

Van: Solidar <Abigail.Goundry@solidar.org>
Aan: veerle.solia@amsab.be
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Onderwerp: SOLIDAR Weekly Round Up 16-05-2008

SOLIDARity actions in Burma

More than a week after the cyclone hit Burma, reports from the region now say that the death toll has reached 78,000 and that aid is still too slow getting to the areas worst hit. Furthermore Foreign Aid staff have been banned from going to the Irrawaddy delta area which was the region worst hit by the cyclone.

SOLIDAR members have been organising themselves and we can report that a team from Norwegian People's Aid has successfully managed to distribute goods through a local partner organisation in the Irrawaddy delta area. Swiss Solidarity Fund has also expressed its readiness to fund rehabilitation and reconstruction projects after the first relief phase.

News from SOLIDAR consortium in Sri Lanka

A Provincial Council election was held in the Eastern province of Sri Lanka with the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) sealing the most number of seats in this hotly contested Province. This was the first time in two decades that such an election has been held in the Province following the government taking control of almost all of the Eastern Province in July 2007. The Opposition United National Party (UNP) has alleged the election was not free and fair and has vowed to stage protests against the outcome.

Heads of the SOLIDAR Consortium and the rest of the international non-governmental Organisations (INGOs) which are operating in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) controlled Vanni region, came together at a joint retreat this week to discuss operational challenges and constraints and most importantly to identify combined action points for the future as the conflict intensifies in Northern areas. Amongst those organisations that took part in the meeting were Save the Children, Oxfam UK, World University Service of Canada (WUSC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Care International and ZOA Refugee Care. A few representatives of these INGOs also had a meeting with the Vanni Security Forces Commander. This meeting was followed by a separate meeting that the SOLIDAR Consortium had with its key Northern Programme staff with an aim to improve the programmatic and operational aspects of SOLIDAR's Northern Programme.

[Read the letter of support](#) that the SOLIDAR Board sent to SOLIDAR Consortium in Sri Lanka

Israel at Sixty

Aaron Barnea from the Parents Circle-Families Forum for Peace, Silver Rose winners in 2007, commented on Israel's 60th anniversary, saying that: *"For us, Israeli families who lost their beloved in the conflict, and have decided to actively engage in stretching hands to Palestinian bereaved families, the 60th anniversary is a good opportunity to assess the challenges facing us, and solemnly declare that we will not rest until we shall see our people joining us in our call for peace and reconciliation with our neighbors."*

In the SOLIDAR Board meeting which took place on 15 May in Brussels, the Board agreed that *"SOLIDAR should support the work of its members on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Promoting solidarity and social justice amongst all Palestinians and Israeli will ensure the enforcement of human rights set out in the Universal Declaration and bring about sustainable solutions for peace"*.

Read the [full message from Aaron](#)

Take action against the arrest of trade union leaders in Zimbabwe

Last week, the President and Secretary General of the most representative international trade union in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), were arrested and questioned on speeches that they made on May Day. Whilst attending their trial, the General Secretary of the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ) and member of the General Council of the ZCTU, was then also arrested. All three men are now being held in illegal detention by President Mugabe.

SOLIDAR fully supports the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in urging President Mugabe to immediately release Lovemore Motombo, Wellington Chibebe and Raymond Majongwe and drop all charges against them. Your organisation can also, like SOLIDAR, take action by filling in the template letter (below) drafted by the ITUC and sending it to President Mugabe.

ITUC's [template letter](#) to release the trade union leaders in Zimbabwe

Spotlight on the social economy in Europe

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament (EP) together with the Social Economy Intergroup in the EP held this week a thematic focus on the role of the social economy in Europe, in which social economy enterprises and organisations - cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations - play a crucial role in facilitating labour market inclusion of vulnerable groups and disadvantaged persons and their empowerment.

During a conference on 15 May, speakers from the European institutions and the social economy stressed the contribution of social economy organisations to social cohesion, solidarity amongst groups within society and sustainable development. Many of them supported the call of Social Economy Europe to the European Commission to put the proposal for European statutes for mutual societies, associations and foundations back on the agenda. SOLIDAR contributed to this conference with a presentation from the perspective of social NGOs organised as associations. It critically assessed the Lisbon Strategy's focus on jobs and growth at the expense of social cohesion and sustainable development and highlighted challenges and concerns linked to the legal and policy framework for social services of general interest (SSGI).

Visit the [Social Economy Europe website](#)

Read the [press release of French delegation of Socialist Group in the European Parliament on conference \(in French\)](#)

Participate in building your Social Europe

As you now may be aware, SOLIDAR and its French members and the 'Maison de l'Europe' will jointly organise a conference on Social Europe on 25 June in Paris. The conference will discuss two main issues: (Social) Services of General Interest and Decent Work and Decent Life/Building Inclusive Societies. In addition to the initial English to French interpretation, German will also be available.

As this event is taking place just before the start of the French EU Presidency, this is a unique opportunity for SOLIDAR members to gather their forces together to create a joint statement on social Europe which will be presented in person by SOLIDAR French members to the President of France.

See the updated Social Europe programme in [English](#), [French](#), [German](#)

Make your voice heard and participate in the Citizens' Agora

Another excellent opportunity for citizens to enter into direct dialogue with the European Union is the **second Citizens' Agora** taking place on the 12-13 June. SOLIDAR is actively encouraging all members to participate as the debate should not be left only to the usual suspects. This event will allow for a free and frank discussion on the social aspects of climate change directly with the European Parliament and we would like SOLIDAR to be strongly represented at this event.

[Join](#) the British, Spanish and Finnish SOLIDAR members at the Citizens' Agora

2011 - European Year for Volunteering?

More than 100 Million Europeans do it - day after day. They put our European values of solidarity and social cohesion into practice and contribute an average of 3% to our GDP - and they nevertheless remain largely invisible in European policy making. In order to make volunteering the European Year in 2011, a coalition has been formed which includes The European Volunteer Center (CEV), SOLIDAR and all Social Platform members. SOLIDAR's member Community Service Volunteers (CSV) is very active in the mobilisation campaign.

The coalition has decided to first mobilise Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), through a written declaration, which MEPs can sign during plenary sessions. Until now, nearly 100 MEPs have signed the Declaration and we urge you to join us in our support for more attention to volunteering and its contribution to our societies.

You can help by contacting your national members of the European Parliament, [find out how](#)

Sign the Call for Action for Decent Work

Job Opening at War on Want

SOLIDAR members War on Want are looking for an International Programmes Director, [find out more](#)

5	SOLIDAR International Cooperation Committee meeting, Brussels
6	SOLIDAR Balkan Network meeting, Brussels
5-6	European Commission Conference: Responding to new social realities: Developing an EU Agenda for Opportunities, Access and Solidarity, Brussels
7	European Parliament: Presentation of EUROCITIES position on SGI and SSGI, Brussels
7-9	Olof Palme Balkans Study Visit: European Enlargement - Social Perspectives in the Western Balkans, Brussels
15	SOLIDAR Board meeting, Brussels
15	European Parliament, PES Group and Social Economy Europe: Conference on Social Economy, Brussels
22-23	SOLIDAR New Orientation Framework (NOF) meeting - Helsinki, Finland
3	SOLIDAR Social Affairs Committee meeting, Brussels
3-4	SOLIDAR New Orientation Framework (NOF) meeting - Madrid, Spain
12-13	European Parliament 2 nd Citizens Agora on Climate Change, Brussels
25	SOLIDAR France & SOLIDAR network: For a Social Europe-Pour une Europe Sociale, Maison de l'Europe, Paris
2	SOLIDAR Annual General Meeting
4-6	European Civic Forum - mobility, dialogue, participation: towards an active European citizenship", La Rochelle, France
15	SOLIDAR Silver Rose Awards 2008 and 60 Years Anniversary, Brussels
28-29	2 nd Forum on Social Services of General Interest, Paris
30-2	Volonturope 2008, Genoa, Italy

SOLIDAR is a European network of 42 members working for social and economic justice in Europe and around the world. SOLIDAR's Weekly Round Up provides you with the latest information and news from SOLIDAR and our members, as well as other issues of interest and European developments.

If you have any comments or wish to have further information on any of the articles featured in the Weekly Round Up, please do not hesitate to contact SOLIDAR's Communications Officer [Abigail](#)

Tel +32 2 500 1020 Fax +32 2 500 1030
Rue du Commerce 22, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium
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www.solidar.org