

Liberation

Volume 56 No1

International Women's Day Issue

£1.50



Demonstrating for
womens' rights

**Also Inside - Ecuador + Guatemala
Iran + Sarawak + Women in Islam
George Christofinis Obituary
Guyana honours John Bowden**

JOURNAL OF LIBERATION, FORMERLY THE MOVEMENT FOR COLONIAL FREEDOM

Volume 56 No1 March 2013

ISSN 0024 1873

75-77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN

Phone & Fax 44 0207 324 2498 & 2489

E-mail info@liberationorg.co.uk

Website

<http://www.liberationorg.co.uk>

Editorial

E-mail george1@uwclub.net

Phone & Fax 44 020 7229 5831

Editor - George Anthony.

Other than the editorial, the opinions in the articles inside are not necessarily those of Liberation.

in a way they don't feel comfortable sharing them in person," she said.

Ms. Kearl said she had experienced what she wrote about. "Mostly it's whistling and cat-calls and gross sexual comments," she said. "But I've also been followed and a man grabbed my crotch once on the street." As Ms. Kearl wrote her book, her mother shared her own stories of street harassment. So did her grandmother.

Meanwhile, Ihollaback.org started in New York in 2005 when Ms. May and six friends decided that technology and

founder of Smartwomentravelers.com.

"I've been physically abused on a bus, I've been groped on a train, and I've jumped out of cabs that were taking me in the wrong direction," she said. "Has this stopped me from traveling, or kept me away from big cities? Absolutely not. But it has made me more observant, more prepared and more street-smart."

Even within the security of a hotel room some women don't feel safe, Ms. Margolis said.

"A female airline pilot told me that the first thing she does



Demonstrating for women's rights

Many women concede that they have experienced at least some kind of sexual harassment on the road. Usually it's verbal, though sometimes it's physical.

But rarely is it reported — not to the authorities and not at the office, where a woman who talks about harassment on a business trip may worry about being marked as a problem traveller.

Now, though, something new and aggressive is being done to publicly address street harassment of women.

It's a movement driven by young women in the United States and abroad who are using social networking and crowd sourcing to shine a light on the issue and organize support for doing something about it.

Street harassment of women has been around "probably since the advent of streets," said Emily May, 29, the co-founder of Ihollaback.org, a Web site that encourages

women to share stories and provide data about harassment so they can map locations where it occurred.

The subject came up again last month, when the CBS News correspondent [Lara Logan](http://LaraLogan.com) was sexually attacked by a mob in Tahrir Square in Cairo. In Egypt, according to a 2008 study by the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, 98% of foreign female visitors, and 83% of Egyptian women, said they had experienced some form of sexual harassment on the streets, mostly verbal but sometimes worse.

"Ihollaback is taking awareness to a new level in helping to create a platform where people can talk about this worldwide," said Holly Kearl, 28, the author of **Stop Street Harassment: Making Public Places Safe and Welcoming for Women**, a book published last year by Praeger. Ms. Kearl also operates a Web site, Stopstreetharassment.com, "where people can share their stories

networking could be applied to the ages-old problem. There are now 12 sister Ihollaback sites in 12 international cities, and 14 more starting soon. "We're using social networking, blogging, aps and maps to help people share stories and to build a case," she said. "Street harassment of women has been silenced for too long, and we're breaking that silence."

To me, the most impressive thing about the fight-back phenomenon is the youthful determination to organize and take concerted action about a problem that female travellers have long faced on the road, often alone and without recourse. If they do report an incident, they often encounter the "blame the victim" reaction, Ms. Kearl noted.

"A lot of women are traveling the planet, and whether it's a city like New York or Chicago or Houston or Cairo, their guard is up," said Carol Margolis, a business consultant and

is stick Kleenex in the peephole. It seems that flight attendants and female pilots are almost more neurotic about these things because they simply have been exposed to more."

That particular peephole concern was underscored in 2009, when a video appeared on the Internet showing an [ESPN](http://ESPN.com) reporter, Erin Andrews, naked in her hotel room. The video was made surreptitiously through her hotel door peephole.

Female business travellers, many of them juggling work and family responsibilities, are famously tough and resilient — but concerns about sexual harassment often add an element of wariness, said Ms. Margolis.

She is working with a hotel chain, which she declined to identify, to develop social programs for female business travellers. "I think it restricts some women on the road from leaving their hotels and really enjoying their travels in their off-time."

Urgent call to free imprisoned teacher in Iran

Jane Green on the latest outrage



Iranian opposition on the streets

The Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has today called for the immediate release of Mohammad Tavakoli, Secretary of the Kermanshah Teachers' Guild Association. Mr Tavakoli was arrested last week after being called to present himself for questioning at the intelligence section of the Kermanshah Revolutionary Guard. Kermanshah is a provincial capital in Western Iran, 525 kilometres from the Iranian

capital, Tehran.

Mr. Tavakoli teaches at one of the Kermanshah's zone two district schools. Prior to his arrest he had been harassed on a number of occasions by the security forces for his trade union activities. In August last year he was threatened by the security forces for publicising news of teachers' pay cuts. Mr. Tavakoli has previously stated, "During their last contact with me, the security officer told me that the Kermanshah Teachers' Guild Association is illegal. They added that if you continue your activities, you will be dealt with severely."

It would appear that with his recent arrest the security forces have made good on their promise. Tavakoli and others had reported that they had been beaten by "unknown individuals" in August last year and his situation is consistent with the ongoing intimidation of teachers and other trades union activists by the regime in Iran.

Jamshid Ahmadi, Assistant General Secretary of CODIR, said today that the Iranian regime must get the message that this arrest is condemned in the strongest terms.

"It is simply not acceptable for individuals to suffer arrest, intimidation and worse for

simply raising legitimate trade union issues," he stated. "The pay, terms and conditions of teachers in Iran are deteriorating at a time when the Iranian economy needs its young people to be educated and for its skills to be homegrown. This is the sort of issue which Mr. Tavakoli was raising and should not be considered a threat to the regime. The fact that it is a threat is a measure of the regime's weakness and uncertainty, not its strength."

According to a report from the Haranah News Agency on Wednesday, three days after the arrest of Mr. Tavakoli, his interrogators had not allowed him to contact his attorney.

In a range of cases dating back at least to 2006 verdicts of dismissal, imprisonment and even execution have been imposed on teachers in Iran. This is in spite of the fact that, according to Articles 26 and 27 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, membership of different religious, trade and political communities should be considered as a basic right for Iranian people. The international human rights conventions, to which the Iranian government is a signatory, also insist on it.

Sadly, government officials in Iran do not take responsibility for their international commitments or the national laws of their own country. Demands for basic rights, even seeking appointments with

Parliamentary deputies, have led to violent confrontations between teacher activists and security officials. The judiciary continue to characterise the teachers' legitimate demands as threats to society and have opened files for them on cases in the Islamic Revolutionary Court.

CODIR once again calls for the immediate release of Mohammad Tavakoli and all other imprisoned trade union activists from detention. The Iranian theocratic regime should be pressed to guarantee that it will fully observe all its obligations under the terms of ILO Conventions Numbers 87 (1948) and 98 (1949) concerning Freedom of Association.

ENDS

14th February 2013

Press Release

For Immediate Use

Contact Information:-

Postal Address:

B.M.CODIR

London

WC1N

UK

Website:

www.codir.net

E-mail:

codir_info@btinternet.com

Further information for Editors

CODIR is the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights. It has been established since 1981 and has consistently campaigned to expose human rights abuses in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**A History of
Struggle
Commemorating
the Fiftieth
Anniversary of
Liberation;
formerly the
Movement for
Colonial
Freedom.
Stan Newens £3**



Iranian women in opposition

Ecuador's progressive alternatives to the neo-liberal crisis

Lee Brown on advances in another Latin-American country



President Rafael Correa

London's Bolivar Hall was packed out recently to learn about the progressive developments underway in Ecuador and offer solidarity against attempts to reverse this. Supported by Unite the Union, Tribune magazine and the organising committee of the annual Latin America Conference amongst others, the meeting was one of the first in the Britain dedicated to exploring the ideas of the Citizens Revolution, as Ecuador's radical policies of social, environmental and economic justice are known.

The meeting was held ahead of Ecuadorians electing their President. Setting out what is at stake in the elections

Latin America expert, Stephanie Pearce of QMW University, explained that "This election will decide whether or not social progress continues to advance in Ecuador or if Ecuador returns to the free-market fundamentalism that caused such damage" in the recent past.

She pointed out that Rafael Correa, who as current President has overseen dramatic and progressive changes in the country, "Is the clear favourite to win. Polls placed him on

around 65% with his nearest rival, a former chief banker, languishing on just 15%."

The keynote speaker was José María Guijarro, an adviser to the Ecuadorian Foreign Minister. Guijarro emphasised that the developments underway across Latin America are reversing 500 years of colonial domination and allowing the region to finally achieve genuine independence.

He explained that in recent decades, the era of neo-liberalism had especially failed the continent with 20 years of economic stagnation that through millions into poverty. The specific and devastating impact in Ecuador of these policies was addressed.

He explained that in 1998/9 "Ecuador's financial system collapsed and over half of all people's life savings evaporated" and "GDP per capita shrank by over one-third". Offering hope for those seeking political change in Europe, he explained that "this created very strong social resistance, initially this was in the streets but then it became translated into a new political reality"

In reversing these policies, Guijarro explained how the key tenets of neo-liberal had

had to be eschewed. At the core of the Citizens Revolution are "economic planning and social investment" which are needed to "create decent living standards for everybody" and move the economy away from a model that "translated into huge percentages living in poverty and extreme poverty".

Under a new state-led development model the adviser explained that "certain companies have been nationalized, so that today the main sources of Ecuador's wealth go to the people". He added that to stimulate growth "we now have economic planning, and a greater role for the state, though the private sector still has a role too, but it does not dominate our economy and people's lives in the same way". Ecuador has South America's highest levels of state led investment and this is has driven economic growth of 5% over the past 5 years.

As with other progressive governments in Latin America, Guijarro explained that this progressive program "has created internal and external enemies" and especially from bankers, oligarchs and media outlets owned by businesses with powerful economic interests in other sectors.

He said "of course, they are not very happy with our new direction...but we are here to govern in the interest of the

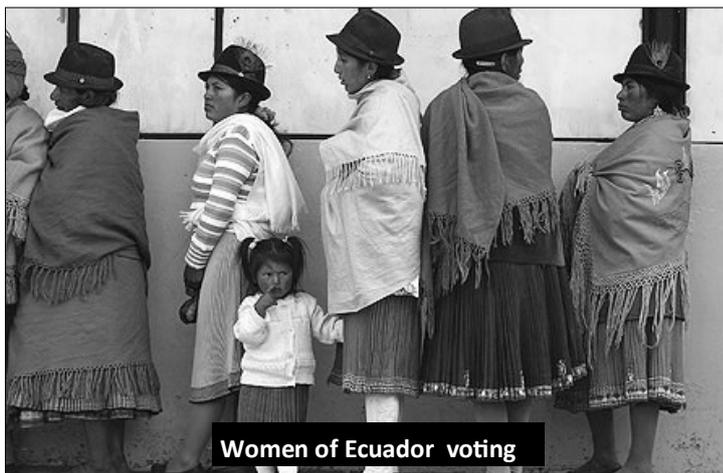
majority" and "it can feel like a badge of honor if these people don't like what we are doing".

He also addressed the concept of sustainable development which is central to Ecuador's new model. Ecuador is today playing a world leading role in attempts to prevent catastrophic climate change and he pointed out the first country in the world to "guarantee rights to nature in its Constitution" a measure adopted in 2008.

Though he acknowledged the difficulties in defining this concretely in policies, he spoke of the countries groundbreaking Yasuni Initiative, the world's first proposal to leave a nation's vast oil reserves underground to help prevent climate change as an example of how Ecuador is seeking turning this right into reality.

Chris Williamson MP, Labour's Shadow Minister for Local government, contrasted the situation in Europe with Latin America. Describing the European panorama he said "investment is falling, growth is down, unemployment up".

He said much could be learnt from Ecuador where "President Correa has championed state-led economic growth" and "increased social spending". That he explained is "why they have not had a recession, why poverty has fallen one-third in just five years".



Women of Ecuador voting



Rafael Correa with Hugo Chavez & Evo Morales

He noted how in Britain *“working class kids in are turning their back on university”* whilst in Ecuador the disadvantaged are increasingly attending university *“thanks to free education introduced by the Correa government”*. He said that encouragement should be taken form proof *“that there is an alternative way”* where the *“state can act for the majority and not just for a tiny minority who have done very well already”*.

Author **Robin Blackburn**, who recently interviewed President Correa for *New Left Review*, pointed out the similarities between Europe of today and Ecuador in its recent past. He explained *“15 years ago Ecuador was going through a social explosion like Greece today. What is known as “socialism of the 21st century” which is sweeping Latin America is carrying out polices demanded by social movements in the Britain.*

As an example he drew on the Correa government’s success in increasing state funds for social spending by *“the government now collecting the taxes owed by companies”* which he joked was *“a radical innovation in the capitalist world”* given the tax avoidance of companies such as Starbucks.

He also pointed out that Ecuador has demonstrated that *“government has the power to cancel debt”* with clear lessons for Greece, Spain and Ireland. He explained how Ecuador, under Correa, had repudiated the punishing debt owed to international financial institu-

tions that meant three times as much was previously being spent on debt repayment than on social services.

Central to this new path of progress, Robin Blackburn added, was that *“Ecuador is today able to act independently of the domination of the United States, and had overturned the idea that the continent is the US back yard”*.

Lindsey German of Stop the War Coalition continued this theme, addressing the progressive policies against war and aggression undertaken by the Correa government. This included the decision to shut down a major US military base in 2010, in order to be better able to resist the constant pressure placed on governments of the past.

She explained that closing down such a base is very difficult and is seen as *“an act of war”* that *“are taken very seriously”* by the US. She reminded the audience that outside interferences have taken the form of coup in Paraguay and Honduras in recent years. But she pointed out that this is just the tip of the iceberg with *“US intervention most of the time being hidden”*.

This constant aggression against countries was obviously about controlling their natural resources but, she explained, was also about enforcing on countries an economic agenda that benefits more powerful nations. This, she explained, shows how *“war and neoliberal agenda go hand in hand”* and that Ecuador was *“challenging both”*.

She also added that it was a

“complete affront” to those carrying out austerity that there are other places in the world *“where poverty falling and where education and health are free as a right”*.

Dr Francisco Dominguez, author of the book *Right-Wing Politics in the New Latin America*, emphasized how as well as learning from the progressive changes in Latin America, solidarity is constantly needed. He explained that *“the right in Latin America is not democratic and never was”*. The proof, he said, lies in the death squads and governments that *“killed over 100,000 people”* in the dictatorships of past decades. Today the right wing continues to seek to undermine social progress aided by *“the US’ National Endowment for Democracy which channels millions of dollars of government funds to all sorts of bodies in the region.”* He added that one of the main recipients of US State Department funding in this way was the International Republican Institute, headed up by hawkish US Senator *John McCain*.

Dr Dominguez explained that *“the right cannot produce coalition majorities because what has been done by the left has benefitted so any people. Therefore the non-democratic route is often taken”*. In Ecuador’s case a coup d’état was attempted to oust President Correa in Ecuador in 2010, failing only after many were killed including a presidential body-guard.

He said the importance of ensuring that intervention by

the US and other governments is opposed is best illustrated by the *“gigantic transformations under way”* across Latin America. He explained that *“in 1990 poverty in the region was 48%.*

At end 2011, poverty was at 30% meaning that more than 100 million taken out of poverty through the policies of democracy and social inclusion”.

Juan Carlos Piedra from the Ecuadorian Movement in the UK, an Ecuadorian community group which organized the meeting, described the importance of Correa’s progressive migration and citizenship polices. One in ten Ecuadorians fled the Ecuador following the financial collapse at the run of the century.

Today the Correa government is *“providing resources to the millions of Ecuadorians abroad to be organized and supported on employment, immigration, English language”* and to help them integrate into British society or to return home if that is their wish. Juan Carlos pointed out that the equalities agenda is very strong in Ecuador today and that sexual discrimination is now unlawful and gender equality a priority.

He concluded the meeting saying the Citizen’s Revolution *“gives us dignity and it makes us proud again to be Ecuadorian”*. He encouraged people in Europe to learn from Ecuador’s alternative it as it shows that real change can be achieved everywhere.

Lee Brown is a researcher on Latin America



President Rafael Correa celebrates victory

Islam and patriarchy

Irakli Tusiashvili exposes an oppressive ideology



Muslim women in Egypt

Some cover Islam's achievements for the women, maintaining that it was Islam that gave the women her rights and honour, while others blame all the disadvantages in the position of Muslim women on Islam.

Muslim apologists' understanding of the Quran is that not only does it not support either form of patriarchy, but that its teachings are fundamentally at odds with theories of male privilege. Many of them even argue that there is a need to rethink religious

knowledge where this knowledge conflicts with the Quran's teachings, even if this means questioning the knowledge produced by sources outside Quran, since the Quran is believed by Muslims to be an exhaustive record, fully detailed, for all aspects of life, and in relation to religious matters. Therefore, Muslim apologists argue that the Quran must be read contextually, not selectively or piecemeal.

But in general, there can be a problem with that assumption. Mainly because critics of Quran contend that the Quran is very complicated book to read as it is disjointed. One has to assume and know a lot of things in order to understand it, because the stories in the Quran are not complete apart from the Surah-12, the story of Jo-

seph. In case of the rest, either stories do not begin, or they do not end. And there is no transitional phrase to go from one story to another. There are also matters that the Quran touches upon without describing them in detail. So, to fully understand Islam, critics argue, one needs to go to other sources like the Prophet's examples and sayings (hadith), and read commentaries of scholars known as the "great commentators of the Quran" that explain how to follow and submit to its message.

It is here then, critics say, where these sources are very important for the religion of Islam. To go back to the question of patriarchy and the place of women in Islam, one needs to look at what the Quran and the sources mentioned above are saying in relation to it.

Islam, like Christianity or other traditional religions, was at the outset faced with patriarchy as a given. The question to ask, then, is in which direction and to what extent it changes and improves the surrounding system. And is it old-fashioned culture, or religious beliefs that should be blamed? Nonetheless, as said, patriarchal attitudes place women in a highly disadvantageous position in the Islamic social order. Critics contend that it is important to look closely to the Quran and its sources to explain why.

Patriarchal beliefs have been part and parcel of Middle East history, as they have been in much of the world. In this con-

text, one of the biggest debates today is about the question: is an on-going Patriarchal attitude in much of the Islamic world a result of religion or culture? There is a wide belief in Western world that patriarchal attitudes and legal structures built on it places women in a highly disadvantageous position in the Islamic social order.



Public stoning of women

text, one of the biggest debates today is about the question: is an on-going Patriarchal attitude in much of the Islamic world a result of religion or culture? There is a wide belief in Western world that patriarchal attitudes and legal structures built on it places women in a highly disadvantageous position in the Islamic social order.

Although clearly, many Islamic countries and/or, religious

in the Islamic world in general agree that justice and equality are intrinsic values and core principles in Islam and the shari'a. Nonetheless, the theme of patriarchy continues to remain central to the debate on Islam and gender. Therefore, women's status in Islam is one of the most controversial issues of our time. There is large number of books and scholarly works that treat this subject.



Public beating of women

Men's superiority

The evidence from the Quran and the Sunnah and the Hadith and the Commentaries of Muslim scholars indicates that it is not possible for woman to assume positions of senior public authority, such as the minister of state (wazeer), or judge (qaadi), and so on. In fact it is narrated in the traditions that the Prophet of Islam said: "No people will ever prosper who appoint a woman in charge of them."

Furthermore, Quran as well as commentaries clearly state that men are to excel women in important matters.

What is more, critics contend that patriarchal attitudes are embedded in Islam as it allows female slaves and sees women as property of men as evident from the works of distinguished scholars of Islam such as al-Tabari and Ibn Taymiyyah.

Women's Deficiency

According to the Quran and many hadiths and commentaries, women are less obedient and less intelligent. In many hadiths compiled by al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, it is said that women lack common sense because their minds are deficient.

Critics of Islam argue that deficiency of their mind can be seen from the fact that in shari'a their testimony is only as good as a man's testimony.

Husband's Rights

Despite the fact that Islam

offers women (wives and mothers) a safe and a stable position in Islamic society, critics argue that hadiths and commentaries on Quran allow wife-beatings by husbands. Although it should be very last resort to be applied.

Regarding inheritance, in pre-Islamic times men only had the right to inherit, and women possessed no inheritance rights in the pre-Islamic Society.

The Quran clearly improves on the pagan practices regarding inheritance for women. Nevertheless, in shari'a a man shall inherit twice as much as a female.

Talking about patriarchy in Islamic societies, these brief examples of sunnah and hadiths are important because Islamic scholars were able to draw from these stories and develop an Islamic system of life and, as critics argue, result was that women continued in subjugation, and practice still continues.

Therefore, critics argue that some of the verses in the Quran, and overall understanding of it, is in need of reform owing to the great progress humanity has made inequality between the sexes.

Because inequality and oppression in the Quran, and in general understanding of Islam, reflect this patriarchal culture.

The Quran clearly improved on many questions of this pa-



triarchy, but as critics argue, it did not go far enough for a worldwide religion that claims universality.

Irakli Tusiashvili

is a post-graduate student at Kings College, London on Middle East studies.

alexus2000@yahoo.co.uk

Liberation
archives are now
on the Working
Class Movement
Library website at-
[www.wcml.org.uk/
Liberationorg.co.uk/journal%](http://www.wcml.org.uk/Liberationorg.co.uk/journal%2020)
20
Archives.html
Also at S.O.A.S

PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY of GUYANA To John Bowden

We are aware of the tremendous work of Comrade John, both on behalf of the people of the UK and his contribution to the international working class movement and I can't think of any one more worthy of the award. Indeed our struggle befitted greatly from his unselfish and sterling support. We can never forget that at the very height of Burnham's rule, when the future looked bleak, Comrade John was outstanding in this solidarity to our cause. He was at the bar defending Arnold Rampersaud, a case that has gone down in the judicial history of this country. I take this opportunity to embrace Comrade John and to wish him good health and strength. The PPP and the democratic forces will always remember John Bowden and be forever loyal to the cause we both serve. Best wishes and a warm embrace.

Fraternally,
Donald Ramotar
General Secretary of the People's
Progressive Party
President of the Republic of Guyana



Women drivers in Saudi Arabia

Is the War on Drugs a failure?

Rinaldo Francesca on US military intervention in Guatemala



Drug barons decapitated victims

Speaking in Davos at the latest World Economic Forum in January this year, Guatemalan president Otto Perez Molina announced that a rethinking of the War on Drugs was urgently needed, and pointed out that the approach of the last four decades to the problem had produced the exact opposite results of what was supposedly intended. He was essentially reiterating a message he had delivered four months prior to Davos, in his address to the UN General Assembly in New York on 26 September 2012. On that occasion, president Molina reported the expansion of drug consumers' markets, the proliferation of drug-producing countries and the opening of more and more smuggling routes across the continent.

None of this was groundbreaking news, considering that a report published by the Global Commission on Drug Policy in June 2011 had already declared the previous fifteen years's phase of the War on Drugs to be a fiasco, with data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime showing an increase of 33% in drug consumption between 1998 and 2008 in the United States alone.

This did not stop **Latino Fox News** – the Latin American-focused branch of Rupert Murdoch's NewsCorp – from rushing to undermine Molina's credibility by reminding its readers of pending allegations

of his possible "involvement in scorched earth campaigns during the early 1980s in the country's Ixil Triangle - a region of Quiché that saw 2744 people killed between January 1982 and late December 1983." [1]

In his supposed commitment to provide "fair and balanced news", the Fox reporter somehow forgot to mention that the murderous scorched earth campaign of the '80s was carried out by US-trained and funded paramilitary guerrillas, and that when news of these atrocities were reaching the US – such as the 1982 Dos Erres massacre, in which over 200 people, including women, the elderly and children, were killed by government commandos – most of the US media went out of their way to dismiss the news as fictitious communist propaganda.

Perhaps it would have been too complicated to explain to **Latino Fox News** readers that, however true these accusations might eventually turn out, Molina was after all a product of American training at the US military School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Virginia (more recently re-branded Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation), also at Fort Benning, along with some of the most prominent military commanders responsible for mass murders in the Ixil region, such as General Hector Mario Lopez Fuentes, all the way up to Gen-

eral Efraim Rios Montt, who was Guatemalan president in the early '80s, as well as friendly ally to the United States.

The link between US military involvement in Guatemala (and indeed, the whole of Latin America) and the so-called War on Drugs is in fact more central to the issue than it might first appear: the War on Drugs offers yet another pretext for US militarisation and hegemony in the region, consolidated over the years under the banner of fighting international communism (initiated under president Eisenhower in the '50s), drug trafficking (started by Richard Nixon in the '70s and continued under George H. W. Bush in the '90s) or alleged Soviet-sponsored terrorism (inaugurated by Ronald Reagan in the '80s).

Over the last few years, the militarisation of the War on Drugs in Latin America has resulted in the establishment of an immense US military intelligence compound in Mexico, named *Oficina Binacional de Inteligencia* (Bi-national Bureau of Intelligence), which hosts FBI, DIA and NSA offices and the US take-over of no fewer than seven military bases in Colombia (including the Palanquero air base).

In particular, the US-Colombia Defense Cooperation Agreement, one might remember, took a rather embarrassing turn in 2007, when it was

revealed that, at a time when the American annual budget earmarked for military aid to Colombia was \$350m, some of the highest ranking officers in the Colombian army – including army chief General Mario Montoya – were in fact in cahoots with drug-trafficking guerrillas, along with 13 members of the Colombian Congress, close to then president Álvaro Uribe. [2]

Stepping up American military involvement in Guatemala, the US Southern Command initiated Operation Martillo (hammer) in January 2012, culminating in the deployment of 200 US Marines on Guatemalan soil; this was merely a new phase in a long history of US military intervention in the country, whether direct or by proxy.

It is useful to remember that the War on Drugs as a projection of American military might in Central America was started under the Richard Nixon administration in the '70s: a review of this historical pattern is worth examining. *Fifteen years prior to that, the same Richard Nixon, when he was still vice-president in 1954, had triumphantly announced on American TV the overthrow of democratically elected Guatemalan president Jacobo Árbenz, calling it "the first time in the history of the world that a communist government has been overthrown by the people."*



Ever present military



Aftermath of the massacre

None of it was true: Árbenz was in fact a popular president and his land reforms benefitted the largely peasant population of Guatemala. They did, however, displease US-based private companies with large interests in the country, such as

United Fruits (now known as Chiquita).

The CIA and the US State Department, led by the Dulles brothers, were only too happy to step in and help their friends at United Fruits – with whom they shared financial ties – and engineered the coup d'état. This was sold to the American public as the result of a popular uprising, partly thanks to the help of expert manipulator of mass perception Edward Bernays, spin master and inventor of the Public Relations business, who went as far as to establish a fake news agency outlet called Middle America Information Bureau.

The coup d'état in Guatemala led to 43 years of military dictatorships, punctuated by several US military interventions under various pretexts and against the backdrop of a bloody civil war which lasted between 1960 and 1996, claiming 200,000 lives.

In May 1962 the US established a military base in Guatemala for counter-insurgency training, directed by a team of Green Berets. Supposedly, the American military left the base in 1978, although history shows that by then the murderous death squads had received all the training they needed in order to carry out violence and terror independently, following US directives such as were contained in CIA manuals the Green Berets had left behind. Among them was the infamous KUBARK, which gave detailed instructions on torture interrogation techniques.

The reason there has been a renewed War on Drugs over the last 23 years is partly connected to the end of the Cold War, and to the ingenious ploy by George H. W. Bush administration to keep justifying the United States' enormous military budget, which at the time comprised 39% of world military spending. [3] With the Soviet Union gone, it became necessary to continue military intervention in Latin America under a different guise. Noteworthy, for instance, is the 1990 US invasion of Panama (Operation Just Cause), undertaken to capture drug baron Manuel Noriega, who was accused of crimes he had committed when he was in fact on the CIA payroll (former CIA chief William Casey referred to him as “my boy Noriega”).

As for Guatemala, when the civil war finally ended in 1996, the US promptly adjusted its tactics and once again the War on Drugs was resurrected: according to the same article which appeared on *Latino Fox News*, the United States has so far spent some \$85m in Guatemala alone, supposedly fighting drug traffickers, in a continuing process of further military control over the country – and only negative results to show for it.

Frankly, it is doubtful that this US administration – or the next – will take on board the evidence against the War on Drugs, despite the transparent

inefficacy of a military approach to the problem (and much has been written about possible economic solutions, pointing at the North-American Free Trade Agreement as the major cause of unemployment and proliferation of the drug trade south of the border). This is not because US planners are still convinced that the War on Drugs will eventually be won. They are not. In this day and age, wars and occupations do not seem to be designed to be won or resolved, but to be sustained. The arms industry is churning out weapons and ammunitions for decades of high and low intensity conflicts to come. When and if the military aspect of the War on Drugs is abandoned, US projection of military power and hegemony in the region will probably continue under a different brand name.

[1] **Bryan Llenas: *Guatemalan President Argues Drug Legalization and Calls Out US Anti-Drug*, Fox News Latino, 27 September 2012.**

[2] **Rory Carroll and Sibylla Brodzinsky: *Colombian leader denies link to paramilitaries*, The Guardian, 18 May 2007.**

[3] **Anita Dancs: *The Cost of the Global U.S. Military Presence*, 3 July 2009, available**

at: <http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/0907dancs.pdf>

Rinaldo Francesca researched this article for Liberation.

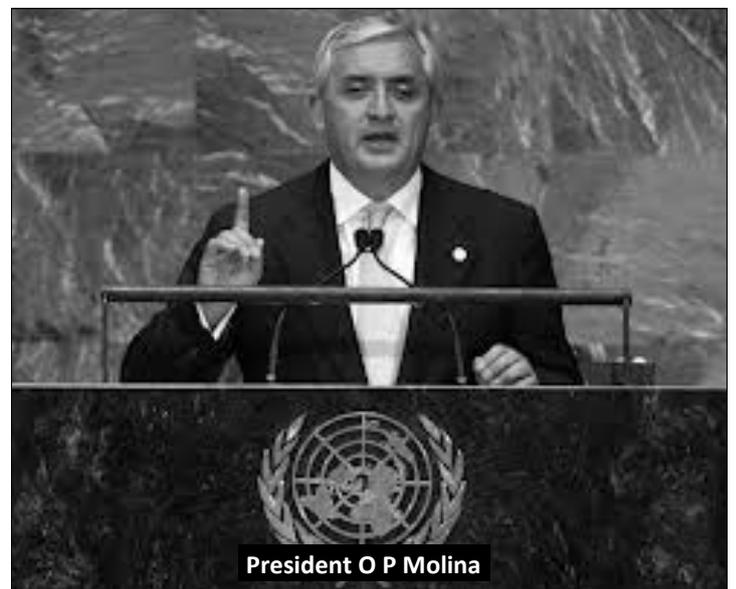
Readers are invited to follow us on Twitter: you can find us @LiberationOrg. Our account: <https://twitter.com/LiberationOrg>

Back issues of our journal are now available to download for free on our website.

At present, the digital archives contain the last ten years of our bi-monthly publication, going back to March 2003. Visitors are invited to check the website regularly, as we are planning to introduce more features, such as the option to browse our journal by countries and topics. Please visit <http://liberationorg.co.uk/journal%20Archives.html>

A correction to an article appeared on the January Volume 55 No 6 issue of Liberation's journal, entitled The Military's Role in Pakistan's Polity: the headline attributed the article to our researcher Rinaldo Francesca: its author is in fact Shah Alam. That error has now been rectified and the amendment appears on the digital version of the issue, available for download on our website:

<http://liberationorg.co.uk/journal.html> (see bottom of the web page for the 'download' option).



President O P Molina



George Christofinis

Eulogy for George Christofinis

News of the death of our very dear comrade, veteran George Christofinis, spread very rapidly throughout our community here in the UK, in Cyprus, Greece and elsewhere. His multidimensional and multifaceted contribution, in so many areas of social and political life, along with the simplicity of his character, made him well known beyond the confines of our community, and without any exaggeration, around the world.

Despite the fact that everyone was aware that George had suffered greatly in recent months, his death still sent his family, AKEL and our entire community into heavy mourning.

We share in the mourning and, to a large extent, understand the pain and grief that his death has brought to his wife Annie, his children, his grandchildren and generally to the whole family. We ex-

press the sincere condolences of all AKEL members and especially the General Secretary of the Central Committee of AKEL Andros Kyprianou, and the President of the Republic of Cyprus Demetris Christofias, who both knew our unforgettable George personally.

With heavy hearts and sharing in the grief and irreplaceable void which his death has left, on behalf of AKEL in Britain and his local party branch, Catford, we express this ultimate salute to one of its founding members in Britain. George was one of the last generation of romantic communists who loved and fought hard to improve the lives and living standards of every person especially our compatriots in Britain.

Even more, the contribution of George or Kokos, as he was better known, created those conditions for continuing and maintaining the national-cultural identity and entity of the Cypriot community, a community that for decades has been fighting for the rights and the much longed for Freedom of our long-suffering Cyprus. This eulogy is a very difficult

and important task assigned to me by AKEL, the beloved party of the late George Christofinis, because it should ideally describe a multidimensional comrade, and this short farewell cannot really do him justice nor can it afford the appropriate honour for the contribution of a man who gave a lifetime and dedicated commitment of more than 6 decades. This was a life full of struggles and contribution of invaluable service for the common good, given with immense love for his fellow human beings. This was an indescribable faith in his ideology, and its universal values which he interpreted with consistency and love, as pursued by his Party.

For one to speak about George Christofinis is not an easy thing, because the difficulty is not what you say, but what to omit from his varied contributions. It takes a lot of time to partially describe the rich and significant contribution of the scientist, the patriot, the fighter for freedom, democracy, justice and world peace.

What can you say in a few minutes about the ideologist, Marxist / internationalist, the lover of music, theatre and literature, the scholar, with a special love and study of poetry. More, and above all, about the man, meaning, of course, the man Kokos, as he is known to his close relatives and friends, full of ethos and humanity, the man who loved and fought tirelessly for his fellow man, his country, his ideology.

As a scientist, he left behind valuable work, and even research bearing the name of George Christofinis which scientists have in their hands, use and process until today, to further improve areas of medical science.

We all understand how much time science takes from the life of a scientist who is involved in the process of evolution and consequently reaches the top. Despite this, however, from

the early days in Britain along with other compatriots, George took part in the anti-colonial struggle of our people in Cyprus and in which, not unsurprisingly, the community has continuously been involved. George was part of the National Committee of Cyprus and their participation in the British Solidarity Committee, otherwise known as "Liberation" of peoples for freedom from colonization. This Committee, together with British MPs, helped to publicise the demand for freedom of Cyprus. He became a member of the Cypriot branches of the Communist Party of Britain and later of AKEL in Britain and was soon elected to its leading bodies. He collaborated and worked for Parikiaki Newspaper and before that, with VEMA and other publications of the community.

When the children in the community needed a Greek language education, he worked closely with the late poet Tefkros Anthias in forming the Greek Parents' Association (GPA) and organized the first Greek School of London. When it was necessary, he took over as chair of GPA, making his own contribution to this crucial work of the teaching of the Greek language and the preservation of our Cypriot cultural identity.

In 1966, when the situation in Cyprus and developments called for a better organization of our Cypriot compatriots and more active participation in the struggle, he contributed to the founding of the Union of Cypriots in England (EKA) of which he was President for many years.

From this position as President of EKA, in the dark days of July 1974, he was one of the initiators for the establishment of the National Co-ordinating Committee of Cyprus Struggle, ESEKA, today called EKO UK, the National Federation of Cypriots in the UK, which he served from the high office of Vice-President.

He served this organization with patience and consistency, with a spirit of consensus, always co-operating with everyone. Forming relationships with parliamentarians, trade unionists, and other politicians, was always part of his political activity. The foundation of the British Cyprus Committee consisting of members of parliament and community leaders, is considered one of the achievements that have the stamp of George Christofinis.

His correspondence with MPs, ministers and others is voluminous which honours him and his community and is certainly an example to follow.

Time does not allow me to talk further about George's love and study of poetry. Whether the poems of Tefkros Anthias, or Vasilis Michailidis, Pavlos Liasidis, Demetris Liperitis, whether it was the poetry of Yannis Ritsos, Kostas Varnalis, Kostis Palamas, or Nazim Hikmet, he was able at any moment to recite at least one

of their poems.

I believe I have left out so much, because George Christofinis was a rich mobile encyclopedia. Having George as a friend, companion and colleague, not only made you feel proud, but you felt that you had another self. For all of us who knew and worked closely with him, we can testify that deep down he never changed from having a boundless energy and kindness, which made him remain in his entire life irreconcilable with ingratitude but who was always humane.

The late George fought alongside us in AKEL and the popular movement with selflessness, always giving without expecting anything in return, fought for a free and peaceful Cyprus, home for all its rightful citizens and for a fair and prosperous society. I sincerely hope this society will be full of such people.

And now that we turn our thoughts to George and his life, we see a life that represents

the simple, honest man whose fighting spirit, modesty, friendly approach with his companions and comrades, and generally his fellow human beings helped improve many fields of activity. He did not let the intelligence, knowledge and other gifts that he had to affect him or change his life. These were the main features that enriched his life.

He fought many battles and from many positions for the progress and prosperity of the people and especially for the vindication of the struggle of our country, of our Cyprus, which he so loved and cared for.

We mourn your loss George, but also honour your memory, the memory of the popular fighter who with your struggles and your works, wrote your own story, and in your entire life was an example of a good human being.

Sadly, you have departed before seeing our beloved Cyprus, free, demilitarized,

peaceful, home of progress and prosperity for all its rightful people.

We bid you farewell for the last time with our promise that we in AKEL and the progressive movement, this movement that you loved and until your last moment were praising for the work it is doing, will continue your fight.

This is always and everywhere and as long as necessary until the day comes when social justice and people are able to live in days of equal distribution of wealth, and until we eliminate the evil and injustice in our midst.

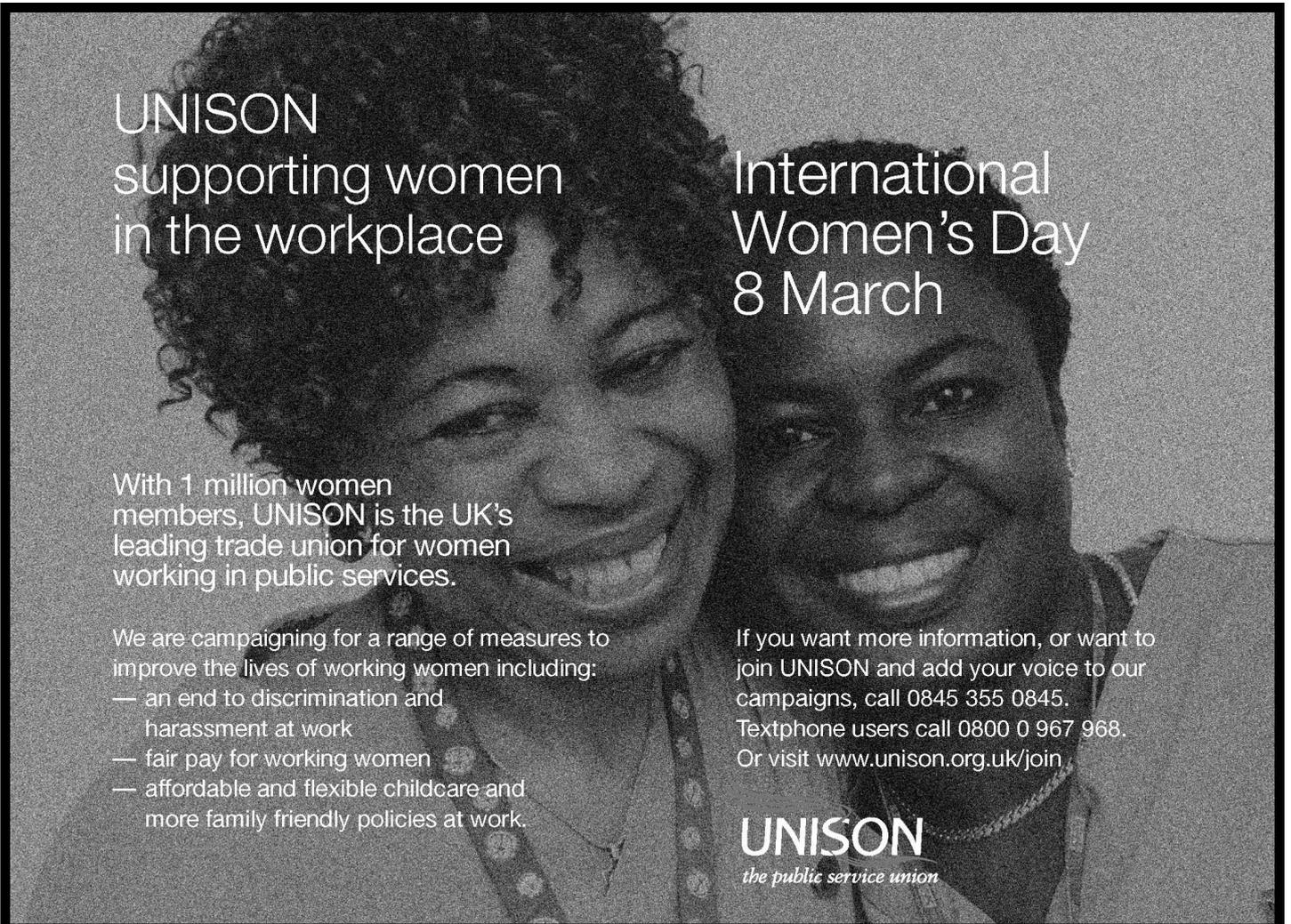
Sleep comfortably, dear Comrade George, in the knowledge that you performed your duty to the utmost.

Long live your memory our very dear and unforgettable George.

Christodoulos Stylianou.

Member of the Central Committee of AKEL.

Former Secretary of AKEL in BRITAIN.



UNISON
supporting women
in the workplace

International
Women's Day
8 March

With 1 million women members, UNISON is the UK's leading trade union for women working in public services.

We are campaigning for a range of measures to improve the lives of working women including:

- an end to discrimination and harassment at work
- fair pay for working women
- affordable and flexible childcare and more family friendly policies at work.

If you want more information, or want to join UNISON and add your voice to our campaigns, call 0845 355 0845. Textphone users call 0800 0 967 968. Or visit www.unison.org.uk/join

UNISON
the public service union

Reclaiming the last forests of Sarawak

G. Sape on the land grabbing in Malaysia



Threatened indigenous people

Indigenous community leader Sumen Bin Gasan has a big burden on his shoulders. His neighbours, fellow *Iban* and *Melanau* indigenous groups from 132 houses and 4 long-houses along the mighty Rajang River in Sibu town in Sarawak, Malaysia, have designated him as leader in claiming back their native customary land from land grabbers. In the next few weeks, they will file a court case against an oil palm company and present evidences that the land rightfully belongs to them and that they have been tilling and taking care of it for generations

Living in the same community for more than 100 years, generations of Sumen's family depend on their land for livelihood. Sumen is now 52 years old and just like his neighbours, they practice shifting cultivation - growing sago palm, fruit trees, paddy rice and vegetables. In between, their land and forests also provide them with traditional medicines and wild animals for hunting. The huge river that surrounds its communities used to supply the people with fish until its waters became too polluted with industrial and agricultural waste.

Under *adat* (native customary laws), the indigenous peoples of Sarawak have customary rights to land consisting of the right to cultivate the land, right to the produce of the forests, hunting and fishing rights, right to use the land for burial and ceremonial purposes, and rights of inheritance and transfer. The same cus-

tomary law is also recognised under the Sarawak Land Code of 1958. Despite these, both private- and government-owned logging and oil palm companies have been continuously violating these rights. The Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA) that has been at the forefront of defending the rights of indigenous peoples recorded more than 400 court cases related to land grabbing of ancestral land. Sumen's case will be one of them.

In 2010, oil palm company Sarananas Sdn Berhad that is linked to Sarawak Chief Minister Abdul Taib Mahmud, was granted provisional lease (PL) by the Land and Survey Department for 2,500 hectares.

Not yet happy with what they got, they still have a pending application for another 3,500 hectares. All in all, they want 6,000 hectares to clear for their palm oil plantation. The land, as most resources in Sarawak, is native customary land of indigenous communities that Sumen and his neighbours belong to.

Just like many cases of land grabbing in Sarawak, government institutions tasked to safeguard the rights of indigenous peoples are also the same institutions that violate these rights through their powers to deliberate and decide on land conflict cases.

For the government of Sarawak, every piece of land should be utilised in the name of "development". Thus, reserved forests and lands should be logged and cleared and eventually, planted with oil palm.

Indiscriminate logging of indigenous peoples' territories in the name of "development" has wiped out thousands of hectares of virgin rainforest. As a result, Malaysia's deforestation rate is increasing faster than anywhere else in the world.

Development in Sarawak, however, is one-sided. Sibu town, for example, has more millionaires per capita than any part of Sarawak, yet many rural communities, including Sumen's, remain without portable water or electricity.

The massive wealth of the privileged few comes from logging and oil palm concessions at the cost of indigenous peoples' rights. Resources-wise, Sarawak, boasting of abundant liquefied natural gas and petroleum reserves, is the richest in Malaysia. Yet it has the poorest population, particularly among indigenous communities. 40% its population of 2.5 million are indigenous peoples, who should have control over Sarawak's rich productive resources by virtue of their native customary rights. Yet they have no power to decide on Sarawak's development path.

Meanwhile, still in Sibu town not far from Sumen's community, 5,000 hectares of land belonging to indigenous peoples have just been cleared for oil palm plantations with sanction from the Sarawak government. Sixty-three year old community indigenous leader Bujang Anak Kunjan said that the land, which is now under the control of various companies, was his community's "reserve land for future generations" under their native customary law.

Bujang narrated that in the old days, the contested land used to be a virgin forest with wild animals and different varieties of trees. It was also their community's source of traditional medicines and burial ground. Unlike Sumen's community, which is organised and fighting against the entry of Sarananas, Bujang's community quietly accepted its fate.

"Where do we go to complain when the government is the one taking over the land?" he asked. But Bujang is not giving up. He sought the help of other organised communities like Sumen's to be able to strategise and reach out to more than 100 *Iban* families who rightfully have native customary rights to the land but didn't put up a fight.

Indigenous peoples' organisations such as SADIA play a crucial role in defending the rights of indigenous groups to their native customary land. Both Sumen and Bujang belong to SADIA and have been involved in organising their communities to defend their rights and the remaining forests of Sarawak. Aside from raising awareness on their rights as indigenous peoples, they have started mapping their ancestral domain.

Using a GPS device (global positioning system) and documenting evidence such as old trees, houses and burial sites to prove that the land has belonged to them for generations, Sumen led his community in mapping their land.

These maps together with other evidences will be presented to the court to support their case. It is a tedious and long process. A legal case such as this might last for five to 15 years in Sarawak, but so far, this is the only recourse that indigenous communities have. In some cases, indigenous peoples win their case and get compensation. Some lose. For Sumen's case, since the community started making noises, Sarananas has started initiating a dialogue with the indigenous peoples, which they refused to entertain so far as the case is about to be brought to the court.

For Bujang's community, it is still a long way to go. At 63 and with the possibility that the case could last for many years, he is determined to organise his community and fight for their rights no matter how long it might take them to succeed.

G Sape writes for the Sarawak Monitor.

UCATT

says

**End the aggression in Gaza
Justice for the Palestinians
Solidarity with the PGFTU**



Steve Murphy
General Secretary

John Thompson
President

Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians
UCATT House, 177 Abbeville Road, London SW4 9RL



Unite-London & Eastern Region

Woodberry
218 Green Lanes
London
N4 2HB

www.unite.theunion.org.uk

**Trade Union Rights are Human Rights
Keep industrial relations
Out of the courts
Support ILO Conventions 87 and 98**

Peter Kavanagh—Regional Secretary

Jim Kelly—Regional Chair



**ASLEF sends
greetings to Liberation
on International Women's Day**

Mick Whelan
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly
President

ASLEF the train drivers' union
www.aslef.org.uk

**COMMUNICATION
WORKERS UNION**



**International
Women's Day
Greetings**

**RMT sends
Greetings
to Liberation on
International
Women's Day**

Billy Hayes **Beryl Shepherd**
General Secretary President

Bob Crow **Peter Pinkney**
General Secretary President

www.cwu.org

www.rmt.or.uk

Liberation Membership Application

I/We wish to subscribe to Liberation for the year 2013

I enclose a cheque/postal order (payable to Liberation).....

which includes a donation of.....

Rates are; Individuals £20/£10 unwaged: institutions and local organisations £30

Overseas subscriptions, add £10.

Regional bodies £40 and national £100 or more according to size.

Libraries Annual Subscriptions ; Domestic £40/Foreign £45.

Name/Position.....

Organisation.....

Postal Address.....

.....

Postcode.....Telephone.....email.....

Please complete and return, with payment

Maggie Bowden-General Secretary

Liberation, 75-77 St John Street, London, EC1M 4NN

Phone & Fax 0207 3242498 & 9 email info@liberationorg.co.uk

Web Site <http://www.liberation.co.uk>

Liberation

BANK DETAILS for a STANDING ORDER

To: The Manager (name of Bank)

Address of bank

..... Post Code

Account number

I would like to pay my membership by annual standing order

Waged £20-Unwaged £10

I would like the annual standing order to start on.....until further notice

Or I would like pay £.....monthly standing order to start on.....until further notice

Bank sort code

Signature Date

For bank use only: Please pay Liberation, Unity Trust Bank plc, BMI513, Birmingham, B1 2BR.

Sort code 08-60-01, Account number 50728552

Unite Community Membership



find your
voice

shape your
community

- Take action in your local community
- Benefit from our offers and services
- Special discounted rate of 50p a week

If you are over 16 and not in paid work,
join us today. For more information, contact:

E: community@unitetheunion.org
W: www.unitetheunion.org

Len McCluskey
General Secretary

Tony Woodhouse
Chair, Unite Executive Council



www.unitetheunion.org/community