

Newsflash

Trade Union Alliance to Combat Forced Labour and Trafficking



Dear friends,

This is a newsletter of the Global Trade Union Alliance to Combat Forced Labour and Trafficking. It is aimed at everyone interested and contains information about trade union activities to combat forced labour and human trafficking all around the world. The Alliance is led by the International Trade Union Confederation and financially supported by the Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour of the International Labour Organisation. It promotes decent work for all and, more specifically, geographical and institutional commitment and cooperation to eradicating forced labour and human trafficking as its very antithesis.

The **ITUC** is developing a **Best Practices guide** on trade unions' work in the fight against forced labour and human trafficking, based on information collected through a survey. All trade unionists are kindly asked to complete the **questionnaire** following the links below and sent it back before the 28 August to merixhan.mehmeti@ituc-csi.org or by fax to +32 2 224 02 97. Please also send any additional information programmes, activities and campaigns, photographs and images which can be added to our guide. For further information please call +32 2 224 03 12.

[ITUC Circular Letter to Affiliates](#)
[Questionnaire](#)

[ITUC](#) WTO reports on Core Labour Standards:
[Solomon Islands](#)
[Morocco](#)
[Zambia](#)
[Guyana](#)
[New Zealand](#)

[ITUC interview](#) with G. Rajasekaran, General Secretary of the **Malaysian Trade Union Congress MTUC**, about trade union initiatives designed to help the two million migrant workers in Malaysia and denouncing the exploitation suffered by domestic workers, a particularly vulnerable category of migrants. See also the latest [press statement](#) by the MTUC in response to the horrific domestic worker abuse/torture on June 9th.

The **German Trade Union Confederation (DGB)** has issued a [paper](#) (in German) describing the situation of undocumented migrants in Germany. In addition to quoting a few examples of "good practices", the DGB also formulates some policy requirements. (source: [PICUM](#) Newsletter)

ITUC Africa held a Regional writers' workshop in Nairobi, Kenya, from 23 to 26 March 2009 on the theme "developing African trade union strategies addressing Child labour, Forced Labour, Labour Migration and Human Trafficking". Click [here](#) and [here](#) to consult the 2 reports of this workshop.



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[ITUC interview](#) of Titus Mlengeya, National Chairman of the **IUF** affiliated **Tanzanian Conservation, Hotels, Domestic and Allied Workers' Union (CHODAWU)**, outlining trade union action to defend domestic workers and to combat domestic child labour:

“Children who have been trafficked and then rescued by our programme are now helping us to identify other mistreated children and adult domestics suffering from exploitation, and bring them to our centres. It is also a means of recruiting them as members and letting them open up about their grievances so that CHODAWU can try to help resolve the problems with their employers.”

The **ITUC** started up a new [project](#) called “Creating a European coalition of trade unions and NGOs to prevent violence and protect women and young people in the workplace, with a specific focus on trafficking” in partnership with [Anti-Slavery](#) International and funded by the [European Union](#). For more information, please contact [Sergejus Glovackas](#) in the ITUC Vilnius Office. ([job offer](#))

In Ireland, the trade unions have negotiated a [Code of Practice](#) which is a product of social partnership and agreed between government, employers and workers. This Code emphasises domestic workers’ right to be recognised as workers and protected by employment rights. The **Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)** is strongly in favour of an enforceable Convention and continues to campaign for this at ILO level and at national level. In this connection, the **ICTU** has published a [booklet](#) in collaboration with its largest affiliate **SIPTU** and the NGO [Migrants Rights Centre Ireland](#). Additionally, the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform has edited a “[National action plan](#) to prevent and combat trafficking of human beings in Ireland 2009-2012” in consultation with the **Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)**.

The **Swedish Wood & Forestry Union**, a **BWI** affiliate, has highlighted another case of migrant forestry workers being swindled out of their rights by a foreign-based labour agency. The company has been supplying workers to two companies in the Swedish forestry industry, including the multinational forest products giant Stora Enso. The union is representing its 13 members who were employed by the company, all of whom are of Polish origin. For two months they received no wages or overtime payments. (Source: <http://www.skogstrafacket.org>)

On 30 April 2009, a [joint statement](#) on migrant workers was signed by the **UATUC Croatia** and the **ZSSS Slovenia**, at a meeting entitled “Trade Unions without Borders”. Both trade union organisations agreed to inform migrant workers about their rights and to provide free legal assistance and education.

The **ITUC** has issued a new [circular](#) letter with [a briefing for trade unionists](#) on reporting obligations under the ILO supervisory mechanisms. Submissions of observations have to be sent by 31 August to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) with a copy to: turights@ituc-csi.org. Please send your comments on the application of Conventions 29 and 105 in your country. Feel free to ask for guidance or assistance at the abovementioned address.

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The Dutch [FNV Bondgenoten](#) has published a [brochure](#), containing a specimen contract and information on where to go for special protection, shelter, financial help and a lawyer in the event of serious exploitation and human trafficking in the domestic work sector.

[ITUC interview](#) with Maung Maung, General Secretary of the **Federation of Trade Unions of Burma FTUB**, who talks about the Burmese trade union movement and the current state of affairs in Burma: international sanctions, the trial of Aung San Suu Kyi, the 2010 elections, the economic collapse, etc., as well as the first ever FTUB Congress held in March 2009.

The **Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA)**, the ITUC Regional Organisation of the Americas, and the Centre for Migrant Support (CAMI) received a Paraguayan Government delegation. About 35,000 Paraguayans were living illegally in the city of Sao Paolo. They all benefited from the recently passed Brazilian amnesty law. Several took the floor and described their experiences of migration, working conditions, dismissal and exploitation.

The **Kuwait Trade Union Federation (KTUF)** related the [story](#) of *Muhnadiramla Athula who was working during 10 years as a housemaid for a family in Kuwait, far from her native South Asian village, without receiving a dinar for her labour. Although she finally managed to escape and seek refuge at her embassy, she can't go home because her employer will not give up her passport.* A partnership agreement was signed between the **National Workers' Congress of Sri Lanka** and the KTUF on looking after migrant workers (Source: AFL-CIO [Solidarity Center](#))

The Spanish trade union **Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO.)** filed a complaint with the Public Prosecutor following an [accident](#) suffered by an undocumented worker at a bakery in Valencia. He had his arm cut off by an industrial machine. His employer threw the severed arm away, promptly removed the Bolivian national from the bakery and left him 200 metres from a hospital to fend for himself.

The **Georgian Trade Union Federation (GTUC)** adopted a Trade Union Anti-trafficking Policy, in the framework of a regional ILO project on “development of a comprehensive anti-trafficking response in South Caucasus”. On 25 March 2009, a “[Training on Trafficking, Migration and Forced Labour](#)” was held. The meeting covered problems of trafficking, migration issues, forced labour issues, supply and demand issues and Georgia as a transit route.

[Seven Ugandan girls](#) from a group of 16, who were recruited by the Ugandan Veterans Association to work in Iraq as secretaries and supermarket attendants, have disappeared after being lured into a slave racket in Iraq. In fact they were sold to different people who rushed to 'buy' them like 'goats in a market', and some of them were tortured and raped. The Chairman General of the **National Organisations for Trade Unions Uganda (NOTU)** urged the government to ensure that the girls working as slaves are rescued and returned home. There are over 12,000 Ugandan guards in Iraq. They are recruited through several agencies, including the Ugandan Veterans Association.



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12 June is the **World Day against Child Labour**. The global spotlight has been placed on the plight of children in child labour around the world. The World Day also celebrated the tenth anniversary of **ILO Convention 182**, concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. According to the [ILO](#), more than 100 million girls are involved in child labour, many in its most dangerous and exploitative forms. Trade union organisations, such as the [ICEM](#), are convinced that the first and most important tool step towards decent work is education. Education for children and young adults is the surest and securest way to escape poverty and secure a decent livelihood as an adult.

By publishing a new [report](#) called “*Give girls a chance*”, the [TUC \(UK\)](#) warns that the global economic crisis could impede achievements made recently in reducing child labour and getting more girls into school. The report emphasises the multiple disadvantages girls face, which result in the worst forms of child labour.

The [ITUC](#) has launched a new [video spot](#) to highlight the problem and press governments to tackle the exploitation of children more effectively, both through funding quality education and enforcing labour law.

The [US AFL-CIO Solidarity Center](#), along with its union and community partners, is fighting to eliminate forced and child labour and child trafficking worldwide. Its work is focused, *inter alia*, on:

- the eradication of child labour by removing girls from mines in the [Congo](#) and enrolling them in vocational training courses;
- the fight against child trafficking and forced labour on agricultural plantations, in the fishing industry and in domestic work in [Kenya](#);
- the solving of problems of millions of children by requiring a comprehensive approach directed at policymakers and the public alike in [Pakistan](#);
- the coalition of concerned organisations working together with major brands, retailers and industry associations to end state-sponsored child labour in [Uzbekistan](#)’s cotton fields.

Useful information:

The [ILO](#) published an [article](#) explaining difficulties in defining the fine line between labour exploitation and forced labour. The article shows that Zambia is one of the African countries to have taken steps both to understand the problems through research and to instigate measures to combat them.

A network of intergovernmental agencies and international civil society groups chaired by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has launched a [guide](#) on strengthening **legal protection of migrants’ rights**. (source: [PICUM](#) Newsletter)

The Environmental Justice Foundation ([EJF](#)) has published a new [guide](#), “**Somebody Knows**” explaining how retailers can investigate their supply chain, by **knowing where their cotton comes from and by** tracing the production of their goods from raw materials to finished



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products, enabling them to eliminate cotton produced through environmentally or socially unacceptable practices, such as that from Uzbekistan.

According to a new [report](#) published by the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility ([ECCR](#)), the flexible **migrant workers in the United Kingdom and Ireland** remain vulnerable to very low pay, excessively long hours, poor health and safety conditions, workplace discrimination and other forms of injustice. The report compares the policies and practices of nine food production, manufacturing and supermarket companies towards migrant workers, particularly in their **supply chains**. An important element is *strengthening monitoring by increasing regularity and coverage and ensuring that migrant, temporary and agency workers are involved in audits, as well as trade unions and/or other groups that support migrant workers' rights.*

The [ILO](#) has edited a new [training manual](#) for judges, prosecutors and legal practitioners on "Forced Labour and Human Trafficking: Casebook of Court Decisions". This manual fills an important gap as it covers a range of national experience, from judicial decisions on forced and bonded labour in a number of developing countries, through to the more recent decisions on forced labour and trafficking in industrialised countries.

The Women's UN Report Programme & Network ([WUNRN](#)) [video](#) showing the particular misery faced by **women and children** in indentured servitude in **Nepal**.

[GISTI](#), an association specialised in **foreigners' rights**, has published a new [book](#) called "Defend the foreigners' cause in judicial process". This book is a compilation of **strategies developed by NGOs, trade unions and lawyers** to defend foreigners in court and gathers thirty years of litigation before administrative and judicial judges, the European Court of Human Rights and all case law concerning foreigners' conditions. (Source: [PICUM](#) Newsletter)

On 7 July, the [EU Fundamental Rights Agency](#) (FRA) released a [report on the role of the European Union in the fight against child trafficking](#), in which they call for better legislation to combat child trafficking. FRA Director Morten Kjaerum said: *"Human trafficking is part of the modern slave trade. Every year, a significant number of children in the EU fall victim to trafficking for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, adoption and organ extraction. These are alarming signals. We must make every possible effort to protect and support these children".*

A **new domestic labour law in Bahrain** will regulate the working hours and living conditions of domestic staff such as housemaids, drivers, childminders and cooks. This new law would **complement Bahrain's anti-trafficking law** which was enacted in January 2008. Bahrain also has labour Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and looks forward to signing others with the Philippines and Thailand. (Source: [Gulf Daily News](#))

A New York Times [editorial](#) raised the issue of why unions would endorse the **regularisation of undocumented migrants in the United States**, as the country's two big labour unions have done. The unions seem to understand that immigration reform is an issue of worker



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empowerment. The undocumented migrants undercut wages and job conditions for Americans by tolerating low pay and abuse because they cannot stand up for their rights.

On 29 April in the European Parliament, 50 social workers who are members of the NGO network [Solidar](#) launched a [declaration](#) calling for a more social Europe. Calling for migration and integration policies based on rights and human dignity, Solidar recommends better balancing between the needs of host societies with the **needs and interests of migrant workers**, urging the EU to promote framework conditions in the social protection systems.

Ms Gulnara Shahinian, the **Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery** (the first-ever Special Rapporteur in this field) of the [OHCHR](#) voiced her deep concern, in a [press release](#), about the highly exploitative nature of the '**restavek**' **system in Haiti**, which she said is tantamount to slavery. Demand for child slaves has shifted from wealthy families to poorer ones, resulting in an "alarming" situation for children in Haiti. (Source: [UN News Centre](#))

Thousands of **women** are continually trafficked from West Africa to Europe in a multi-million dollar criminal industry. It is estimated that **West African trafficking victims** comprise about 10 per cent of the forced sexual labour pool in Western Europe (Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, [UNODC website](#)).

Events:

- **18 June 2009:** *(Non-sex industry) labour trafficking: A forum to discuss trafficking in persons in contexts other than the commercial sex industry*, held at the Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, Australia, tel +61 2 6260 9232, fax +61 2 6260 9201, www.aic.gov.au – Please use the following link to get a copy of the forum's programme and downloadable versions of the presentation slides: <http://www.aic.gov.au/events/aic%20upcoming%20events/2009/labourtrafficking.aspx>. For further information on this topic please visit the AIC [people trafficking](#) page.
- **28-29 August 2009** : ICTU [Summer School](#) with a session on Forced Labour and Trafficking.
- **17-18 September 2009**: CSA meeting in Paraguay on Migrants and Human Trafficking
- **8 October 2009**: Panel discussion "*What Not to Wear - Cotton and Child Slavery*" on the use of child slavery in the Uzbek cotton industry, organised by Anti-Slavery International, Amnesty International and the Environmental Justice Foundation in the United Kingdom. You can book your place online by going to www.amnesty.org.uk/events_details.asp?ID=1202. More info on the use of child slavery in the Uzbek cotton industry at: www.antislavery.org/homepage/campaign/Uzbekistan_cotton_industry.htm.



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- **13-15 October 2009:** ITUC-PERC AntiSlavery International Regional workshop, Bucharest Romania.

If you know other people interested in the issue please forward this newsletter and invite them to subscribe by emailing lyris@forum.ituc-csi.org and write “subscribe forcedlabour” in the message body or send an email to forcedlabour@ituc-csi.org .

You are kindly invited to send any relevant information to be included in the next issue.

For more information please contact forcedlabour@ituc-csi.org

Website: www.ituc-csi.org/forcedlabour



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