

FROM WASHINGTON TO GAZA TO BELEM: SETTING THE GLOBAL SOCIAL AGENDA

This week has seen the festivities around Barak Obama's arrival in the White House which we all regard as a historic step forward and which we all load with expectations. Besides the historical dimension of the inauguration, the enthusiasm it has provoked is the translation of the hope of millions of people in the US and worldwide for a charismatic and wise leadership to build a better and more just world where the United States has a particular responsibility and must play another role than the one played over the last eight years. [Read more...](#)

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

SOLIDAR SENDS LETTER TO EU COUNCIL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTERS ON GAZA

In the aftermath of Israel's military operation in Gaza leading to a flurry of diplomacy on both sides of the Atlantic, SOLIDAR and its members have written a letter, based on the common SOLIDAR position agreed on in the last ICC, to the European Council whose Foreign Affairs Ministers will meet on Monday 26 January to call for the EU to take decisive measures to ensure a just and lasting peace to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Underlining the importance of respect for international law, SOLIDAR has called on EU member states to use their so-called "soft power" to hold Israel accountable for its actions and to politically engage itself in the peace process.

Specifically, SOLIDAR has asked for the EU to exert political pressure to ensure that:

1. The Israeli government grants immediate access to humanitarian aid and materials necessary for reconstruction by opening the border crossings and ending the blockade of Gaza;
2. The Egyptian government commits to the same vis-à-vis the opening of the Rafah crossing;
3. All parties agree to an end to all violence;
4. A full investigation into accusations of possible war crimes committed.

[Read the full letter.](#)

SOLIDAR AT WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

SOLIDAR, in a delegation led by its President and Secretary General, will be present at the World Social Forum taking place in Belem from 27 Jan - 1 Feb 2009, in order to send a strong message to the World Economic Forum that civil society wants to see fundamental changes in the coming months so as to ensure social and economic justice for all.

Together with the Decent Work Decent Life Alliance and Global Network partners, SOLIDAR will organise activities on questions relating to migration, social protection, the financial crisis, the impact of Chinese investment in Africa and Latin America and the importance of building alliances for Decent Work. Many SOLIDAR members will also present activities.

[Read full list of SOLIDAR & members activities.](#)

SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

The international media have given extended coverage to the assassination of the editor of the Sri Lankan 'Sunday Leader' and his editorial predicting the complicity of the Sri Lankan government in his death. There has been little publicity about continuing assassinations in the East of the country (24 deaths recorded by UNHCR in November) and the general climate of fear in the resettled areas.

In the North, where journalists are not allowed and the UN and INGOs were expelled by the government, more than a quarter of a million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are concentrated into restricted areas by the army advances. Basic food and non food supplies are short and the numbers of civilian deaths from shelling and aerial attacks are increasing. This has left a grave humanitarian crisis and a potential human rights disaster. [Read more...](#)

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

MINISTERS OF LABOUR & SOCIAL AFFAIRS TROIKA MEET WITH SOCIAL PLATFORM

On Thursday, a Social Platform (SP) delegation, led by Conny Reuter in his capacity as President of the SP, met the Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs Troika composed of Petr Nečas (Czech Republic), Christina Husmark-Pehrsson (Sweden) and Celestino Corbacho Chaves (Spain), as well as the European Commissioner Vladimír Spidla.

The Czech Presidency has put the mobility of workers as a priority because "mobility also boosts economic growth and the EU competitiveness in the global economic competition. It increases employment, reduces labour costs and social exclusion and poverty" (Presidency paper for the informal EPSCO council). [Read more...](#)

EP CLOSING IMPORTANT SOCIAL AFFAIRS DOSIERS: SOCIAL ECONOMY

With the European elections looming on the horizon (4-7 June), MEPs are busy wrapping up their various reports, for example reports on the Renewed Social Agenda, on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market, and on the social economy. On this last issue, ALDE drafted a self-initiative report on the need for better recognition and legal frameworks for [social economy organisations](#)* in the EU for which they organised, on Tuesday, a hearing to collect input from various actors. [Read more...](#)

EDUCATION

SECOND STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM

As announced in last week's edition, the Second Stakeholders' Forum, organised by DG EAC in partnership with EUCIS-LLL, will take place on Monday 9 February. This Forum is a key moment for stakeholders to discuss together and to try to find common messages to the European Commission and to the Member States. It is a very good opportunity to meet and to dialogue with the different actors working on education and training, across the sectors.

SOLIDAR members, if you are interested in participating, please contact afrith@laligue.org | [Read programme](#)

MEMBERS

Register for the next Social Affairs Committee meeting, read the latest funding update and feedback from our meeting at DG ECHO... in the **Members Area**. Don't have a password? Contact [Abigail](#)

SOLIDAR Italian member **Arci**'s [newsletter](#)

Read **OGB-L**'s [newsletter](#), SOLIDAR's member in Luxembourg

PARTNERS

Friend's of Europe's Development Policy Forum 2009 will hold 'Future World' lunch debate entitled "Africa: Sustaining successes in the face of global turmoil" on Thursday 5 February 2009, 12.00-13.50, at the Bibliothèque Solvay, Parc Léopold, Brussels. [More info.](#)

22-24	EPSCO meeting, Luhacovice, Czech Rep
29-30	Conference: Preparing for EU Leadership on Sustainability, Brussels
27-1 Feb	World Social Forum, Belem, Brazil
5	SOLIDAR Social Affairs Committee, Brussels
5-6	Conference on Employment Policy, Prague
18	8th Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion (DG Empl & Swedish Presidency), Brussels
16-18	Conference: Social Rights, Active Citizenship and Governance in the EU, Brussels
19	EUCIS-LLL Annual General Assembly, Brussels
25-26	Conference: Flexicurity - Lifelong Learning and Social Protection Components, Prague
2	G20 meeting, London
2-3	Global Progressive Forum event, Brussels
14	Civil Society Day, Brussels
16-18	Conference: Social Economy, Prague
22-23	Conference: Social Services - a tool to Mobilise Workforce and Reinforce Social Cohesion, Prague

SOLIDAR is a European network of 50 NGOs and labour movement organisations. Working in cooperation with progressive civil society and trade unions, SOLIDAR promotes equality, solidarity and social justice in the fields of social affairs, international cooperation and education. SOLIDAR's Weekly Round Up provides you with the latest information and news from the SOLIDAR Network.

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](#)

