

WELCOME

Welcome to your new look Up Front, the newsletter for War on Want supporters. We've redesigned it for our 60th anniversary year so that we can bring you more good news of how your support is helping in the fight for global justice. Enjoy!



John Hilary
John Hilary
Executive Director

60 YEARS IN THE STRUGGLE



60 YEARS OF FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

Sixty years ago, on 12 February 1951, the Manchester Guardian carried a letter from the publisher Victor Gollancz calling for people to join him in an urgent campaign against world poverty and militarism.

Britain was at that time fighting an unwinnable war in Asia, the Korean War, and Gollancz asked all those who agreed with his call for a negotiated settlement to end the conflict to send him a postcard marked with the single word 'yes'.

The letter provoked a massive response. Within a month Gollancz had received over 10,000 postcards, and War on Want was born. The future prime minister Harold Wilson, then an up-and-coming Labour MP, was tasked with drawing up a 'Plan for World Development', which was published in June 1952. The report cited the yawning gap between the world's rich and poor as "the supreme challenge of the next 50 years", and called for a popular movement to address that challenge.

Ever since that time, War on Want has stayed true to Harold Wilson's conviction that the fight against poverty should be seen as a campaign for justice, not "an exercise in condescending charity from the rich to the poor". When Wilson was elected prime minister in 1964, he established Britain's first ministry of overseas development as a key part of his government, with former War on Want trustee Barbara Castle as minister in charge.

Over the last 60 years, War on Want has led the way on many critical issues, including the 1974 publication of *The Baby Killer*, which exposed the actions of baby milk companies and led to the adoption of the WHO International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. In the 1980s we led pioneering campaigns on 'Third World' debt and women's rights, while in 1998 we launched the call for a Tobin tax on foreign currency

transactions, now known as the Robin Hood Tax campaign. War on Want also won a famous victory in 2005 when it changed UK government aid policy, so that British aid can no longer be made conditional upon the privatisation of public services or the opening of markets in developing countries.

Looking to the future

War on Want is proud of its history and its achievements, and we have no intention of resting on our laurels now. We will continue to challenge the root causes of poverty through our overseas programmes and through our hard-hitting campaigns. Millions of people across the world put their lives on the line on a daily basis in order to defend their rights and to win a world free from poverty and oppression. Their struggle is a constant inspiration, and we have a duty to stand in solidarity with them.

War on Want will continue the fight for justice for as long as it takes, and we ask you to stand with us in this noble cause. Our achievements have only been possible because of the generosity and commitment of the many thousands of War on Want members, donors and affiliates who have supported us over the years. We are truly grateful, and we look forward to working with you in the years to come.



FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

War on Want
44-48 Shepherdess Walk
London N1 7JP
tel. 020 7324 5040
email support@waronwant.org
web waronwant.org
Registered Charity No. 208724

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Front cover image: Guy Smallman.
View of Kabul from above

The reality of Britain's war in Afghanistan

Today Britain finds itself mired in another unwinnable war in Asia, this time in Afghanistan. As the US-led occupation enters its 10th year, casualties have risen among Afghan civilians and NATO forces alike, making the last 12 months the bloodiest of the conflict to date. The new surge in military activity has led not to more security but to greater insecurity, both in Afghanistan itself and increasingly in neighbouring Pakistan as well. Even the coalition commanders are now openly voicing their doubts as to the future.

The Afghan people continue to pay the highest price for the continuing foreign occupation of their country. Life expectancy in Afghanistan is now just 44.6 years, the lowest of any nation in the world. One in five children dies before their fifth birthday, and one in eight Afghan women dies from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Along with rising insecurity and a worsening human rights crisis, the Afghan war has brought dire poverty to millions.

Yet not everyone has been made poorer by the war. Private military and security companies – many of them British – have profited greatly from NATO contracts, while the privatisation of key sectors of the economy has been designed to benefit multinational investors rather than the Afghan people. Aided by the World Bank and other donors, this ideologically driven strategy threatens to set back development prospects still further in one of the poorest countries in the world.

All three major political parties in the UK favour keeping British forces in Afghanistan until 2015, and maintaining a strategic presence in the country for years after that. Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the US and UK military presence is the problem in Afghanistan, not the solution. War on Want calls on the UK government to withdraw British troops from Afghanistan immediately, and to support a political solution under UN auspices based on the Afghan people's self-determination, security and human rights.

To take action and for a copy of War on Want's latest report on Afghanistan *The Great Game – The reality of Britain's war in Afghanistan* go to www.waronwant.org/greatgame

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VICTORY FOR WORKERS IN CHINA

After more than five long years of struggle a significant victory has been won by War on Want partner Labour Action China in the fight for justice for Silicosis victims against the Hong Kong-owned Lucky Gems and Jewellery Company.

Workers in the Lucky Gems factory reported incredibly poor working conditions, and despite the presence of heavy dust from rocks were not given the basic protection of face masks. After seven years the company managers arranged for medical examinations and misdiagnosed workers' symptoms as Tuberculosis rather than the incurable Silicosis. As their symptoms worsened, workers sought independent consultations and found support from Labour Action China.

Labour Action China helped bring together workers from the same factory, many of whom had been sacked without compensation, and brought forward a collective case for compensation against Lucky Gems. After five years' struggle they were successful in

their fight for justice, and in a historically significant decision six workers were awarded financial compensation of 2.6 million Yuan (£234,000).

Alongside the compensation for individual workers, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and BASELWORLD of Switzerland have banned Lucky Gems from participating in international trade shows in Hong Kong and Switzerland. This is the first ever move by international trade fair organisers to sanction a Hong Kong-owned company over labour rights violations.

The lessons learnt from this success will help to inform future campaigns on collective cases for partners in Hong Kong and mainland China.

WHAT IS SILICOSIS?

- Pneumonoultramicroscopic silicovolcanoconiosis is more commonly known as Silicosis
- Silicosis is a respiratory disease caused by inhaling silica dust. It is typically associated with mining, quarrying, tunneling, and people working with metal ores.
- Silicosis affects the lungs and chest lymph nodes, causing lungs to become inflamed and fill with fluids. It causes severe shortness of breath and low blood oxygen levels.
- Silicosis is an irreversible condition with no cure.

Working with Ken Loach

War on Want provided expert guidance and advice in the making of Ken Loach's new film *Route Irish*. The film explores the story of a private security contractor in Iraq who rejects the official explanation of his friend's death and sets out to discover the truth. The film is out now.



No Land! No House! No Vote!

Early in 2007 hundreds of families living in shacks in Cape Town were moved into houses they had been promised since the end of apartheid. They were then told that the move had been illegal and were evicted from their new homes. In response they built shacks next to the road opposite the housing project and organised themselves into the Symphony Way Anti-Eviction Campaign, a War on Want partner, vowing to stay until the government gives them access to permanent housing.

War on Want has worked with Fahamu Books, a progressive publisher, on the book *No Land! No House! No Vote! Voices from Symphony Way*. The book is a collection of life stories and testimonies from residents living in the Symphony Way settlement and highlights the community's fight for justice and a permanent place to live. *No Land! No House! No Vote!* is out now.



Supermarket power continues unchecked

UK supermarkets continue to squeeze suppliers and drive down pay and working conditions for workers overseas. This often means the people who make the clothes and grow the food sold in UK supermarkets are overworked, poorly paid, work in unsafe conditions and discouraged from joining trade unions. In an attempt to redress the balance of power the Competition Commission, in 2009, recommended that the government create a supermarket watchdog – the Groceries Code Adjudicator.

Recent government announcements suggest that this watchdog will not be set up until 2014. This is despite the fact that the revised Code of Practice for Suppliers was published in February 2010. The government is unwilling to allow time for a bill creating a Groceries Code Adjudicator to be debated and approved. We are in discussion with our campaign allies and supportive MPs to increase pressure on the government to act sooner.



Best foot forward for Mark

War on Want is supporting Mark Thomas' new tour *Extreme Rambling - Walking the Wall*. During 2010 Mark decided to go rambling and walked the entire length of the Apartheid Wall in the West Bank crossing between the Israeli and the Palestinian side. This is the story of 500,000 settlers, a 750km wall, six arrests, one stoning, too much hummus and one simple question... can you ever get away from it all with a good walk?

For more information on the UK tour visit www.markthomasinfo.com or call 020 7439 2270. From Reading to Cardiff and Birmingham to Glasgow, Mark Thomas is probably coming to a city near you. Book your tickets now to avoid disappointment.

Wage rise and compensation victory in Bangladesh

Thanks to your support and the hard work of partners on the ground, more than three million sweatshop workers in Bangladesh have seen their minimum wage rise for the first time in four years, from £15 to £27 a month. Many sweatshop workers and their families live in abject poverty so this rise in pay will make a huge difference to their lives.

After public demonstrations and intense negotiations with factory owners, our partner also won a victory when they secured compensation for the families of 27 garment workers who tragically died in a factory fire. We will continue to support their fight to improve health and safety conditions in factories to prevent future tragedies.



Chancellor's jammy tax dodge plans take the biscuit



War on Want together with activists from trade union PCS and the TUC awarded Tory Chancellor George Osborne a giant Jammy Dodger for coming top in the national Tax Shirker poll. Osborne took a commanding 35% and was nominated for his refusal to clamp down on wealthy tax dodgers in the UK while slashing public services at the expense of the poor. Arcadia tycoon Sir Philip Green was second in the poll, with third and fourth place being awarded to Barclays and Vodafone respectively.

War on Want has long campaigned for a crackdown on tax dodgers, both for the sake of the British economy and for developing countries. We are campaigning to 'Close the Tax Gap' and recover the billions in missing tax from the banks and big business. The UK exchequer loses up to £120bn a year through tax dodging, while governments across the global South are robbed of around £250bn each year as a result of corporate tax 'minimisation'. For more information visit the Tax not Cuts section on our website – www.waronwant.org/taxnotcuts

Make a lasting legacy to fight poverty and injustice

In the last 60 years War on Want has been at the forefront of the fight against poverty and injustice. By leaving a gift in your will you can support this vital work for years to come.

To find out how you can leave a gift in your will, call Duncan on 020 7324 5043 or email us at legacies@waronwant.org.

To request a copy of our free guide to leaving a legacy, please tick the box on the donation form and send it back to us.

Gifts in wills have played a vital part in funding War on Want's work for decades. Please consider a gift in your will to War on Want and make fighting the root causes of poverty your lasting legacy.