

# Global Solidarity

An ICTU Development Education Project

## Newsletter

Issue 1



Nazma Akter and David Joyce



Nazma Akter and Minister Tom Kitt, TD



Alisa Keane and Nazma Akter

## ICTU Launches Global Solidarity

The major activity was the launch in February 2002 of the Campaign for Workers' Rights in the Global Economy. Launched by Minister Tom Kitt at Liberty Hall in Dublin and Carmel Hanna, MLA in Belfast, we were privileged to be joined by Nazma Akter from the Bangladeshi Garment Workers' Union Federation. Nazma features in the Esperanza Productions Video, "Race to the Bottom", which was shown at both launches and has been broadcast on TG4.

The video explores the issues related to the movement of the garment industry from Ireland to countries like Bangladesh, where workers are denied fundamental rights. Even these workers are in danger of losing their jobs as the industry continues to search for locations with ever cheaper labour costs, mainly China.

Copies available from:

**Esperanza Productions**

**Tel: +353 (01) 2888648**

**Fax: +353 (01) 2888649**

**e-mail: [info@esperanza.ie](mailto:info@esperanza.ie)**

**web: [www.esperanza.ie](http://www.esperanza.ie)**

## New Website & Electronic Actions

Congress also launched a website, **[www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org](http://www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org)** which will serve as a useful starting point for anybody seeking information and ideas for action. The development education office continues to provide a list of email contacts with campaign action ideas and updates on a regular basis.



## Campaigning for Workers' Rights in the Global Economy

The campaign pack provides a valuable source of information and ideas for action for trade unionists interested in involving their union in international issues and promoting the core labour standards as crucial tools for poverty reduction and development.

### The Core Labour Standards are:

1. Freedom of Association and the right to collective bargaining
2. Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
3. Effective abolition of child labour
4. Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

The pack also offers information around globalisation.



# Global Campaign for Education



Children show their Global Solidarity

Congress along with Teachers' unions, Concern, Oxfam Ireland and Action Aid Ireland actively promote this campaign to ensure that all children have access to primary education by 2015.

In this years Global Week of Action, Teachers' unions presented postcards to Minister Tom Kitt, T.D.; children all over the ROI and Northern Ireland took place in the World's Largest Lesson along with over one million children worldwide; a question on Education was put from Ireland to James Wolfensohn, World Bank President, during a video conference with civil society members worldwide; and Action Aid Ireland launched two reports: Global Education Review and the Sound of Silence – a report on HIV/AIDS and education strategies.

## Amnesty International & Trade Unions Celebrating 25 Years of Solidarity and Action

Amnesty International UK and the trade union movement are celebrating 25 years together protecting and promoting workers' rights.... human rights.

Jointly we have campaigned to free prisoners of conscience, to secure fair trials for political prisoners, to abolish torture and the death penalty, and to stop enforced 'disappearances' and extrajudicial executions.

Many of those we have campaigned for have been trade union members and leaders, such as Dan Byung-ho, a prisoner of conscience and President of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, who was released in April 2003, after tenacious campaigning by trade unionists in conjunction with Amnesty International.

**For more information contact Alisa or Patrick Corrigan at Amnesty International on 0 48/28 9064 3000**

## Anti-Racist Workplace Week: Migrant Workers 2002

An email campaign to urge government to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their Families was promoted by the project. Many unions also signed letters in support of this campaign that also has the support of the Human Rights Commission.



Anti-war activities

In Belfast, the Project also helped to co-ordinate activities against the war in Iraq both before and after the conflict started. This gave Congress a lead role in promoting the UN against unilateral actions that violate the UN charter and human rights. It is estimated that over 26,000 people attended these events.

## Irish Social Forum

Open Space dialogue meetings for Irish civil society to build an Irish Social Forum have been taking place in Dublin. The interim Convenor is Barry Finnegan: **phone: 01-8741223 or email: john.finnegan3@mail.dcu.ie**

People are being encouraged to get new groups involved in these meetings to dialogue and build an Irish Social Forum (ISF) and/or to come to the ISF planning and information day on May 24th 2003 which will take place at:

**The Cultivate Sustainable Living Centre,** Essex Street West, Temple Bar, Dublin 8 from 9.00a.m. to 5.30p.m. as part of the 4th Convergence Sustainable Living Festival.

This will help to introduce new people and groups to the idea of creating an Irish Social Forum.

## Fair Trade

The project has promoted the use of Fair Trade products (especially tea and coffee) within the offices of ICTU and affiliated unions.

Many unions now participate in the annual Fair Trade Fortnight in March every year. A presentation on Fair Trade was also made at the Congress Women's Conference in 2003.

**Look for the new logo in your local shop and if not there, ask why not?**



Fiona Marshall (ATNGWU), Guillermo Vargas Leiton and Alisa Keane promote Fair Trade products at Congress' Women's Seminar





*In Belfast, the project co-ordinated May Day activities that highlighted issues relating to Racism, Gender discrimination, Sectarianism and looking at "Respecting Diversity Locally and Globally"*

## Trade Unions and the WTO

The Executive Council of Congress has adopted 'An Agenda for Trade Justice', which will form the basis of trade union policy for advocacy work in the run up to the next WTO Ministerial meeting set for Cancun, Mexico in September 2003.

Concerned at the continued negative impacts of globalisation on the rights and the livelihoods of working people across the globe, trade union organisations globally are calling for measures to promote development and protect fundamental labour standards from the actions of unscrupulous governments and employers.

**For more information contact David or Alisa**



*Tens of thousands march in Belfast against War in Iraq*

## Tip the Scales for Trade Justice

We are campaigning for trade justice - not free trade - with the rules weighted to benefit poor people and the planet.

### What Can U Do?

Trade Unions and their members are asked to lobby their MP's and TD's on trade issues. There was a lobby of the Dail on 14 May and in Northern Ireland on 27 June. We are asking people to contact their MP's and ask them what they are doing about fair trade!

**For more information contact Alisa**

### What we are asking our political leaders:

#### 1 No New Powers for the World Trade Organisation

Ireland, UK and the EU should stop pressing to widen the WTO agenda. Poor countries do not have the negotiating capacity to protect their interests in the four new areas proposed.

#### 2 End the Dumping which Destroys Livelihoods

Ireland, UK and the EU must agree to end the agricultural subsidies which produce surpluses that are dumped in developing countries undermining farming livelihoods and food security.

#### 3 Trade policy making must be transparent and fair

The government must tell Westminster, the NI Assembly and the Oireachtas (parliament) where it stands on the key issues, why, and how our trade policy promotes poverty reduction and protects the environment.

#### 4 Trade Justice not Free Trade

Trade policy and practice must respect human rights, labour and environmental standards, to which both states and companies should be held accountable. Poor countries have the right to manage their economies according to their development goals - they should not be forced to open their markets.

**For more information:**  
[www.tradejusticeireland.org](http://www.tradejusticeireland.org)  
[www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk](http://www.tradejusticemovement.org.uk)

## Corporate Accountability

Congress has agreed an agenda for action with Irish NGOs on Corporate Social Responsibility.

The purpose of the network is to give an impetus to work on the issue of corporate accountability through the coordination of the individual actions of member organisations and the organisation of joint actions as appropriate. From this, the Irish Corporate Accountability Network (ICAN) has been formed.

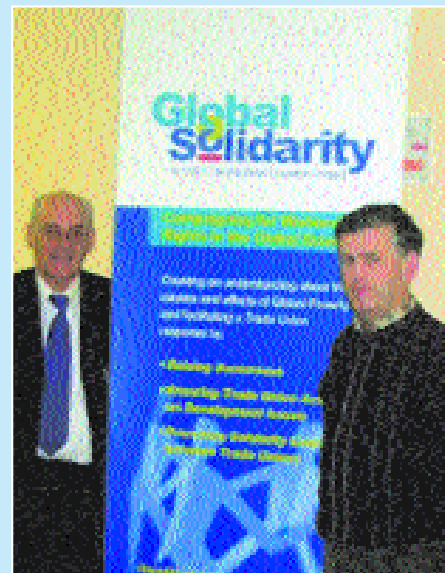
**For more information contact David Joyce**

## NI Assembly & International Development

Before the Assembly was suspended and now the postponement of elections, an All Party Group on International Development was established with Carmel Hanna MLA as Chair. This group produced the Report of the All Party Group on International Development. This report was to form an action plan on International Development work within the Assembly.

Also formed was an Advisory Board to the All Party Group made up of Social Partners on which Congress is a member.

**Watch this space for more updates.**



*Cork Trade Council supports Global Solidarity*

# Ireland Aid

Congress has been in discussions with Ireland Aid (IA) regarding a role for trade unions in IA's programmes. At a meeting in November, IA indicated that they are seeking new ways of working together with various other groups, including trade unions. They went on to identify some issues where co-operation might be in our mutual interest, including:

**Advocacy** – 370m of Irish Taxpayers money will be spent on all of this in 2003. Yet, there is very little understanding of IA's role or indeed existence. People may ask why continue to spend in the context of cutbacks etc. Congress as a Social partner in the last round of national negotiations resulting in Sustaining Progress ensured that the references to development issues and the defence of levels of expenditure in previous agreements remained.

## Policy issues including:

Labour standards and their application; their role in future trade negotiations? Co-operation on role of MNCs; Debt burden / Irish government recent policy statement has yet to be applied.

Promoting links and supporting trade unions in Ireland wishing to make links with unions in developing countries. IA is also developing a strategy on governance issues in it's priority countries, including support for civil society there. Trade unions in developing countries may usefully gain from the expertise of Irish trade unions in contributing to Irish Society. Given the requirement on developing country governments to consult with civil society in drawing up national poverty reduction programmes in order to attract loans and overseas development assistance, there is a very important role for Irish trade unions in supporting our developing world counterparts in participating in the development process. Erik Nielsen from LO Denmark also addressed the meeting on the type of cooperation LO has with DANIDA, the Danish Governments official aid programme. The Danish Trade Union

movement has been active in development assistance activities for the past 20 years. In 1988, LO and FTF formed the LO/FTF council to implement the trade union's activities. The allocation for 2002 is approx. 8 million Euro. In addition to this, some branches receive around 4 million Euro. The Danish government also contributes to the ILO with around 8 million Euro. In addition to this, some branches receive around 4 million Euro. The Danish government also contributes to the ILO with around 5.5 million Euro. From this amount, 1.5 million Euro is allocated to ACTRAV, the Workers Bureau at the ILO.

## Unions and Development Cooperation

Recent action in this area by Irish Trade Unions includes:

### IMPACT

Congratulations to **IMPACT** on the publication of their 17th Annual Report of the IMPACT Developing World Fund. The report records the expenditure of over 200,000 euros in the calendar year 2002. Details of the various IMPACT supported projects are contained in the report. These include support for PSI Affiliates in Eastern Africa. These have been weakened by the public sector reforms, which have been implemented in the region. This has both reduced their numerical strength and eroded their meagre resources. PSI has planned a union development programme for three countries. This programme consists of various projects including the present project objectives, that the selected unions will have established a functional membership database and a functional computer based accounting system.

**MANDATE** who have sent financial support to BIGUF in Bangladesh. BIGUF is the union federation in Bangladesh, whose President, Nazma Akter, features in the video "Race to the Bottom". Their donation is enabling the Trade Union to provide a clinic for textile workers.



Brian Moore of NIPSA and Nazma Akter

## NIPSA Developing World Fund

Since its establishment in 1993 the NIPSA Developing World Fund has raised over £259,000. During 2002 £28,464 was donated to projects in Belize, Lesotho Southern Africa, Rwanda and Tanzania. A number of these extend over 2 to 3 years during which time NIPSA has agreed to continue funding projects. Recently a further £12k has been provided to a number of projects these being:

- Through Oxfam NI we are providing Socio-economic support for Domestic Labourers and Street Children in Kigali Rwanda including the Rwandan Institute for Sustainable Development Rural Development in Cyeru Village.
- Through links provided by the ICTU Global Solidarity project we are working with the Tanzanian Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU) on an AIDS/HIV Education project for Plantation Workers.

Two further projects are under consideration in partnership with Oxfam and War-on-Want. In a number of the projects supported strong links are being established with other trade unions in the developing world. Central to the objectives and associated activities of the projects is work in the field of education, advocacy, skills enhancement, employment and improved terms and working conditions including the right to organise labour.

**For more information, contact  
Kieran Bannon at NIPSA  
on 028/48 90 66 1831**



# Confronting terror with trade union action

## Focus on Colombia

During last year trade unionists affiliated to the CUT faced persistent and extremely serious violations of their human rights. The CUT has provided information showing that some 172 members were assassinated, 164 threatened with death, 26 kidnapped, 7 forcibly disappeared, 132 arbitrarily detained and around 80 others forced into exile.

These violations were the direct consequence of the trade union activity of the victims. Of the three trade union federations, the CUT continues to be hardest hit, with the affiliated Colombian Federation of Educators (FECODE) alone suffering from 79 assassinations, some 45.9 per cent of the total. In 6.14 per cent (33 of the total cases) the victims were female union members, the majority working in the service sector.

On 20 February 2003 teacher Juan Antonio Bohorquez Medina, a member of the trade union executive for the municipality of Bituima, was kidnapped or 'disappeared'. Three days later his body was found. He had been horribly murdered.

On 5 March 2003 Tereza Baez Rodríguez, President of the SINTRACLÍNICAS hospital workers union in Bucaramanga, was arrested and charged with rebellion. During February she had received numerous death threats. In 2002 she was the victim of an attempted kidnapping. On 8 March 2003 Robinson Beltrán Herrera, President of the SINTRAEELECOL union was arrested and charged with rebellion and terrorism. Five years ago he spent three years in prison on the same charges before being absolved of the charges and released.

### 'The most dangerous place in the world to be a trade union activist'

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, Annual survey of violations of trade union rights 2002.



### 'Somebody has to save Colombia and its people from a completely chaotic and unjust society'

Jesus Gonzalez, former Director, Human Rights Department, CUT Colombia.

### 'Trade unionists are killed, they are murdered or they 'disappear'...

Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to be a trade union leader or activist. The number of trade unionists killed in Colombia over recent years is sickening. In 2001 184 were assassinated. More than 170 were assassinated in 2002. In the first two months of 2003 the figures had already risen into double figures. Since 1986, over 4,000 have been assassinated. The standards against which we measure employment and labour rights in Colombia are distorted by the nature of the extreme violence perpetrated against trade unionists. It is basic human rights standards that are evoked by trade unions calling for investigations into the murder or disappearance of their colleagues, rather than complex arguments about labour laws. There are legal restrictions on the freedom to participate in collective bargaining or to call strikes which are contrary to ILO standards, but the biggest restriction on effective trade union organisation is the alarming frequency with which death threats issued by the paramilitaries coincide with negotiations or strike action.

Public sector unions have been particularly hard hit by the violence. Public-sector

union leaders who denounce corruption in public institutions are often labelled as guerrilla sympathisers by corrupt public officials who wish to deflect criticism, leaving the union leaders vulnerable to paramilitary attacks. The State's increasingly draconian attempts to comply with the dictates of IMF-imposed structural adjustment have had their severest impact among public sector workers, whose organisations have responded with increasing determination, which in turn has drawn more repression from both State institutions and paramilitary forces.

## Multinationals

Many US and other multinationals benefit from the natural wealth of Colombia and just because trade unionists work for a multinational does not mean that they will benefit from the human rights normal in the home state of that company. Numerous trade unionists working for Coca Cola – which is responsible for many jobs in Colombia – have been assassinated or been victims of violence over the years. This has led unions and human rights



groups in the US to launch a vigorous legal case against the soft drink giant. However, it should surprise no one that this has led to reprisals in Colombia.

## The Civil War

Many of Colombia's problems arise from the political violence and civil war that has gripped the country for decades. A combination of a repressive state, right-wing paramilitaries supported by the State, drug-related organised crime and the activities of left-wing guerrillas have led to the development of one of the most violent countries in the world. The vast majority of the violations of human rights in Colombia directed at trade unionists come from the right-wing paramilitary groups. It is also true that the armed opposition groups, including the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), are responsible for some kidnappings, disappearances and assassinations.

This is a minority of cases. Trade unionists have often led the calls for the development of a meaningful peace process, but this has sometimes led to serious consequences.

## Government

According to Amnesty International the Colombian Government has failed to take decisive action to dismantle the army-backed paramilitary groups responsible for the majority of human rights violations against trade unionists and to ensure that those responsible for human rights violations against trade unionists are brought to justice. The failure to adequately resource the protection program, to take all measures necessary to guarantee the security of trade unionists, to ensure that full and impartial investigations into human rights violations against trade unionists and that those responsible are brought to justice has led to a cycle of increased attacks against trade unionists and a climate of impunity.

## What you can do:

1. Sign up to receive a regular bulletin on Colombia from Global Solidarity.
2. Join thousands of trade unionists and sign the online protest at Labourstart [www.labourstart.org](http://www.labourstart.org)
3. Contact ICTU Global Solidarity for information on our Colombian Campaign.

Thanks to ICTUR Colombia Newsletter, Issue one, March/April 2003

# End Child Labour



*The Global March against Child Labour came through Dublin in 1998*

Congress is delighted to be cooperating, along with Teachers' unions, with Concern on their child labour initiative:

## School is the best place to Work

This is a public awareness, education and advocacy campaign that seeks to contribute to the eradication of child labour by ensuring provision of elementary education for all children working as labourers, by 2015. The campaign will engage with a wide variety of civil society groups, educators, students and policy makers. The campaign will encourage broad based support for national policies in three European Union member states, as well as seeking improvements in EU Official Development Aid, particularly as it relates to education and progress toward related international development targets. Through theatre, video production, exchange visits with southern partners, education resource packs, information leaflets and multi media communication, along with meetings with parliamentarians at member state and EU levels, the campaign will be an active and energetic movement for change. The project will be launched on May 16th.

Our involvement in this initiative is timely as a call for Urgent Action on child labour was made by the Global March against child labour on their Fifth Anniversary, 17 January 2003. Over the last five years the problem of child labour and the need for universal quality education have become among the top issues on the international agenda. Decades of denial have finally given way to the realisation that no society can hope to prosper when its children are

being exploited. Since its start the Global March has brought together a movement of over 2000 partners in 140 countries to lead the fight against child labour. As a united voice for NGOs, trade unions, teachers associations, and individual activists, the Global March has time and again reminded the world that all children must be protected from exploitation and abuse. The all too common practice of using young children as child servants, soldiers, prostitutes, plantation workers, drug traffickers, or ragpickers has been a disgrace for the whole of humanity. With the Global March, child labourers themselves have passionately pleaded the case that children should be in good schools and not be put to work.

**"Children are the future of the country, but they are working. I want to ask the governments, what their future is?"**

said Pintu, a former child stone crusher.

The gap between awareness and action has never been wider. The ILO estimates that even today 246 million children are working as child labourers, with almost three-quarters of them caught in the worst forms. Kailash Satyarthi, Chairperson of the Global March, appealed to all people to make this crisis their call to action. "Will we sit comfortably in our homes and offices as we watch the life and spirit of countless children disappear before our very eyes? If we fail to act now we are no less responsible than the worst exploiter."

Congress is proud to retain our association with the Global March Against Child labour.

More Info @ <http://globalmarch.org>  
[www.schoolisthebestplacetowork.org](http://www.schoolisthebestplacetowork.org)



## The Tobin Tax Initiative-Ireland

Part of a global citizens' campaign to encourage governments to tax the speculative financial transactions engaged in by banks and investment houses. Named after the Nobel prize-winning economist James Tobin, the tax could raise up to 200 billion Euros per annum to be used in poverty eradication and environmental protection in the Developing World. The campaign has a website [www.tobintaxireland.ie](http://www.tobintaxireland.ie) from where you can send an email to your TD/MLA/MP urging them to support the idea. **Why not add your voice?**

## Debt Cancellation Campaign

Happy 1st Birthday on July 19th to the R.O.I. government's 2002 100% debt cancellation statement. The debt and development coalition Ireland have published postcards urging government to mark this anniversary with a new commitment to the policy.

"We call on you to reject the IMF and World Bank's pleas of poverty and press them to cancel debt of the poorest countries. In order that the public can follow the debate, we also urge you to publish all statements made on debt by Ireland at these institutions.

Ireland will hold the EU presidency in 2004. Make 100% debt cancellation one of your priorities for the presidency.

Cards available from Angela at:  
**+353 (01) 857 1828**

and more information at:  
[www.debtireland.org](http://www.debtireland.org)

"...challenge facing many poor countries is their continuing level of unsustainable debt. The World Bank's leadership in implementing the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) has provided much needed relief from a crushing burden. However, it has not been enough. Too many countries emerging from HIPC continue to have debt levels that are unsustainable. ... Last year Ireland adopted an updated strategy on debt. We believe that the international community's overall support for NEPAD, and for countries committed to good governance and sound economic management, means that total debt cancellation is a politically acceptable objective and one that we would support.

We are aware of the Bank's views and the arguments used to defend the current HIPC approach. Nonetheless, we continue to see great merit in a much more ambitious approach to dealing with the HIPC debt burden. This is an issue we will continue to discuss with our friends and colleagues at the Bank and at the IMF. We must work together to ensure that the debt burden cannot frustrate our common goal of poverty reduction through strong and sustained pro-poor growth."

*The Taoiseach at the World Bank, March 2003.*



TV's 'Hole in the Wall Gang' joined demonstrators outside Belfast City Hall to demand debt relief for the poorest countries. Caught in a cycle of loans to pay off debts, poor governments have little power against the international financial institutions.

## New Report Documents Working Conditions in Southern Africa

A just-released (December 2002) report entitled **"Made in Southern Africa"** documents the findings of a two-year research project that investigated garment industry conditions in Swaziland, Botswana, Mauritius, Madagascar, and Lesotho. The picture is not pretty. Researchers, from the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) in the Netherlands and the Trade Union Research Project (TURP) in South Africa, found a variety of serious workplace problems, ranging from union repression and low wages to forced overtime and health and safety concerns. This lengthy report (97 pages) includes a profile of the industry in each of the countries studied, as well as individual factory profiles and a discussion of the impact of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), the expansion of the US General System of Preferences that went into effect in 2000, on the garment industry.

Prior to this study, carried out between 2000 and 2002, there had been little documentation of working conditions in this sector in the region. The vast amount of information gathered together in this report will be useful to those seeking to get a better grasp of the reality faced by garment workers in Southern Africa. The researchers involved in this project stress that their aim was to carry out campaign-oriented research, i.e. connect their findings to good use by having a link to worker organizing or education efforts, and direct action initiatives to pressure companies for improvements in the industry and the empowerment of garment workers. The chapter on Lesotho (a country which Ireland has a bilateral aid relationship with) demonstrates the potential of a commitment to such follow up to research, documenting the events that took place to date following the dissemination of the research findings there, including a government level investigation into industry conditions.

To get a copy of this informative report, please visit:

[www.cleanclothes.org](http://www.cleanclothes.org)

**Global Solidarity**  
An ICTU Development Education Project

## Life Long Learning, Education & Training

In order for unions to take informed action on international issues it is essential that they are provided with educational opportunities to increase their level of knowledge, skills necessary to do so.

The Global Solidarity project is trying to move away from delivering one off training sessions at trade union courses towards a situation whereby development education is embedded as core components of union training and delivered by a trained team of union tutors.

The Workers' rights pack and the video *Race to the Bottom* are very useful additions to the range of materials now available for development education. We also have tutor notes to accompany these.

**If you are interested in being part of this initiative, please contact Alisa or David**



*Trade unionists take part in the May Global Solidarity Seminar*



*'We were cheap labour once' says a Derry woman in the film 'Race to the Bottom'*

## Solidarity Committees

The Solidarity Committees (NI and ROI) continue to be the vital link between Congress and affiliates on solidarity issues. These Committees work closely with the Global Solidarity Project to ensure that it reaches affiliated unions of Congress and meet regularly during the year. They continue to act as a link between the project, their individual unions, and the membership.

These Committees encourage affiliates to engage with the project and look to embed solidarity linking within trade union structure.

Some affiliates (NIPSA, IMPACT, PSEU and ESBOA) have formed their own structures to engage with international solidarity issues.

**If you would like more information, please contact Alisa or David**

### Republic of Ireland

David Joyce  
Development Education Officer  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)  
32 Parnell Square  
Dublin 1

**t.** +353 (01) 889 7746  
**f.** +353 (01) 887 2012  
**e.** david.joyce@ictu.ie  
**w.** www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org  
**w.** www.ictu.ie

### Northern Ireland

Alisa Keane  
Development Education Officer  
Northern Ireland Committee  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)  
3 Crescent Gardens, Belfast BT7 1NS

**t.** +44 (028) 9024 7940  
**f.** +44 (028) 9024 6898  
**e.** alisa.keane@ictuni.org  
**w.** www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org  
**w.** www.ictuni.org

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