



up front

autumn / winter 2013 waronwant.org

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**WAR ON
WANT**

FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

WELCOME



The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in Bangladesh, killing 1,127 people, shone

the global media spotlight on the fashion industry. In this issue of *Up Front* we bear tribute to those who died by calling for justice for the victims of this terrible tragedy. Thanks to your support we have already secured notable victories and now need to build on this momentum to ensure the safety of all garment workers. We also bring you news of our campaign to ban killer drones and an update on Colombian human rights defender Alfamir Castillo, following our call for her protection.

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FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

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BANGLADESH SAFETY CAMPAIGN

Western brands' failure to ensure workplace safety and our campaign to hold them to account

The Rana Plaza building collapse in Bangladesh is the deadliest workplace incident in the history of the garment industry. While some brands are still refusing to act and the victims are facing a bleak future, huge public pressure is forcing the industry to change.

On 24 April this year, 1,127 people were killed and thousands more were injured when the Rana Plaza building collapsed. The majority of the victims were female garment workers. The disaster exposed the appalling conditions in which our clothes are made.

We first heard the terrible news from Amirul Haque Amin, president of our partner organisation in Bangladesh – the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF). He had begun mobilising support for the rescue operation and called on us to support the workers' struggle for justice. He told us "The deaths of these workers could have been avoided if multinational corporations, governments and factory owners took workers' protection seriously."

The day before the collapse, inspectors noticed massive cracks in the walls of the building and ordered the evacuation of all the businesses inside. However, workers in the garment factories were forced to return to their sewing machines by the owners, under the threat of having their wages docked or losing their jobs altogether. One hour later, hundreds of people were crushed to death.

Western retailers Benetton, Bonmarché, Primark, Matalan and Mango all acknowledged recent production in the factories. The workers had been making clothes bound for the UK high street. We immediately launched a petition calling on the brands to join the Bangladesh Safety Accord to prevent another such disaster, and to fully compensate the victims. The Bangladesh Safety Accord is a comprehensive project, with transparent factory audits, mandatory repairs, effective worker training and is driven by trade unions. The Accord is legally binding: the companies that sign it will be forced to make their supplier factories safe.

More than 90,000 people signed our petition, demonstrations were held outside retailers' stores up and down the country, and we secured a huge amount of media coverage – all targeted at making brands take responsibility. In Bangladesh hundreds of thousands of garment workers took to the streets protesting against the unnecessary deaths.



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The pressure paid off

In a momentous victory, over 80 of the world's largest brands and retailers including Primark, H&M and Tesco signed the Bangladesh Safety Accord. It is the first time clothing companies have signed a legally binding agreement, with trade union involvement, taking responsibility for their supplier factories.

However, not all retailers have taken their workers' safety seriously. Some companies, including Philip Green's Arcadia Group – owner of Dorothy Perkins, Miss Selfridge and Topshop – refused to sign the Safety Accord. In an attempt to salvage their reputation, Gap and Walmart launched their own voluntary safety plan. But it contains no binding commitments and does not involve trade unions. Voluntary 'solutions' did not prevent the Rana Plaza disaster. Their voluntary plan is a sham.

We believe no one should have to work in fear of their life. So we are demanding that Gap, Walmart and the Arcadia Group sign the Bangladesh Safety Accord to make factories safe and ensure garment workers' lives are not put at risk.

Bleak future

With no income, thousands of injured workers, some of whom may never be able to work again, are struggling to make ends meet. The families of the garment workers who were killed had previously relied on their relative's meagre income to survive. These people now face destitution.

Under huge public pressure, following our protests and petition, Primark offered to pay its share of compensation to the victims. Yet despite Primark's statement, Benetton, Bonmarché, Mango and Matalan all refused to pay compensation. Instead they made high profile statements that they would offer some form of 'financial assistance' to the victims. This falls far short of the responsibility these retailers have to the people who make their clothes.

Thanks to you the industry is changing

While the battle for a fashion industry which respects workers' rights rages on, together we have secured hugely positive changes in the aftermath of this terrible disaster. These changes will save lives. This has only been possible because of people like you demanding action and this groundswell of support has led us to where we are now: a truly ground breaking moment in the fight for workers' rights.

TAKE ACTION

1. Email Benetton, Bonmarché, Mango and Matalan demanding compensation for the victims:
www.waronwant.org/bangladeshfactory

2. Sign our petition calling on Gap, Walmart and the Arcadia Group to sign the Bangladesh Safety Accord: change.org/bangladeshsafetyaccord



Gaza: Israel's drone laboratory

© Mohammed Salem / Reuters

Drones are indiscriminate weapons of war responsible for thousands of civilian deaths. Drones are also big business.

Remotely controlled by 'pilots' from the ground, drones allow politicians to carry out surveillance and launch military strikes without the risk of losing ground troops. This 'risk-free' approach to warfare means the annual market for drones is expected to rise from \$5.9 billion to \$11.3 billion in the next 10 years.

Israel is the single largest exporter of drones in the world, responsible for 41% of all exports between 2001 and 2011. In fact, Israeli companies boast of their competitive advantage in the global arms market due to their extensive 'testing' in 'real life' situations.

Drones play a crucial role in maintaining Israel's siege of Gaza, which has condemned its 1.5 million inhabitants to a humanitarian disaster with no end in sight. Dr Mads Gilbert, a Norwegian doctor who worked at Gaza's al-Shifa Hospital

during the 2008-2009 Israeli military assault on Gaza, recalls his experience of living under the constant presence of drones circling above: "Every night the Palestinians in Gaza relive their worst nightmares when they hear drones; it never stops and you are never sure if it is a surveillance drone or if it will launch a rocket attack. Even the sound of Gaza is frightful: the sound of Israeli drones in the sky."

Disregarding abundant evidence in UN resolutions and reports by international human rights organisations of Israel's unlawful use of force and weapons resulting in human rights violations, the British government continues its cooperation with Israel's army and military industry. So much so that the British army has awarded Israeli company Elbit, and its partner Thales UK, a contract worth nearly £1 billion to develop a new surveillance drone called the Watchkeeper.



Left: Demonstration at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire, the UK's new centre of drone operations.

Below: The Watchkeeper WK450 surveillance drone.



The design and technology of the Watchkeeper is based closely on Israeli company Elbit's Hermes 450 drone, used extensively over Gaza. The Hermes 450 is described as the 'workhorse' of Israel's military in its operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This means the technology used in British drones has been field tested on Palestinian civilians.

Rather than expanding the UK's arsenal, our government should ban indiscriminate killer drones, just as landmines and cluster munitions were banned before them.

As well as its imports of Israeli technology, the UK provides direct material support for Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people. Israeli company Elbit has factories in the UK where it makes components for weapons that are used during attacks on Palestinians. At its Lichfield factory, Elbit manufactures engines for the Hermes 450 drones, and the testing ground for the UK's Watchkeeper drones is ParcAberporth in Wales. Elbit is directly profiting from the Occupation of Palestine.

The call to divest from Elbit has become a key element in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel until it complies with international law – and there have been notable successes. In September 2009, after years of campaigning by War on Want's partner organisation Stop the Wall, the Norwegian government excluded Elbit from its state pension fund on ethical grounds. In March 2010, Sweden's national pension funds announced that they were excluding Elbit Systems from their investment portfolios. Leading players in the financial markets in Denmark and Scandinavia followed suit, with Deutsche Bank, Germany's biggest bank and a major investor in the corporation, subsequently announcing it was 'out of Elbit' in May 2010.

Following the call from Palestinian civil society, War on Want is demanding a two-way arms embargo on Israel until it complies with international law. This would see an end to all dealings with Elbit and other Israeli weapons companies, and an end to all licences for UK arms exports to Israel.

Supporters of the military embargo call include Nobel Peace Prize winners Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mairead Maguire, Betty Williams and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, and best-selling writer Naomi Klein.

We're also calling on the UK government to ban killer drones. Together with other anti-war organisations, we organised the first national demonstration against drone warfare, which was widely covered by the press.

It is crucial that we keep the pressure on the British government to completely end its arms trade with Israel. Together, we can help end our government's complicity in human rights atrocities committed by Israel against the people of Palestine.

Take action: support us in the call for a two-way arms embargo on Israel
waronwant.org/Palestine

Right to the City exhibition

In urban centres across the world, spiralling accommodation prices, gentrification and increases in the cost of living, are denying people the right to live and work in the city. In Zambia, following sweeping cuts in jobs and services, people have been forced to make ends meet working as street and market traders. The daily lives of these traders have been captured by award-winning photographer Tina Remiz, and are set to feature in a free exhibition in London, hosted by War on Want.

The exhibition opens in early November with a free event featuring guest speakers from Malawi and South Africa who will highlight the changing life of the city, including inspiring resistance movements which have developed in response to the forced migration of poor people to the outskirts. We hope to see you there!

Find out more: waronwant.org/RightToTheCity



© Tina Remiz / War on Want

Africa's new wave of colonialism

In May 2012, the G8 unveiled its new plan to expand corporate control over farming in Africa: the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. Its objective is to open up African agriculture to multinational agribusiness companies, such as Monsanto and Unilever, bringing an end to the free distribution of seeds and making it easier for private investors to take over agricultural land. The UK government has backed the plan with a commitment to contribute £395 million in taxpayers' money from the UK aid budget to the New Alliance over the coming three years.

The New Alliance threatens to destroy African farmers' livelihoods and increase hunger. War on Want led a coalition of supporters and civil society groups to reject the privatisation of agriculture in Africa. We demonstrated outside Unilever's headquarters, calling on G8 leaders to abandon the New Alliance and demanding David Cameron withhold the £395 million in aid money that will be handed to multinationals.

Support African farmers' struggle against corporations: waronwant.org/newalliance



© Darren Johnson DJ Photography

Is your union branch affiliated to War on Want?

War on Want has long understood that decent work and a living wage are not only a basic right but also a key route out of poverty. However, in many of the world's poorest communities, workers face exploitation, discrimination and have little hope of a better life. With your help we can change this.

If you're a member of a trade union you can ask your union branch to affiliate to War on Want with a donation of £25 a year. By affiliating to War on Want, your union branch will be joining an organisation which fights for workers' rights in partnership with trade unions and associations of working people across the world. As an affiliate organisation you can vote at our AGM and have a real say in our future.

For more information call Jackie on 020 7324 5057, email her at jsimpkins@waronwant.org or visit waronwant.org/affiliate

Human rights in Colombia

In October last year, a man pushed a gun into the chest of human rights defender Alfamir Castillo and told her she was going to die.

Alfamir's son was murdered by the Colombian army on 8 February 2008. The case was what is known in Colombia as a 'false positive extrajudicial execution', where the army kills civilians and then falsely claims them as fallen guerrilla fighters.

Since her son's death, Alfamir has fought to bring her son's murderers to justice. But it has come at great personal cost to Alfamir and her family, who have been

subject to intense persecution: attacks, death threats and even attempted kidnap.

More than 3,000 War on Want supporters called on the Colombian government to protect Alfamir and her family and she says of the support: "It is so important to feel like we are not alone, and for the Colombian government to see that it can't just stand by – people on the other side of the world are watching what happens."

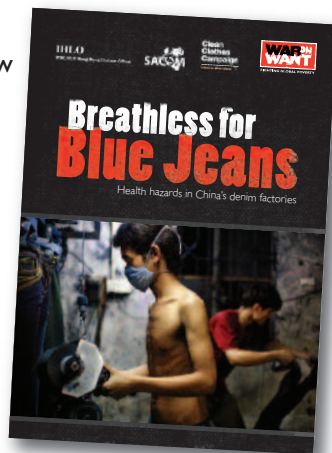
Despite having recently moved from their family home to a safer place, we remain concerned for the safety of Alfamir and her family as the court case against two army generals progresses.

Sign up for emails to keep up to date:
waronwant.org/signup



Undercover exposé: sweatshops in China

Breathless for Blue Jeans: Health hazards in China's denim factories is our shocking new undercover report on Chinese sweatshops. Our research reveals that sandblasting is still widespread in China in order to give jeans a worn or 'distressed' look, despite most Western brands banning the practice three years ago after it was proven to cause silicosis, a deadly lung disease that has already caused the deaths of many garment workers.



Factory workers are forced to endure dangerous conditions for up to 15 hours a day, with one factory supervisor telling researchers, "Danger lurks at every stage of the denim treatment processes."

War on Want is demanding urgent action from governments and companies to stamp out the continued use of sandblasting and other unsafe finishing processes in the manufacture of denim jeans.

Breathless for Blue Jeans is free to download:
waronwant.org/breathless

Tackling tax dodging

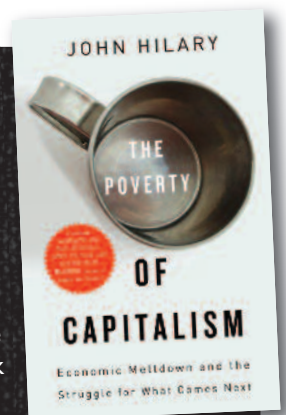
In recent months, thanks to public anger over tax avoidance by multinational companies in the UK, tax has been high on the political agenda. At the G8 in June, David Cameron said he would get the UK's house in order by shining a light on the UK's tax havens. A month later, at a G20 meeting in Moscow, the public were told that the 'golden era' of corporate tax dodging is over.

But, in reality, little has changed. The UK still plays a central role in many of the world's most significant tax havens. Furthermore, it is easier today for UK multinationals to dodge tax than it was when the coalition government came to power. It's therefore imperative we keep the pressure up to ensure government talk turns to action.

Take action now: waronwant.org/tax

The Poverty of Capitalism

John Hilary, War on Want Executive Director, reveals the true face of capital's insatiable drive for growth in this new book *The Poverty of Capitalism*.



Order your advance paperback copy for the exclusive offer price of £11.99 including free UK postage and packaging and a £2 donation to War on Want (RRP £14.99). Visit waronwant.org/povertyofcapitalism or call 020 8348 2724 and quote War on Want Offer.

Make fighting exploitation your lasting legacy

Your Will is a powerful tool. You can use it to help change the political structures that keep people in poverty and expose the companies that profit from exploitation. You can make a lasting difference to people's lives across the world by leaving a gift in your Will to War on Want.

For more than 60 years, War on Want has been at the forefront of the struggle for justice, working with inspirational people like human rights activist Berenice Celeita. Working for our partner organisation in Colombia, Berenice is faced with daily threats to her life, but she says **"It is better to die for something than to live for nothing."**



@Josh Berson/CoDev



Leaving the world a better future



It's so easy to make provision for your friends and family, and support the causes you care about by making a Will, or adding a codicil to an existing Will. Our free legacy booklet explains more.

For more information, or to tell us of a gift you've already made to help us plan for the future, please fill in and return the form below. You can also write to Adina Claire, War on Want, 44-48 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7JP, call us on 020 7324 5043 or email legacies@waronwant.org.

Please fill in the form and return it to:

Freepost RSKC-UCZZ-ZSHL, War on Want, 44-48 Shepherdess Walk, London N1 7JP

- I have already left a gift to War on Want in my Will
- I am thinking about leaving a gift to War on Want in my Will and would like some more information

Full name

Address

Postcode

Telephone Email

We'll use these details to provide information about leaving a legacy to War on Want. We'd also like to keep you up to date with our campaigns and activities, but if you'd prefer not to hear from us please tick this box to **stop all existing and future communications** from War on Want.