Tax justice now

Corporate tax scandals have made the issue of tax dodging into a hot political issue over the past few years, even while the government has introduced new loopholes enabling companies to avoid paying the tax they owe. War on Want believes that all corporations should be required to pay their taxes in full, wherever they operate in the world. **Ask your candidates if they will support our new Tax Dodging Bill to raise revenue for crucial public services and anti-poverty programmes everywhere.**

4 Corporate accountability

The past 40 years have seen a massive transfer of power to transnational corporations operating in the global economy, free from any accountability for their actions. The UK government has consistently blocked any move towards corporate accountability at the international level, arguing for big business to adopt 'corporate social responsibility' programmes on a voluntary basis instead. **The UN's new move towards a binding framework on business and human rights is another attempt to overcome this blockage, and we need every incoming British MP to register support for that initiative.**



5 Justice for Palestine

Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people is one of the most egregious crimes of the 21st century, and War on Want is committed to the struggle for justice in Palestine. The UK's arms trade with Israel makes us complicit in Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people, including its murderous attacks on the civilian population of Gaza. War on Want is calling for an immediate two-way arms embargo as part of the campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) on Israel until it complies with international law. **No MP can be allowed to defend Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people, and the arms embargo is a minimum call for all to support.**



6 Rethink Trident

The UK parliament will vote in 2016 on whether to replace Britain's nuclear deterrent. War on Want is part of the Rethink Trident coalition, and we want every incoming MP to commit to ending the UK's nuclear weapons programme once and for all. **This is a unique opportunity to strike a blow for peace and justice at the global level, reducing the UK's military expenditure by a massive £100 billion at a stroke. Nuclear weapons? Just say no!**



These are just six specific questions to raise with anyone who comes knocking at your door.

We also need to be pressing our politicians on austerity, welfare, the NHS, jobs, trade union rights and so much more. And while you're about it, ask them whether they will vote to repeal the Lobbying Act, introduced last year in order to silence War on Want and other politically active groups in the run-up to this and any future general election. **They can try to gag us, but we will not go quietly!**



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TTIP: we are winning!

The fight against TTIP, the EU-US trade deal that will cost at least one million jobs and destroy our public services, is hotting up. The UK government and European Commission are still hoping to rush their negotiations through to a conclusion by the end of 2015, despite massive opposition across the whole of Europe. Yet the wheels are coming off the TTIP wagon. This year is our chance to stop it.

TTIP is now becoming known as a test case for EU democracy. Together with six other European organisations, War on Want launched a formal European Citizens' Initiative last summer in order to collect one million signatures to stop TTIP and the parallel EU-Canada deal, CETA, which is now being prepared for ratification. With spectacular arrogance, the European Commission denied us permission to start the petition. We went ahead anyway, and passed the one million mark in a record two months.

The European Parliament is voting on a TTIP resolution this May, and War on Want has linked up with partner organisations across Europe

to contact every MEP and press them to vote the right way. In February, War on Want joined forces with Global Justice Now, UNISON and 38 Degrees to take 150 anti-TTIP activists to Brussels to make our voices heard directly. War on Want supporters from Bath, Bristol, Halifax, Lewes, London, Manchester, Nottingham and Swansea joined the energising trip. We took over the Parliament for a day and left MEPs in no doubt that they should vote No to TTIP, CETA and all the EU's damaging free trade deals.

Please get in touch if you would like copies of our new TTIP booklet (updated for 2015), our TTIP action cards, stickers, badges or anything else – just email Nadia at nidle@waronwant.org, or call War on Want on 020 7324 5040.



DON'T MISS

the exciting Global Day of Action against TTIP, CETA and all damaging free trade deals on **Saturday 18 April 2015**. Events are planned in the UK and worldwide. Details from waronwant.org/ttip



BDS: 10 YEARS AND RISING

July 2015 marks a decade since the historic **Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)** call issued by Palestinian civil society, urging people of conscience around the world to come behind a concerted campaign of action against Israel until it recognises the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and complies with international law. The call was inspired by the South African anti-apartheid movement, whose vision of the path towards justice necessarily included a clear role for grassroots organising at local, national and international levels.

In an inspiring groundswell of support for the Palestinian struggle, the call has been taken up by groups around the world through strategic targeting of corporate and government complicity in Israel's policy of apartheid. War on Want endorsed the BDS call when it first came out of Palestine in 2005, and has since taken an active role in mobilising against companies complicit in Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people.

Now, 10 years later, the BDS movement has come a long way with an impressive list of wins, including:

- In 2006, following lobbying by War on Want members, the Church of England voted to divest £2.2 million worth of shares from Caterpillar, which supplied armoured vehicles used by Israel to demolish Palestinian homes.
- In 2012, the UK's Co-operative Group became the first major European supermarket to end all trade with companies that export produce from illegal Israeli settlements.

- In 2013, Veolia announced that it would no longer operate bus lines for settlers in the Occupied West Bank after losing billions of dollars in contracts and being blacklisted by investors due to its support for Israeli apartheid.
- In 2014, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation sold down its £110 million of shares in security company G4S after pressure from over 100 Palestinian and international organisations, including War on Want, over the company's support for the Israeli prison system, checkpoints and the Apartheid Wall.

While it is right to celebrate our successes, we must now translate these into tangible results for the Palestinian struggle. Just as South African apartheid was toppled after international companies and governments were forced to withdraw their support for the repressive regime, Israeli apartheid will fall too... **and it's up to all of us to help make that happen!**

What you can do

Sign up to War on Want emails for the latest news and actions; read and share our highly acclaimed BDS report (free online or in hard copy); order more free resources to help support the campaign in your local area. Go to waronwant.org/BDS or call us on 020 7324 5040 for a copy of the report or other materials.

STOP THE KILLING STOP ARMING ISRAEL

Almost a year has passed since Israel's most recent attack on the Gaza Strip, during which over 2,000 Palestinians were killed, 500 of them children. Palestinians in Gaza were still reeling from Israel's previous attacks, not to mention the ongoing siege which prevents essential supplies from coming in and blocks Palestinians in Gaza from exercising any freedom of movement.

Repeat attacks and perpetual siege are part and parcel of Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people, and they are also intimately connected with one of Israel's most prosperous industries: designing, manufacturing and trading in arms.

The UK is one of Israel's leading business partners in this industry. The British government licenses arms exports to Israel amounting to hundreds of millions of pounds. On top of this, Israeli arms exports to Britain are a major source of revenue, tested on the civilian Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza, and then imported and integrated into the British armed forces.



When the summer attacks on Gaza began, people all over the world took to the streets outraged by Israel's actions and impunity. After realising that the Israeli arms giant Elbit was manufacturing drones right here in the UK, some activists were moved to action, occupying the roof of the Elbit factory in Shenstone and shutting it down for two days. The prosecution against the activists for aggravated trespass was dropped at the last minute when the company backed out.

Following our previous *Killer Drones* report, War on Want is now teaming up with Campaign Against Arms Trade to produce a new report about the Israeli-British arms trade, including analysis following the 2014 attacks. This new *Arming Apartheid* report will be the basis for expanding our Stop Arming Israel campaign, ramping up the call for an immediate two-way arms embargo on Israel until it complies with international law. **You can download the report online from waronwant.org as of May 2015, or call us for a copy on 020 7324 5040.**



Support our campaign by purchasing a 'No arms to Israel' T-shirt designed by Katherine Hamnett. See our news section for more details.



RANA PLAZA TWO YEARS ON THE LONG ROAD TO JUSTICE

Since the horrific collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in April 2013, killing over 1,100 garment workers, there has been a groundswell of campaigning for workers' rights in Bangladesh and around the world. Whilst these actions have led to significant improvements, the workers of Bangladesh will continue to need solidarity as they fight for their right to decent working conditions.

In response to the Rana Plaza disaster, a wave of anger from the public around the world helped boost an initiative by Bangladeshi workers: the Bangladesh Safety Accord. The Accord is a legally binding agreement between trade unions and major brands sourcing from Bangladesh to drive forward life-saving safety improvements in Bangladeshi factories. Pressure from ordinary people around Europe was critical in driving over 180 brands to sign up to the Accord, although some companies such as Gap and Wal-Mart continue to hold out against it.

The Accord's progress has been impressive, and it has made significant impact on the ground. Inspections have taken place in **over 1,500 factories**, and they have identified a staggering **80,000 safety issues** that need addressing. Where factories were deemed to pose an immediate threat to life, they have been closed.

The Accord's continued success is not guaranteed. As brands face up to their commitments to fund safety

improvements, delays, quibbling and the complexity of dealing with so many companies all threaten to undermine the Accord's vital work.

Meanwhile, as the rest of the world forgets the worst accident in a manufacturing facility in recorded history, the garment workers' struggle continues. As they seek to organise in more and more factories, they continue to face factory owners who are heavily resistant to worker involvement. Union activists face violent threats and harassment.

Ultimately, it is the garment workers themselves who will win their right to safe, fairly paid jobs with reasonable hours. War on Want has worked in partnership with the National Garment Workers' Federation (NGWF) in Bangladesh for over 20 years. This kind of long-term partnership, which continues when the world's attention is elsewhere, sustains organisations like NGWF in their ongoing work. It is solidarity from ordinary people around the globe that supports the struggles of those on the front line in the fight for workers' rights.

Find out more about how you can contact the brands to make sure they protect the workers who make our clothes – go to www.waronwant.org/lovefashionhatesweatshops and follow the links.



TAX DODGING BILL TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE TAX FAIR!

With your support, our tax justice campaign has been able to expose a range of companies which together dodge billions of pounds in tax every year. War on Want has turned the spotlight in particular on Alliance Boots, the high street chemist that has managed to dodge over £1 billion in tax since shifting its headquarters from Nottingham to Switzerland. As a result of pressure from War on Want campaigners, Alliance Boots ended up paying 40% more in tax last year than the year before.

Tax-dodging corporate parasites suck out profits and leave the rest of society paying the price wherever they operate. They won't be stopped until the rules are changed. Empty rhetoric won't do the job.

That's why we've teamed up with over 15 other organisations to call for a Tax Dodging Bill to make tax fair. We're calling for a law that will:

- Make it harder for big companies to dodge UK taxes and make sure they're not getting unfair tax breaks, by
 - Ensuring that foreign multinationals can't use tax havens to avoid paying their fair share of tax on their business in the UK;
 - Rigorously reviewing tax breaks for big companies and scrapping any which don't bring true benefits to society;

- Ensure UK tax rules don't encourage big companies to avoid tax in the global South:
 - Toughen up the UK's anti-tax haven rules to deter tax dodging at home and abroad, and review other tax rules to make sure they don't harm countries in the global South;
- Make the UK tax regime more transparent and tougher on tax dodging, by:
 - Requiring big companies to publish their taxes, profits and other key data for each country where they do business
 - Toughening the tax regime, and making tax avoidance schemes riskier and more costly.

Launched 100 days before the 2015 general election, our joint campaign calls on all political parties to pledge to introduce the Bill in the first 100 days after the election. We are also calling on all political parties to commit to using the funds raised in the UK to tackle poverty here at home.

The Tax Dodging Bill could tackle the worst elements of UK tax rules that make it easy for big companies to dodge their taxes in the UK and around the world. It could generate £3.6 billion for the UK and could also help raise billions in countries of the global South, where the money could be used for crucial social investments such as health and education.

For more information on the campaign please visit: www.waronwant.org/TDBcampaign

New online shop

War on Want's shop is now run in collaboration with the radical magazine *New Internationalist*. As well as all the usual War on Want ethical products like our popular Justice for Palestine T-shirts, we also have a new No TTIP T-shirt! You can also now choose from a much wider range of goodies. Better still, if you visit the shop via this link: waronwant.org/shop War on Want will receive 10% of the retail price of these other products. **There's a huge range of reading, gifts and garments – so check it out and share the link with your friends too. Happy shopping!**

Welcome to War on Want's new members!

Over the past year War on Want has seen a surge in membership, increasing our numbers by over 20%! We'd like to welcome all our new members and we hope you enjoy reading *Up Front*, which you receive as part of your membership. If you have any thoughts on subjects you'd like to read about in future, then just send an email to support@waronwant.org

As part of your membership you also get to vote at our AGM and have your say on how War on Want should be run. From this year all members can vote online too, at waronwant.org/AGM. Your participation and support ensure we can continue to fight poverty at the radical edge. Thank you for joining up.

Katharine Hamnett T-shirts



Get your hands on an exclusively designed

Katharine Hamnett T-shirt for War on Want. Her clothing with a message has been iconic in fashion since the 1980s and Katharine continues to be an advocate for many of War on Want's causes. **You can see the range at www.katharinehamnett.com/collections/waronwant – and War on Want receives £5 for each one dedicated to our work.**

Leaving a gift in your Will

Over the last year, thanks to the amazing generosity of supporters who left War on Want gifts in their Wills, we have been able to invest in vital new partnerships in Nigeria and the Philippines, and to develop new technologies to help our online campaigns reach even more people and have a bigger impact.

To find out more about how you can make a difference through leaving a gift in your Will, please email legacies@waronwant.org or call 020 7324 5040 and request a copy of our free guide to making a Will.

Leaving a gift in your Will is one of the easiest ways to look after your family and friends, and make sure that the causes you care about are supported to continue their work after you are gone. It's easy to make a small change to an existing Will or set up one which includes a charity. Our guide can tell you more.

We're loving it

War on Want, with a coalition of European and American trade unions, has released a new report on tax avoidance by McDonald's, detailing the fast food giant's strategy to avoid paying over €1 billion in taxes in the five year period between 2009 and 2013. The practice essentially consisted of moving their European headquarters from the UK to Switzerland, as well as using intra-group royalty payments and channelling them into a tiny Luxembourg-based subsidiary.

McDonald's has come under much scrutiny in the past for its poor working conditions, low wages and zero hours contracts, forcing many of its workers to rely on public assistance to afford food and rent.

We are calling upon the European Commission to take immediate action against McDonald's, investigating the legality of their tax practices and forcing them to justify their actions.

Please visit www.waronwant.org/about-us/publications to download the full report.



Living Wage campaign

Globally the so-called 'recovery' has failed to deliver increases in the standards of living for the majority. With inequality rising, the call for a living wage has been gaining momentum around the world.

In the USA, fast food workers and others in low paid roles have been building a mass campaign, including direct action, walk-outs, sit-ins and protests that are driving the campaign to the top of the political agenda. Previous attempts to organise have been difficult, but now these workers are driving forward new hope that a low wage economy is not inevitable, and together they can change the status quo.

In the UK, local living wage campaigns have been gaining ground, with initiatives from several War on Want trade union affiliates. Our partners around the world, organising the workers behind our high streets, also continue to fight for a fair day's pay. **At War on Want we're working to link up these struggles to bring together a movement that says 'Low pay is not OK!' Watch this space for a new campaign coming soon.**

Bangladesh victory

Morning meeting with the boss

Report back from Martin Gemzell, Senior Programmes Officer

I stood outside the National Garment Workers' Federation (NGWF) office in Dhaka looking at hundreds of garment workers. Inside the office there was an unexpected visitor – the owner of the factory which employed them. Four months ago he stopped paying their salaries, and the factory closed.

When the money stopped, the factory owner was called to meet with the labour arbitration council. He refused to come. With no support from the authorities, and going hungry, the workers decided to take action.

One day the managing director woke up to find his house surrounded by 500 workers. They refused to leave unless he paid. That day, as I stood and watched, the factory worker was signing payslips inside the NGWF office.

NGWF has registered new trade unions in 45 factories since the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013. War on Want is proud to support their incredible work in helping women workers receive the better pay and conditions they deserve.



Sri Lanka victory

Saving the seeds of life

Report back from Haidee-Laure Giles, Senior Programmes Officer

I have just come back from an inspiring visit to Sri Lanka with our partner MONLAR. Joining forces with thousands of farmers, fisherfolk, rural workers and grassroots organisations, MONLAR organised a seed caravan which toured the country in opposition to the proposed new Seed Act.

The proposed Act sought to introduce draconian measures to assert agrichemicals corporations' control over seed production and distribution, and to criminalise the ancestral practice of sharing and exchanging native seeds between farmers. Those seeds, planted year on year, are highly adapted to the local climate and soil conditions, and therefore vital to guaranteeing a decent life to farmers.

The strong civil society mobilisation supported by War on Want resulted in the government abandoning the Act, a major victory in the fight to strengthen food sovereignty in the country.



