



# up front

autumn / winter 2012 [waronwant.org](http://waronwant.org)

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FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

# WELCOME



With the recent furore over private security contractor G4S failing to supply the required number of security personnel for the Olympics, this issue of *Up Front* looks deeper into the murky underworld of private military and security companies. We also explore the current debate around aid and whether it delivers justice for people in the global South. We've included an update on our campaign targeting Olympic sponsor Adidas for its abuse of workers' rights in its global supply chains – a campaign that reached great heights thanks to your generosity and support.

*John Hilary*

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Front cover image: Getty Images

# PRIVATISATION OF WAR

## THE SECURITY COMPANIES PROFITING FROM WAR AND OUR CAMPAIGN TO HOLD THEM TO ACCOUNT

**Hired by governments to perform operations previously carried out by national military forces, private military and security companies are the modern equivalent of mercenaries: armed civilians operating for profit in conflict zones. Unaccountable and unregulated, these companies are complicit in human rights abuses across the world, putting profit before people and fanning the flames of war.**

In 2006 War on Want launched a groundbreaking report, *Corporate Mercenaries*, exposing the rapid expansion of a shadowy new phenomenon – private military and security companies (PMSCs). The report documented the role of PMSCs in the occupation of Iraq, providing security and taking part in reconstruction, direct combat, surveillance and intelligence gathering. War on Want warned that what we were seeing was the privatisation of war.

Our prediction is now the stark reality. PMSCs are being deployed in conflict zones in place of 'official' ground troops. The *Daily Mirror* exposed their use in Libya in 2011 and in July this year the British army revealed that two private security firms employing former Special Forces personnel were training groups of Syrian rebels in military tactics, weapons handling and communications systems.

The privatisation of war means that today PMSCs are profiting from conflict and political instability at the expense of security and human rights across the world. In 2007, in a well documented incident in Iraq, contractors from Blackwater, a US-based PMSC, massacred 17 civilians in Baghdad. Yet five years on, no one has been held accountable for the atrocity. British company ArmorGroup, now owned by G4S, was the focus of a US Senate inquiry in 2010 because of its operations in Afghanistan, facing allegations that their security recruits "threatened to attack Afghan Ministry of Defence personnel." In Somalia, security company Saracen International has been training 'anti-piracy' forces. But according to the UN, in 2011 it violated UN arms embargoes while arming and training militias.





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Despite their notoriety, successive governments have outsourced military functions to private contractors. The British government has already played a huge role in the growth of this industry by endorsing its widespread use in Iraq and Afghanistan; the use of PMSCs in Libya and Syria indicate this is only set to continue. In June this year the Defence Secretary, Philip Hammond, announced that army numbers would shrink from 102,000 to 82,000 within eight years. Hammond said the army would need to use “more systematically the skills available in the reserve and from our contractors”. The disturbing truth is that the UK government has now fully embraced the concept of outsourcing security and privatising war.

Despite the evidence of human rights abuses committed by these companies, PMSCs are unaccountable and face no effective regulation of their conduct. War on Want has led the call on the UK government to end the privatisation of war and to put in place decisive controls over this deadly industry. Our campaign for accountability has been supported by MPs and the UN Working Group on Mercenaries. We have put the industry and government under pressure with exposés of human rights abuses in the media, and threatened a legal enquiry if government refused to take action.

Despite this pressure, the government remains determined to continue its policy of outsourcing war. Ministers believe PMSCs

are best left to police themselves through national standards and an International Code of Conduct, which they intend to launch in a matter of months. But these measures represent the lightest of light touch voluntary self-regulation. Such moves will not enable governments or communities to hold these companies to account, as voluntary codes have a track record in failing to stop corporate abuse. Instead they will be used by companies to legitimise the industry, and will stand in the way of proper controls.

The government has agreed to review these voluntary codes two years after their introduction. This means we now have a window of opportunity to prove to the government that voluntary codes are weak and ineffective and that this deadly industry needs proper controls to force companies to put people before profit.

We need your support to build awareness of this secretive industry. War on Want has recently joined forces with other international human rights organisations forming a new coalition to fight these dangerous voluntary codes. Over the next few months we will be launching campaign actions and new resources in order to force the government to act. We will use the media and public actions to ensure that companies cannot hide behind the veneer of respectability that voluntary standards provide.

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

**Sign up for War on Want's email updates and follow us on Twitter and Facebook so that you are ready to help us spread the word and build support for our campaign. It's time for us to send a message to the government that the British public will not tolerate companies profiting from war and human rights violations. [waronwant.org/signup](http://waronwant.org/signup)**



- Danish-British owned G4S is the world's largest private security corporation
- Revenue £7.5 billion
- Operates in 125 countries
- 657,000 employees worldwide
- Security contracts: prison services, immigrant detention centres, war zones, major events, mining, oil, gas and nuclear power, critical national infrastructure

# G4S: Securing your world

The spectacular failure of security firm G4S to fulfil its contract for London 2012 Olympics has ensured that it is now a household name for all the wrong reasons. Organisers were forced to turn to the military when the embattled security contractor admitted it did not have enough staff to patrol the Games just weeks before they were due to begin. The high profile scandal has caused a backlash against the use of private security companies, and G4S Chief Executive Nick Buckles admitted it had been a “humiliating shambles for the company”. However, as G4S declare on their website: “In more ways than you might realise, G4S is securing your world.”

In the UK, G4S operates Parc, Alcourse, Oakwood, Birmingham and Wolds prisons and is currently bidding to operate five more at an estimated total value of £2 billion. It also has a £200 million contract to support front line policing for the Lincolnshire Police Authority. In June this year, in a move which many fear points towards core functions of policing being privatised, the government granted permission to Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Police to investigate outsourcing ‘backroom’ services to G4S.

G4S also plays a direct role in running the UK’s immigrant detention centres and Home Office deportations. In October 2010 Jimmy Mubenga died during his forcible deportation by G4S to Angola. But in July this year the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to prosecute G4S or its security guards for his death. In response to the decision, Jimmy Mubenga’s wife stated: “We can’t understand why the officers and G4S are not answerable to the law as we or any other member of the public would be.”

Even more disturbing is the company’s involvement in providing security in war zones. G4S is complicit in Israel’s occupation of Palestine through the supply of security equipment and services for use at checkpoints, illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, and Israeli prisons. Furthermore, four years ago G4S bought ArmorGroup, the Foreign Office’s favoured PMSC in Iraq and Afghanistan. ArmorGroup was the focus of a US Senate inquiry in 2010, alleging the company “relied on a series of warlords to provide armed men” who were engaged in murder and bribery. Undeterred, G4S CEO Nick Buckles has said that such high-risk environments offer “big opportunities” and confirmed that the corporation had recently conducted preparatory work with oil and gas companies for contracts in Iraq. G4S also extended its contract in Afghanistan just last month in a deal understood to be worth £72 million.

Despite facing hundreds of accusations of human rights abuses in conflict situations around the world, security companies like G4S remain unaccountable and unregulated. It is crucial to act now to rein in the power of this murky industry. Rather than leading the way in outsourcing wars to companies like G4S, the British government must end the privatisation of war and hold these companies to account.

Find out more: [waronwant.org/G4S](http://waronwant.org/G4S)





# Beyond Charity, Towards Justice

**War on Want was founded 60 years ago on the understanding that the fight against global poverty is a fight for justice. Members and supporters tell us that this is one of the things they most value about War on Want: that we challenge the root causes of injustice rather than just addressing its symptoms. Our partnerships with grassroots social movements and our campaigns against the structures of oppression are all directed towards this one end.**

In recent years, however, this radical agenda has increasingly struggled to make itself heard in Britain above the calls for more charity, philanthropy and aid. Some NGOs have even gone back to using degrading images of starving black children in order to raise funds for their work. Yet just providing aid to deal with the immediate challenges of health, education or emergency relief does nothing to tackle the underlying causes. In the worst cases, aid perpetuates poverty.

We believe that this is a dangerous step backwards. It is as if we were back in the Victorian era, with debates over how the well-meaning rich can best help the 'deserving poor'. Yet the

historical record is unequivocal: those countries that have managed to overcome poverty have done so not through aid but through the liberation of social, economic and human forces that have transcended the need for foreign assistance.

War on Want has started a process to reclaim the debate on international development. Together with the TUC, UNISON and other progressive organisations, we held public meetings in London and Manchester over the summer on the theme of 'Beyond Charity, Towards Justice'. We also set up a forum for staff from across the development sector to challenge the problematic imagery and language of aid, and we will build on this over the coming months.

**We believe that moving people beyond charity towards a political understanding of the root causes of poverty is an essential part of our mission to build the movement for global justice. Join the debate! We have set up a dedicated page of the War on Want website on this issue, and we would like to hear as many views as possible. Go to [waronwant.org/BeyondAid](http://waronwant.org/BeyondAid) and have your say.**

# Adidas rocked by exploitation campaign

This summer, Adidas took centre stage at the Olympics as the official sportswear partner of the London 2012 Games. But thanks to your enthusiasm and support we were able to expose the exploitation of the people who make Adidas' clothes, who face poverty pay and appalling working conditions.

Thousands of you wrote to Adidas' CEO demanding Adidas stop exploiting workers. We distributed over 15,000 alternative price tags exposing Adidas' exploitative practices, with shops being hit from Exeter to Edinburgh. Adidas also faced nationwide protests outside their stores during the peak of the Olympic Games. The same weekend over 30,000 people saw our enormous exploitation projection on a building overlooking the Olympic Park, thanks to the hundreds of you who shared it on Facebook and Twitter.

All of this has piled the pressure onto Adidas, with its CEO forced to defend himself against our accusations of worker exploitation in high profile interviews with the *Times* and the *Independent*.

The London 2012 Olympics may be over, but the campaign for the rights of garment workers around the world continues. We're supporting the global movement calling for the rights of workers supplying goods for the Olympics to be respected at all future Games. **To find out more visit: [notOKanywhere.org](http://notOKanywhere.org)**



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## Seven years in the struggle

At the end of August this year War on Want partner, the Abahlali baseMjondolo movement, celebrated its seventh anniversary promoting the rights of South African shack dwellers. Abahlali acts as an effective and powerful voice for the poor, preventing evictions of people from their homes and demolitions of shacks through legal interventions, protest marches and grassroots campaigning.



## March for a future that works

War on Want's mandate is to fight the root causes of poverty wherever it occurs. Join War on Want, the TUC and thousands of people as we take to the streets of London on Saturday 20 October calling for an end to the UK's austerity programme, which is hitting the poorest the hardest. Let's send a strong message that it's time for a more equitable economic system, everywhere.

## Ethical Christmas cards and gifts

Why not get a head start on your Christmas shopping? The War on Want online shop is stocked with a wide range of ethical gifts, including mugs, canvas bags and witty political Christmas cards. We also have a range of alternative gifts which help fight the root causes of poverty. Ethically produced and affordable, our gifts are ideal presents for your socially conscious friends and family.

**Visit our online shop today**  
[waronwant.org/shop](http://waronwant.org/shop)

## Leave a gift in your Will

When you make your Will or decide to amend it, after you've made a provision for your family and friends, please consider making a contribution to War on Want. For a chat about the steps involved in leaving a gift in your Will please call **Adina on 020 7324 5043**. You don't have to tell us how much you're considering leaving to us – we respect your right to privacy. **You can also email [legacies@waronwant.org](mailto:legacies@waronwant.org) or visit [waronwant.org/legacy](http://waronwant.org/legacy) for more information.** Gifts left by supporters in their Will are hugely important for our work and have helped War on Want achieve some incredible victories in the fight against poverty and injustice. We are truly grateful to those of you who have already remembered War on Want in your Will.

# Transforming our food system

Over the summer more than 100 food producers, small scale farmers, rural food workers, campaigners, researchers and food lovers from all over the UK gathered at an event, organised by a team including War on Want, called Transforming Our Food System. With the global food system in crisis and the number of people living in hunger at record levels, the group set the foundations for a democratic, sustainable and fair food system in the UK based on the principles of food sovereignty. This echoed the call made at the People's Summit held in Brazil in June – the alternative Summit to the UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development – for a system based on food sovereignty as a solution to the global food crisis.



For more information and to participate in further discussions and actions visit [waronwant.org/foodsovereignty](http://waronwant.org/foodsovereignty)

# Stop the bulldozers

Thousands of people in the Palestinian town of Silwan, East Jerusalem, are facing the imminent threat of their homes being demolished by the Israeli authorities to make way for a theme park. The destruction of their homes is illegal under the Geneva Convention and has been condemned around the world.

But it is British bulldozers from the firm JCB that have been caught on camera carrying out illegal demolitions in the town. Research by War on Want has also exposed the direct sale of JCB

armoured bulldozers to the Israeli army. Targeting British bulldozer firm JCB forms part of a global movement of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and ends its oppression of the Palestinian people. Please take urgent action to help Silwan residents as they resist the demolition of their homes by demanding JCB end its complicity in the Occupation of Palestine:

[waronwant.org/StopTheBulldozers](http://waronwant.org/StopTheBulldozers)



# Power Cut

War on Want, together with more than 100 progressive organisations and networks, has launched a global campaign to 'Dismantle Corporate Power and Stop Impunity' of transnational corporations (TNCs). At the launch, activists from all over the world presented cases of environmental and human rights violations committed by TNCs. The global campaign to end TNCs' impunity is promoting three main changes: a) binding mechanisms to hold transnational corporations accountable; b) an international body to judge economic and ecological crimes; and c) a People's Treaty that will promote alternative models such as the food sovereignty framework. It's time to pull the plug on the unfettered power of multinational corporations.

[stopcorporateimpunity.org](http://stopcorporateimpunity.org)

# Wage increases in Zambia

After a six month battle, War on Want's partner in Zambia, the National Union of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers (NUPAAW), has secured significant wage increases for permanent and seasonal workers in the agriculture sector ranging from 20% to 66%. This extra income will make a huge difference to the workers and their families. Our partner is now negotiating to ensure that workers such as those in the sugar industry also see their wages rise.



