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Public Services International  
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Internacional de Servicios Públicos  
Internationale der Öffentlichen Dienste  
Internationell Facklig Organisation för Offentliga Tjänster  
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**Cover:** London 30 November 2011: CGT France members marched in solidarity with PSI affiliate unions on strike over pension reforms in the UK  
**Photo:** Mac Urata

## Editorial

# Working in the people's interest



Peter Waldorff  
PSI General Secretary

From the Middle East to the American Midwest, Asia to Africa, Europe to South America, public and private sector unions have united as never before to defend and advance democracy and quality public services. We are working with a wide range of allies including local governments and civil society groups that share the vision and commitment to build sustainable economies that benefit all people.

The need to build solidarity and take action in every corner of the globe has seldom been greater. Never before has wealth been so concentrated in the hands of the few. Never before have the rich returned so little to societies.

It's time for equitable taxation policies, including an international financial transactions tax.

Building hope, opportunity and security for ordinary people will be a marathon undertaking, not a sprint. It will require long term dedication, solidarity, and persistent local action to support global goals.

These are challenges that PSI affiliates will be discussing further at our World Congress next year. In late November 2012, we will gather in Durban, South Africa under the banner "In the people's interest." We will exchange stories on shared issues of concern, highlight best practices, and strategise on joint action we can take to support each other's struggles.

Workers must never forget that we are many. Together, we have power in our workplaces, in our communities, in our nations. By joining together in solidarity where we live and work, and by joining hands across borders, we can achieve positive change.

The Council of Global Unions' Quality Public Services – Action now! campaign features local PSI initiatives in Durban, South Africa, Wisconsin, USA, and elsewhere. These activities unite people from all walks of life, private and public sector union members, local governments and community activists.

It's time for new ideas and truly democratic economic systems.

Together, we promote investment in quality public services backed by fair taxation policies. It's not an abstract vision. Improving public services is the best way to improve the lives of people around the world. It's the key solution to the continuing economic crisis. It's the way to build peaceful, equitable, just, democratic and sustainable societies. ■



PSI affiliate nurses and healthcare members from United States, Korea, France, Australia and Ireland with British actor and Oxfam ambassador Bill Nighy at G20 press conference

## PSI healthcare workers deliver economic prescription to G20 leaders: “Apply a financial transactions tax to heal global inequities”

**A**n international delegation of Public Services International healthcare members told world leaders at the recent G20 Summit in Cannes, France that a financial transactions tax is needed to remove the global economy from the emergency room.

The high profile media action on 3 November was initiated by PSI and our US affiliate National Nurses United, and staged in partnership with the International Trade Union Confederation and civil society partners Oxfam and the World Wildlife Fund. PSI members from France, USA, South Korea, and Australia took part. (See the video at [www.world-psi.org](http://www.world-psi.org))

The NNU, which has been leading the call in the US for a “Tax on Wall Street,” held a concurrent rally of over 2000 nurses in front of the White House and Department of Treasury in Washington, DC. In Los Angeles, nurses marched through the financial district. In San Francisco, labour unions and community groups joined NNU affiliate California Nurses’ Association in rallies at bank offices and in front of the Federal Reserve.

“Taxes are not a punishment. We collect them to support public services,” said Peter Waldorff, PSI General Secretary. “If you care about the imbalances between the rich and poor, you should support the financial transactions tax.”

PSI affiliate members from Brazil to South Africa are backing the global union movement’s call for a financial transactions tax or “Robin Hood Tax” that could raise

hundreds of billions of dollars a year to heal economies, promote sustainable development and environmental security, and fund quality public services.

However, despite G20 advisor Bill Gates’ endorsement of the Robin Hood Tax concept and the Cannes Summit’s recognition of the potential of a financial transactions tax – the G20 failed to deliver effective international measures on this front.

“I’m incredibly proud of the nurses internationally for their global advocacy for their patients and society,” said Rose Ann DeMoro, NNU executive director, at the press conference in Cannes.

“The nurses don’t ever give up on people and we won’t give up on this cause.”

The NNU held earlier related campaign actions, including a march of 1000 nurses on Wall Street in June, and events across America on September 1, in advance of the Occupy Wall Street movement that is now spreading world-wide. Despite incidences of arrest and police harassment in several American cities, NNU members have maintained their posts offering healthcare to Occupy Wall Street participants in locations across the US. The OccupyWallStreet movement has made the call for an international financial transactions tax its first official demand.

The Council of Global Unions’ Quality Public Services-Action Now! campaign also highlights the need for an FTT as part of fair taxation needed to support public services for the benefit of all. ■

# Quality Public Services



Hundreds of union members joined General Secretary Peter Waldorff in a march through Durban, South Africa

**T**he Council of Global Union's flagship Quality Public Services—Action Now! campaign was formally launched on United Nations Public Services Day, 23 June 2011. PSI has taken lead responsibility for coordinating with the global unions – including launching the campaign, designing materials and building and maintaining the [www.QPSActionNow.org](http://www.QPSActionNow.org) website.

Local initiatives involving public and private sector unions, civil society organisations and local governments took place on 23 June in South Africa, Thailand, Hong Kong, the United States, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela, India, Fiji, Japan, Lebanon, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Ukraine, Morocco, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Ghana, Russia, Uganda, Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands.

In a joint statement, the European Federation of Public Service Unions, European Transport Workers' Federation, European Trade Union Committee for Education, UNI Europa, European Service Workers' Union and the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers endorsed the QPS campaign.

Representatives from the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center, the Michigan AFL-CIO, American Federation of Teachers and American Federation of Government Employees issued a joint QPS campaign solidarity statement, in the course of visits with trade unions in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Palestine.

An important development has been the association of the QPS campaign with the international movement for a financial transactions tax. The mayors of Nantes and

Brussels pledged their support for the campaign (EPSU-PSI, Maires Nantes et Bruxelles–Taxe transactions financières).

In June and September, PSI affiliate National Nurses United held actions across America calling for a “Tax on Wall Street” to support quality public health care. PSI worked with the ITUC and major civil society groups to bring an international delegation of PSI healthcare workers to take labour's demand for a financial transactions tax to the G20 meeting in Cannes in early November.

Numerous unions and civil society organisations have signed on to the Charter for Quality Public Services.

## Wisconsin, USA

PSI has been asked by the American Federation of Teachers to work with affiliates on a QPS campaign in Wisconsin, the US state where the new governor has attacked public services and bargaining rights to pay for corporate tax giveaways.

“The attack that public employees and their unions are facing in Wisconsin is part of a larger design by those who want to create a powerless and compliant workforce, and to plunder the common good of public services,” said Peter Waldorff, Council of Global Unions chair, in a joint statement with Ambet Yuson, vice-chair, as the CGU made a unanimous commitment to stand with workers in Wisconsin.

“Turning back this tide is not a local or even national challenge. Trade unions worldwide and our allies are working together with a shared determination to organise, defend human and labour rights, promote the growth of

# ION NOW!



Richard Hambloch



Wisconsin affiliate unions and allies occupied the state legislature in February

unions and advance quality public services for the benefit of all people. We pledge our full might to this campaign.”

Canadian affiliates NUPGE and CUPE have offered to provide a member of their staff to work for up to three months each on PSI’s Wisconsin campaign. These efforts will link the international QPS campaign and local affiliate efforts including AFT, SEIU, AFSCME, AFPGE, NNU and allies to provide support in networking, advocacy, research and campaign strategy.

## eThekwini municipality (Durban), South Africa

PSI’s other major pilot campaign location is eThekwini municipality (Durban), South Africa, where our World Congress will be held in 2012. Sister global unions including the International Transport Federation, Education International and Building and Woodworkers International are supporting this campaign through their local affiliates. PSI has hired a local campaign coordinator and established a working group with four members each from unions, the municipality, and civil society organisations. Campaign priorities centre on improving services for users, ending corruption related to privatisation of public services, creating jobs through housing skills training projects, and supporting the national Integrated Community Development Programme.

Other PSI affiliates in Ireland, Spain and the Ukraine are also associating local campaign efforts with the QPS campaign.

PSI has commissioned the independent Public Services International Research Unit (Greenwich University) to produce reports on public services cuts in 30 countries. See the Cuts Watch features at [www.psi.org](http://www.psi.org)

## Global union QPS campaigns

The International Transport Federation has hired a local campaign coordinator for its pilot QPS campaign in Thailand, focused on improving public railway operation safety and services and providing quality public alternatives to privatisation efforts. Global unions responded to the ITF’s call in August to protest to the Thai government following a regressive court decision about the dismissal of seven railway union safety activists.

Education International launched its QPS campaign at the EI Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. The ‘Bring a Book’ initiative is designed to gather enough books to enable new libraries to be opened, and highlight the fact that almost 70 per cent of schools in South Africa do not have access to a properly equipped library where children can learn and teachers can teach.

The Building and Woodworkers International is working to develop a QPS partnership with UN Habitat on sustainable cities. ■

*Teresa Marshall is PSI’s Communications Coordinator*

# A **charter** for the common good



Real democracy: crowd votes at Indignados gathering, Spain, 15 June

**O**n 24 January 2011, the Council of Global Unions adopted the Geneva Charter on Quality Public Services.

“Quality public services available to all enhance the quality of people’s lives and are fundamental to the creation of societies that are equal, prosperous and democratic,” says the Charter.

It defines “public” as serving the general interest rather than particular or individual interests. It calls for a culture of service that responds effectively to the needs of people.

*“Serving the general interest rather than particular or individual interests”*

The global unions – representing an estimated 200 million workers in private and public sector unions – call for a global agenda to provide social justice, sustainable development, equity and a better quality of life for all. This includes:

- Commitment to the right of all people to public services that are universal in their reach and availability, irrespective of social, economic and geographic conditions, and that promote gender equality and equity.
- Recognition that quality public services are required in developing, emerging and advanced economies for sustainable economic growth and for an equitable distribution of the benefits of growth.
- Adoption of policies and strategies to meet the fundamental needs of everyone for water, food, energy and housing; to enable all to have access to education, health, communications, transport and a plurality of information; to preserve cultural diversity and freedom; and to ensure the right to decent conditions at work.
- Good administration that is transparent and free of corruption, in the service of a pluralist, open society.

The Charter commits unions around the world to campaign for adequate public resources, and a commitment to invest in the future of people and their communities.

It notes that philanthropy is not a substitute for fair and reasonable taxation of corporations as well as individuals. It proposes support to put low income countries on the path to sustainable development through innovative sources of funding, including a tax on international financial transactions.

“Today, more than ever before, the world needs to work together for the viability of our planet in a new context of decency, change and hope. That work will succeed when we take our inspiration from the knowledge that quality public services provide quality of life,” the Charter concludes. ■

## The rich get richer –



## and what could be done with just a little of their money

The richest people in the world became nearly ten percent richer in 2010. In 2009 their wealth increased by nearly 20 percent. They have now fully recovered from the crisis, owning assets worth \$42.7 trillion – five percent more than in 2007. This is more than all the government debt in the world.

This vast wealth is owned by less than 11 million people – about 0.15 percent of the world's population. The rich try very hard to pay as little tax as possible, helped by their accountants and advisers. But if, for example, the wealthy individuals of Europe paid a one-off tax of 24 percent, they could reduce the government debt of all 27 European countries to an average level of 60 percent, the EU's arbitrary target. Even a one-off tax of 14 percent would enable them to pay off the entire national debts of Greece, Portugal, Iceland and Spain.

An annual tax of just five percent on these wealthy Europeans would reduce all the deficits in Europe to the EU's target level of 3 percent of GDP. And an annual tax of only one percent on the wealthy individuals of North America would be enough to eliminate all the budget deficits of every state in the USA. ■

# Public Service international Trade Union Award 2011



Leaders of Health Services Workers Union of Ghana Trades Union Congress at PSI award ceremony: General Secretary Abu Kuntulo, National Chair Rev. Richard Yeboah, Deputy General Secretary Reynolds Tenkorang, Second Vice Chair Edith Abutiate, First National Trustee Amoako Attah

On the World Public Services Day, 23 June 2011, the global union federation Public Services International announced that the second annual PSI Public Service Trade Union Award had been awarded to the Health Services Workers' Union of Ghana.

A small union with a big heart and major achievements to its credit, the Health Services Workers' Union of Ghana is truly an exemplary union which defends quality public health services by fighting for decent work and promoting trade union rights for all health workers. This has had a direct effect in lessening the need for skilled health workers to migrate and seek decent work outside their country, while increasing the quality of public health services within Ghana.

The HSWU has established itself as a centre for the promotion of health services in Ghana and across West Africa. The union contributes to important solidarity actions, providing networking and assistance to under-resourced sister unions in neighbouring countries. HSWU founded and sustains the West Africa Health Sector Union Network. HSWU also publishes a health news bulletin that provides information to both health workers and the public.

The HSWU has carried out important work on migration issues. The World Health Organisation listed

Ghana as a country facing a crisis in human resources for health. By winning rights and improving conditions for health workers, this union has helped to reduce the number of skilled workers leaving the country.

HSWU, together with the Ghana Registered Nurses Association, developed a pre-decision and information kit to provide potential migrant health workers with important information on migration realities in other countries as well as extending support services to migrating health workers.

The HSWU has worked closely with the Ghana Registered Nurses Association in a campaign called Health Care Workers Are Not for Sale, defending quality health care services in Ghana and winning better salaries and improved working conditions for health care workers.

HSWU, together with other unions and health workers' associations, formed themselves into a Health Workers Group which played a critical role in the job evaluation and salary negotiations with the government over several years. Their relentless and active engagement in representing the interest of their members, who comprise 95 percent of the Ghanaian health workforce, ultimately led to a raise in wage levels for all health workers. ■



Indignados protest, Spain, 19 June



Anti-austerity protest, Lisbon, Portugal, 30 November

# Austerity cuts are assaults on civil society

**A**ll austerity packages involve cuts in public services and public spending. This hits the poor and vulnerable the hardest, according to the evidence collected by NGOs and others concerned with poverty and social impacts. This evidence is especially important because most governments are not making any assessment of the social impact of their policies.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs warns that “growing pressure for austerity measures, ostensibly for reasons of fiscal consolidation, is putting at risk social protection, public health and education programmes, as well as the economic recovery measures.” It warns that “economic policies considered in isolation from their social outcomes can have dire consequences for poverty, employment, nutrition, health and education, which, in turn, adversely affect long-term sustainable development.... It is essential that governments take into account the likely social implications of their economic policies.”

A survey across 17 countries by the European Anti-Poverty Network found that the austerity measures are hitting hardest at young people, the poor, and vulnerable groups including those with little education, migrants, and ethnic minorities. Those who are already most affected by the economic crisis are hit again by tightened conditions to qualify for unemployment or social assistance, and stricter ‘targeting’ of housing and child benefits.

Deliberate cuts in government jobs and raising the retirement age worsen the prospects for young people seeking work. The youth unemployment rate across the EU in September 2010 was over 20 percent, double the overall rate

of unemployment. In some countries it was much higher, over 37 percent in Estonia and 42 percent in Spain.

The result is growing unemployment, indebtedness, poverty and inequality.

In Spain: 19.5 percent of the population is under the poverty line. There are more than 1.5 million households with no working adult, where children face restrictions in food, clothing and leisure.

In Hungary: There are approximately 100,000 people considered as ‘unsafe’ clients which means that they cannot pay back their loans to the banks.

In Romania: The new austerity package includes a 25 percent cut to child care benefits, the elimination of benefits for young families, and a freezing of benefits for single parents.

In Northern Ireland-UK: a unique and much praised integrated system of health and social care is likely to be dismantled. Current proposals promise to retain the health element, but cut the personal social services component that funds many critical services for vulnerable children and families.

There are similar effects as a result of budget cuts by states in the USA. A survey by the Centre for Budget and Policy Priorities found that a majority of states have reduced health care, services to the elderly and disabled, and education. For example, Washington State planned to reduce assistance for 28,000 people who are physically or mentally incapacitated and unable to work. The cuts would have been even greater without support from the federal government. ■



# Cuts Watch

Here's how people in three countries – Greece, Russia and the United States, are affected by the economic fallout from the financial crisis.

	GREECE	RUSSIA	UNITED STATES
Gross Domestic Product			
in 2009	-2.0%	-7.8%	-2.6%
in 2010	-4.5%		
in 2011	-3.8%		
Economic stimulus provided (% of GDP)		4.5%	1.8%
Support for banks (% of GDP)	5%	7.7%	23%
Government austerity cuts (% of GDP)	-15.4%	-3.7%	Federal government: 0.0% State governments: -7.6%
IMF demand (% of GDP by 2030)	More cuts, equalling another 14.0%.	More cuts, equalling another 7.5%.	More cuts, equalling another 17.5%.
Public sector job cuts	-157,038	-93,000	-535,000
Public sector pay cuts	-21.3%	No. Large real increases in pay of health and education workers, 2011-12.	Some states cut pay, pensions, health care and right to free collective bargaining. Federal pay freeze 2010-12.
Health care cuts	-7% across the board.	No. Extra spending announced.	Improved national health coverage, but cuts imposed at state level.
Pension cuts		No. Increases in pensions as part of 2009 stimulus package.	
by 2020	-25%		
by 2060	-33%		
Minimum retirement age	Will increase from 55 to 65 years.		Retirement age increased to 67.
Privatisation	Euro 50 billion in asset sales, controlled by EU appointees to a private auctioneer rather than the elected government, to pay off banks.	Partial privatisations by selling shares in some state enterprises announced 2010; continued contracting-out of public services.	Some state level contracting-out, PPPs.
Municipal, regional, state level cuts	-7% across the board.	No. Growth in municipal employment resumed in 2010.	Extensive cuts by nearly all states.

For more country reports by David Hall, Director of the Public Services International Research Unit at Greenwich University, see [www.psiru.org/cutswatch](http://www.psiru.org/cutswatch).

# European Day of Action



PSI affiliates protest in Lisbon, Portugal



CGT members march in Paris, France



PSI affiliate members including from SEIU and NNU march in solidarity in Washington, DC



American affiliate members rally in solidarity in Los Angeles

The executive committee of the European Federation of Public Services (PSI/EPSU) coordinated a European day of joint action against austerity and in support of a “Social Europe.” The date connected with meetings of the EC Council of Finance Ministers and Employment Council in Brussels, and the launch of the public sector unions’ pension strike in the United Kingdom.

Angry about the inability of European leaders to find a solution to the crisis and building on a series of national actions by public sector workers in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and elsewhere, PSI/EPSU members protested against brutal austerity measures which include attacks on trade union and collective bargaining rights, cuts in staff, wages and pensions, and reduced public services for citizens.

Carola Fischbach-Pyttel, EPSU General Secretary, underlined that Europe’s public service unions reject the “Catastroika” approach of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission which seeks ever deeper cuts in public spending.

Union mobilisation ranged from public sector general strikes to national days of action, mass meetings, and protests outside EU offices and banks.

# 30 November



Millions of UK affiliate members went on strike against pension cuts



Rallying in London, UK

## Greek unions block agents of austerity

The ADEDY civil service confederation along with other trade unions has been maintaining its protest and strike actions against the austerity measures being imposed on Greece. New measures announced recently could lead to 20,000 public sector workers losing their jobs or facing further reductions in pay, early retirement or part-time work.

## United Kingdom unions strike over pension cuts

PSI affiliate unions in the United Kingdom worked hard to build support for coordinated industrial action on 30 November in response to the government's failure to negotiate properly over changes to pensions and its plans to cut the pensions of millions of public sector workers.

Members of Public and Commercial Services Union, UNISON, GMB, Unite, Prospect and the FDA senior civil servants' union are all affected. An estimated three million workers were to begin strike action on 30 November.

UNISON reported that, following a ballot of its 1.1 million members, nearly 80 percent of those who voted supported taking action. Both UNITE and Prospect public sector members returned votes of 75 percent in favour

of strike action; FDA members voted 81 percent for industrial action; and a majority of PCS and GMB voting members also supported a strike.

Government plans would require workers to increase pension contributions – in some cases by as much as 50 percent, to reduce pension benefits, and to increase the age at which pensions can be drawn. This comes on top of a two year wage freeze for many members.

The unions are also seeking a judicial review of the government's actions.

## No to privatised tax services

More than 21,000 revenue and customs call centre staff could strike over plans to allow private companies to answer taxpayers' enquiries in the UK, after a ballot by Public and Commercial Services union members. Of those who voted, 86 percent said yes to a strike or other industrial action. ■



PSI-EPSU members protest in Rome, Italy

# We are all Greeks

**P**opular movements across Europe are stepping up and internationalising their actions to create a united front against austerity.

Simultaneous protests in several European countries happened on October 15 and when the G20 met in Cannes on 3-4 November.

As Greeks strike and protest against savage job and pension cuts and refuse to pay emergency taxes, unions and civil society groups in other countries are also gearing up.

Though each country has its different characteristics, all austerity programmes seem to have this in common: they are enabling a lasting transfer of wealth from public to private, from people to banks, from poor to rich.

‘We need to create a common mobilisation, a common agenda,’ said activist Max Banc, from the German branch of the finance pressure group Attac. He spoke at a European Coalition of Resistance conference in London in October – attended by around 600 activists, trade unionists and academics from across Europe.

It’s easy, if you listen to European politicians and the mainstream media, to form the impression that the ‘troika’ – the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank – are trying to save the Greek economy. Actually, their purpose is to recapitalize the European banks exposed to Greek debt and to protect the euro.

The bailouts they have arranged not only squeeze the people. They are also likely to result in the dismemberment of Greece’s public assets, which will be sold off to the private sector, including, one can reasonably suppose, the banks and speculators who created the 2008 crisis that is at the root of today’s troubles.

However, there are signs of hope. The people’s ‘debt audit’ movement, started in Greece and Ireland, is gathering pace, with similar initiatives starting in France and Portugal. These ‘citizen auditors’ are investigating: Who took out the public debts? What was the money used for? And who is the money owed to?



PSI affiliate ADEDY has been at the forefront of over a dozen recent general strikes in Greece

The Greek authorities are now trying to squeeze taxes out of people on the lowest incomes. Already 20-30 per cent is being shaved off old age pensions; 20 per cent salary cuts have become common, and 30 per cent of public sector workers are likely to lose their jobs. Value-added tax is now imposed

***“We need to create a common mobilisation, a common agenda”***

on all food items, including 20 per cent on bread. But still the tax revenue is shrinking, partly due to a shrinking economy, rising unemployment, and the fact that state workers are tax payers.

While the tax-evading rich remain more-or-less untouched, hunger wages are becoming common and the suicide rate has gone up by 41 per cent, according to a recent article in the British medical journal *The Lancet*.

‘I would not mind paying the 1300

euro one-off tax they want if I thought it was for the good of my country,’ says one young woman in Athens. ‘But where will the money go?’

Standing to gain from all this are the lenders, who can charge sky-high interest rates and the speculators and corporate vultures waiting for the dismemberment of Greece as the country is forced to sell off its public assets or even, it has been suggested, islands.

So what’s the answer? Few are willing to stick their necks out. But a Europe-wide progressive agenda might look like this: place the banks under democratic control and regulate them and the wider finance sector; raise taxes by closing tax loopholes and by raising taxes on the rich and corporations; renounce illegitimate debts and restructure or write-off others; and finally, remind governments and the EU that their first duty is to the people of Europe, not to its financial institutions. ■

From an article by Vanessa Baird, *New Internationalist* magazine, [www.newint.org](http://www.newint.org)

# Amidst austerity measures and popular revolutions: How are women faring?

**T**he continuing fallout from the global financial crisis has provided the “perfect storm” for those who wish to rid workplaces of unions – and the impact has been particularly severe for women workers, says a PSI secretariat report to the World Women’s Committee.

A wave of austerity measures is being used not only to accelerate privatisation agendas, claw back public spending and reduce the size and role of the state, but to virtually eliminate social dialogue and collective bargaining in public sector workplaces.

The report provides a snapshot of these austerity measures – which hamper economic growth rather than encourage it – and their impact on women.

## United Kingdom

An analysis by the Trades Union Congress shows that the cuts being implemented in the United Kingdom are having an acute impact on women’s jobs, their ability to access the labour market, their pensions, and their share of unpaid work in the household. Women make up the majority of the public sector workforce in the UK. It now has the highest female unemployment in 23 years, and one million young people find themselves excluded from the workplace.

## United States

In the United States, the regressive legislation to destroy free collective bargaining in many states has been described as “the political equivalent of slamming women’s labor history into reverse.” Women lost 79 percent of the 327,000 public sector jobs cut between July, 2009 and February, 2011.

## Australia

New South Wales, in Australia, has launched similar legislative attacks and cuts – which, on top of everything else, may be a potential setback for the pay equity campaign led by PSI affiliates in that state. However, Fair Work Australia, the national workplace relations tribunal, has recognised the need for equal pay for the nation’s social and community sector workers,



“Revolution for the people – thieves must leave” 21 January 2011, Tunisia

an important step towards equal pay for a group whose work has been traditionally undervalued.

## Fiji

Along with sister global unions, PSI has been vocal in denouncing the interim military regime’s raft of anti-union decrees, the net result of which will be to virtually abolish independent, democratic unions in Fiji. For example, the Fiji Nursing Association has reported the loss of some 98 percent of its affiliated income as a result of the withdrawal of dues check-off.

## Botswana

In Botswana, the government responded to a two month strike by dismissing more than 2000 workers. The majority were women, often the main income earners in their households.

## Middle East and North Africa

The popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa gave hope and inspiration to the union movement around the world. They were the culmination of more than a decade of increasing mobilisation by workers

and civil society organisations in the face of deteriorating living conditions and crackdowns on civil liberties and labour rights. Independent trade unions – including PSI affiliates in Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia – were key participants and continue to play a major role in building their societies.

The Arab Spring pushed the issue of women’s empowerment and emancipation higher on the agenda, but much remains to be done. In Egypt, calls by women’s groups and unions to enshrine equal rights for women in the constitution have so far been ignored. In fact, the constitutional amendments decreed by the Supreme Council of Armed Forces contain no reference to equality for women.

Some positive signals are, nonetheless, emerging from the region. In Tunisia, women led a successful campaign to ensure gender parity among candidates for elections to the national constituent assembly. Tunisia has recently announced that it will lift key reservations to the United Nations’ Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). ■

*Chidi King is PSI’s Equality and Rights Officer*

# Energy privatisation “not a solution” for Nigeria



Union members protest military takeover of public electricity stations in Nigeria, November 2011

**T**he Nigerian government announced on 26 August its plans to privatise the country's electricity company. Nigeria's National Union of Electricity Employees called upon Public Services International Utilities Officer David Boys to address these plans. In a meeting with government leaders on 19 September in the country's capital, Abuja, Boys warned the government and citizens of the risks associated with privatising public works.

He called on Nigeria to instead design a national plan to develop its own electricity system that would provide low-carbon energy and universal access. Boys said that Nigeria couldn't afford not to make the investment in their country's energy. In fact, he said that according to the International Energy Agency, the country could fund its own energy with less than one percent of its oil revenues.

He urged decision-makers to “use Nigerian resources, Nigerian ingenuity and know-how to design, plan, build and run your own energy system. Implement transparency, accountability and participation to eliminate corruption. Work with the trade unions here in the room to build your system. Fix your own house, don't sell it.”

“All of our experience, in rich countries and poor,” Boys said, “points to systemic problems when the electricity sector is run by the for-profit actors—even when you bring in tough and bright and independent regulators.” Based on PSI's experience in 150 countries, he said the privatisation would not allow Nigeria to achieve a modern, reliable electricity system.

He said that although Nigeria had encountered problems with the management of the country's current energy system, the solution was not in

privatisation. The problem with private companies, he explained, was that they are obliged to turn around quick profits. “These profits are not easy to realise in the power sector,” he warned.

Some of the consequences of such profit pressure, Boys explained, could be limited energy access in poor and rural areas and refusal to follow the country's environmental and social regulations. “It is clear that the corporations have only one master, the stock market. More and more, the privatised energy companies are managed by financial specialists, with financial goals and no experience in energy.”

PSI's position is that quality public services of energy, water, and healthcare must be delivered through public ownership and management. ■

# Spotlight on South Africa



Standing strong: three members of the SAMWU "Ekurhuleni Seven"

## Campaigning to end corruption

The South African Municipal Workers' Union has initiated a national campaign to reinstate the "Ekurhuleni Seven" workers, who were dismissed by the municipality in connection with the union members' efforts to expose local corruption.

In Kwazulu Natal, the Congress of South African Trade Unions voiced its concerns over the high levels of corruption being exposed by PSI affiliates. COSATU noted that "the massive tenderisation of the state is directly linked to the twin evils of corruption and poor service delivery. In most instances the outsourcing of services and the issuing of tenders has become a way of siphoning state funds into the pockets of private enterprises rather than a way of maximising service delivery."

## Mourning the death of a union comrade

South African Municipal Workers' Union shop steward Petros Msiza, aged 43, was shot point-blank when police opened fire on union members taking part in a peaceful demonstration in the city of Tshwane on 3 March 2011. PSI joined SAMWU and our affiliate unions worldwide in condemning police actions and calling for a judicial inquiry into police violence.

SAMWU workers had taken to

the streets to protest the employer's unilateral changes to their working conditions, and also to defend their union leaders who were being victimised. The municipality responded by dismissing 1054 workers.

## Prison privatisation reversed

In a major turn-around, the South African cabinet, on 26 October 2011, approved the cancellation of four proposed public-private partnership deals for the construction of correctional centres. Cabinet

also agreed that other PPPs in the Department of Correctional Services and the PPP model across government should be reviewed.

## Robben Island strike ended

After a three week strike that began in October, the National Health Education and Allied Workers' Union returned to work at the Robben Island Museum. NEHAWU provincial secretary Luthando Nogcinisa said management had agreed to open negotiations to address the huge wage gap between top management and workers.

## Public services settlement

A new agreement has been reached following an extended collective bargaining process by the Public Services Coordinating Bargaining Council in which eight PSI affiliated trade unions (DENOSA, HOSPERSA, NEHAWU, NPSWU, NUPSAW, PAWUSA, POPCRU and SADNU) participate. The agreement includes: a 6.8% wage settlement for 2011/12; improvements to Medical Assistance for lower and middle income earners; improvement in the Home Ownership program; and priority review of Essential Services minimum levels. ■



On strike for fair pay at Robben Island

# PSI unions play leading



Celebrating in Tahrir Square, 11 February, Egypt



Citizens and military, 5 February, Egypt

**W**estern mainstream media has offered a simplistic explanation for the popular uprisings that have swept the Middle East and North Africa – namely that change has been driven by a young “Facebook generation.”

The real unreported story is that independent unions affiliated to Public Services International have played pivotal roles in forcing this year’s sea change in the Arab world. They continue to lead in shaping the future of their nations now that the dictators of Tunisia and Egypt have fled.

Powerful forces, including the interim military government of Egypt, are not advocates of human and union rights. But the unions have demonstrated their ability to bring people together, and they continue to use that power for the common good.

## Tunisia’s Jasmine Revolution

Organised labour was a leading force in January’s Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia, where people from every social background joined together to depose dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Kacem Afaya, General Secretary of Tunisia’s Fédération Générale de la Santé, explained, “We want a just and democratic society, away from cronyism, bribery and corruption. This is the aspiration.”

The transition to a new system is not easy.

“The federation took a very firm stand against the first government that took over after Ben Ali left,” said Najoua Makhoulf, head of the national women’s committee of the Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail. (PSI affiliate unions are core members of UGTT, Tunisia’s national trade union federation.)

“It was riddled with the remnants of the old ruling party.... In all sectors and provinces, the labour movement came out into the streets to demand the resignation of this government,” she said.

“Under pressure from the street, including workers, that government stepped down.”

In late October 2011, Tunisians held their first democratic election in decades. The Ennahda party won the largest

share of votes; a coalition constituent assembly had yet to be formed at the time of this publication. The UGTT was also preparing for elections in December, with equal representation of women in executive positions in the union federation an important issue to be addressed.

Workers around the world know it takes courage and solidarity to stand up to bosses, and fight for economic justice.

The courage and solidarity required to stand up to dictators – to fight for freedom and social justice – are orders of magnitude greater. Dictators control the courts, jails, police, and armed forces. Their guns do not fire rubber bullets.

Against all that power, the demonstrators who defeated dictators in this year’s Arab Spring had each other. The person who stood beside them. And the woman who stood in front of them in the hope that government forces would be less likely to shoot a woman.

“Until now, men have always considered us second class,” said Nahed Ben Dakhla, a UGTT women’s committee member.

But in Tunisia and Egypt, she said, “men saw us in the front lines preventing the police from making contact.

“We stood between them and police bullets.

“As a result of mass participation by men and women struggling together, the revolution has changed everything. We are not going back,” said Dakhla.

## Egypt’s January 25th Revolution

In Egypt, workers participated in the mass occupation of Tahrir Square that started in January and engaged in 60 strikes during the three days before the February 11 departure of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

A key precursor to these actions was the formation of independent unions, starting with the Union of Real Estate Tax Authority Workers (RETA), a PSI affiliate. Previously the Egyptian Trade Union Federation had a legal monopoly on organising. It was an arm of the state, part of its repressive apparatus. A dramatic 2007 sit-in strike by RETA workers broke the chains. They won a 325 percent wage increase.



# ng roles in Arab Spring



Tunisian women protest attacks by Salafists, 3 November



Jasmine Spring demonstration, Tunisia, 11 February

They built on this victory to create an independent union of 35,000 members in 2008.

RETA President Kamal Abou Aita recounted, “The day before the revolution we were striking, and the next day we were also in the streets. I do believe that we played a critical role and maintained pressure on the regime to step down.

“We declared establishment of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions on January 30. In the first communiqué of our federation (and this was still under the shadow of the deposed president) we called for a general strike in all sectors in order to feed the Egyptian revolution.

“Our strikes paralysed the country and contributed – along with the efforts of many sectors of our society, in particular our youth, in forcing Mubarak to step down at that moment.”

Together, independent unions forced Egypt’s current rulers – the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces – to appoint labour’s candidate as Minister of Manpower and Immigration. Since then the ministry has formally registered many independent unions. There were four independent unions before the revolution. Now, there are 88 new unions with an estimated membership of 250,000 in the Egyptian Federation of Independent Unions.

A top army general has admitted that citizens’ widespread anger at Egypt’s corrupt privatisation programme – which had transferred billions of dollars of public assets to private hands in recent years, added fuel to the Egyptian revolution.

Noha Morshed, RETA women’s committee representative said: “Our union’s strikes and protests paved the way for the revolution. People learned what their rights are, what it meant to reach the officials, how to make the minister come down to talk to people.

“We had been preparing for this for a long time, to get down to Tahrir Square on January 25, which is the Police Day, in protest against what the police were doing in Egypt and against the corrupt regime. We wanted social justice and better pay.

“I want to say: we were not too many; when people saw us, they first said it’s just a demonstration that will take its

time and go away. But we found people gathering behind us from all parts and streets of Cairo, coming out behind us, saying: tell us what it is you want? We explained the role of union work and that we are one people and that we are one family.”

Morshed described the prominent role union women played in the Revolution of January 25: “As women in RETA we had had earlier experiences in demonstrating and protesting in the streets. We were used to being on the first line of defence.

“We had with us mothers, sisters, daughters. The woman was encouraging the man and stating the demands; we were a shield against security forces, who were threatening at all times.

“When we saw security forces attacking people, we stood up and protected them; we brought water and we covered the sleeping. We had small children with us; when a mother was tired any other mother took over. No one knew whose mother or sister; we were one family. We met new people, new mothers. We shielded them and they shielded us. We encouraged them and they encouraged us.

“The corrupt regime did not give anybody the right to talk. It was simply at the top commanding and deciding. Before the revolution we couldn’t stand here and have freedom of speech. Our opinions were ignored. But now we can talk freely. We got rid of Mubarak and his corrupt prime minister.”

Despite these gains, the news is not all good.

The interim Egyptian cabinet passed a law in June that criminalises strikes and protests. The independent unions describe this decree as “a grave and worrisome development,” intended to stifle the democratic revolution and block the creation of a genuine civil society. EFITU has organised a protest campaign that PSI affiliates around the world are asked to support.

No women were appointed to key positions in Egypt’s interim government. Clearly much work remains to be done: there can be no true freedom without women’s rights and full inclusion in political and public life. ■

# Arab Spring:



**Nassira Ghozlane**  
General Secretary,  
Syndicat National  
Autonome des  
Personnels de  
l'Administration  
Publique (SNAPAP),  
Algeria

We took the initiative of establishing a Coordinating Body for Democracy and Change in January after the first protest by Algerian youth this year. It led to our organizing the protests of February 12th and 19th, both of which were suppressed by riot police forces. Our union president was injured and union members and others, including a member of parliament, suffered severe beatings.

Now we are expanding coordination to the grassroots level in all 48 governates. The regime is very oppressive and it is difficult for any movement to happen; the purpose of this coordinating body is to explain to Algerian people how this internal situation can be changed.

The vision is for a complete change of this system. The regime is linked to the French colonials; when they left they left their "sons" in charge. This system, which has confiscated all the natural wealth of the country –enough for all the people of the Arab Maghreb to live in dignity, must fall.

**Interviewer:** Your words are frank and direct.

**N.G.:** Because it is coming from deep within me.

**Interviewer:** But my fear is that you could be made accountable for these words.

**N.G.:** Doesn't matter... Because even if I die, there are others behind me.



**Ali Al Hadid,**  
President, General  
Trade Union for  
Workers in Electricity  
(GTUWE), Jordan

We are part of the people and we care about the national interest. We aim to obtain: political decisions that raise the ceiling of freedoms in Jordan; modification of laws to permit the free expression of citizens; laws and regulations to fight corruption; more representative parliamentary election laws; and economic laws that improve the living standards of our workers and citizens generally. We work with other groups to achieve these goals.



**Howida Makeen**  
Tax Collection  
Researcher, Real  
Estate Tax Authority  
Union (RETA), Egypt

In Tahrir Square, we all issued demands together as Egyptians. In the beginning there was no conflict between Christians and Muslims, but later we realised that there was interference to create conflict. So we stopped that and encouraged cooperation and integration of people.

I feel freedom now. I am Christian and I can raise my voice which I couldn't do before. I can speak out and say: my rights are such and such.

My personality has also changed. I became a risk taker, trying to achieve something. The union taught me courage; it taught me to speak out. I also learned to try and talk to my colleagues and all people with us at work and other people, to do like us and try to benefit.

The trade union improved my life in terms of increasing my income. And I learned that the union system can provide me with great services, such as health insurance, which God willing will become much better.

PSI was here before the revolution supporting us through trade activities and action. PSI representatives came to Egypt and they also invited us to conferences, so we could benefit from these, because there is little or almost no experience in Egypt in union work. This is what we were lacking, it was critical before the revolution. PSI has given us new horizons and new visions (and) we call upon the international community to support us more.

Trade union work is very relevant to democracy. The more you have trade unions, the more democratic society is.

# Union voices



**Kamal Abbas**  
General Coordinator,  
Centre for Trade  
Union and Workers'  
Services (CUTWS),  
Egypt

Egyptians were suffering for decades from poverty and oppression. The claims for revolution were for bread, freedom and social justice.

For sure the independent trade union movement (not the official pro-government unions) played a crucial role in the revolution. Because the 3000 strikes that erupted from December 2006 and up to the start of the revolution and had the participation of two million workers, encouraged large segments of the Egyptian people to get out and use the workers' weapons of strikes and demonstrations to express their interests.

No country has achieved democracy without building an independent trade union movement. Our challenge now is to make a wide alliance to achieve a democratic trade union movement that will help build a democratic society.



**Hussain Raja  
Abdelrazak  
Alfoqaha'a**  
General Secretary,  
Palestine Public  
Services Union

The Palestinian labour movement has a long history in the Arab world and ranks second after the Egyptian labour movement. The history goes back to the 1920s... We have played a major role in the intifadas and resisting occupation by Israel. But the focus is on defending the rights of workers, elevating their living standard, and organising them in unions to defend their rights.

This is a dream that is starting to happen in reality: building a new society with solidarity, civil peace, social justice and human rights.



**Tarek Mustafa  
Abelfattah  
Koueib**  
Treasurer,  
Real Estate Tax  
Authority Union  
(RETA), Egypt

For the members of my union, it was the fulfilment of a long dream because we had started on the way of independence at the Real Estate Tax Authority Union, where we work. Our dream was that all of Egypt would follow.

We, as the only independent and national union, played the major role in mobilising labour and igniting the sectoral strikes. Our focus was on breaking the fear barrier.

Our union is currently the meeting point of all workers who want to organise their own independent unions, and coordinating with other groups – particularly youth. We are trying now to articulate the demands of the Egyptian working class from the January 25th Revolution.

Eliminating corruption is more important than material gains at the present moment.



**Sahar Dessouki**  
Women's Committee  
member,  
Egyptian Health  
Technologists'  
Syndicate (EHTS)

Our independent union was active before the revolution. Our role in the revolution intensified as health technicians; members organised from January 25 working in shifts in both Tahrir Square and in the hospitals to help injured people.

Revolution means of course justice, and freedom of opinion, which is the first thing for women. Women have participated in the revolution and went to the street and their voices were heard – contrary to the past. Anytime anyone demanded anything before, especially women, they were not heard.

Women now join the union and their voice is heard. For women, present in the revolution and demonstrations, our voices are now heard loudly. This is a great achievement for women in Egypt.

# Tunisian workers say: “They are drinking our money”

**M**embers of the Tunisian agricultural workers union were engaged in a strike and sit-in on 2 November to protest managerial corruption and the withholding of workers’ wages and benefits, some still unpaid from 2009.

At a wheat granary just outside Tunis, two dozen workers, on strike for almost a month, held up protest signs, one of which read: “The cooperative belongs to the workers and not to those who exploit it for profit.”

In 2006, the union accepted some layoffs in eight categories—mainly early retirements by workers over age 45—but the government failed to keep up its side of the bargain and clean up corruption, according to Nabil Jebnoui, secretary-general of the regional union in Manouba.

Three women who work at the silo joined the protest. “Things used to work really well here,” says one of the secretaries, who asked not to be named, adding that workers in the past had received profit-sharing bonuses once a year, after the harvest, in a lump sum that could be equivalent to their salary. Since 2009, those payments have been doled out in small amounts, but during the past two months – nothing.

The workers say they expect to stay on strike as long as it takes to resolve the issues, restore the workers’ jobs and wages, and end corruption.

“This is an independent union and the workers are all that counts,” says the secretary, as the men chant, “I will sacrifice my blood and soul for you, my union.”

Silo worker Sami Hafidhi says reforms must come soon. During the revolution, he says, the workers held



Tunisian Federation of Agricultural Workers General Secretary Hassen Ghodbane with striking workers in Manouba

off on their claims in the expectation that a new government would address these problems later. However, the government has not responded, deferring to management.

“We will not stop,” Hafidhi says. “We will not go back to work if there is no solution.”

Meanwhile, other members of the Federation of Tunisian Agricultural Workers are staging a sit-in at the downtown headquarters of the Central Cooperative of Agriculture, guarding documentation of corruption they uncovered and protesting the layoffs of 300 to 400 agricultural workers nationwide.

The former general director of the agricultural ministry allegedly walked off with more than 10,000 dinars of money he was not entitled to. The workers filed their case against the executive on 14 October.

“They are drinking our money, smoking our money,” says Tarek Slama, who is in charge of trucks in the operations and maintenance division. “The current executive says he can do nothing, but we have proof. These are the auditors’ reports, and yet nothing has changed. We are asking them to be responsible for what they have done. The evidence incriminates them. The office is sealed off, with all the files inside.”

The workers want their story told around the world. They know that workers everywhere have been watching Tunisia’s emerging democracy in hopes of fulfilling the promise of the Arab Spring.

“We want everybody to know that the family of the ex-president, along with his in-laws, left the country,” Slama says, “but many thieves remain.”

The general secretary of the Federation of Tunisian Agricultural Workers, Hassen Ghodbane, notes that during the revolution the agricultural workers continued to do their jobs and ensure the food supply, thus supporting the revolution by feeding the nation.

But they have waited long enough, and authorised a strike for 15-17 November. The union is expecting a large turnout of its membership, which has grown from about 22,000 to 36,000 members in four months.

“Our work is like the pace of agriculture itself,” says Ghodbane, “from drought to rain to growth.” ■

Story produced by an international PSI Communicators’ Action Network team in Tunisia, 31 October-4 November 2011. See more great stories, videos and photos at [www.psi-can.org](http://www.psi-can.org)

# Strengthening union voices in the Arab world

**P**SI affiliate unions across the Middle East and North Africa have inspired and continue to lead demands for regime change. To support and strengthen their communications abilities, PSI worked with affiliate unions in Tunisia to host a five day PSI Communicators' Action Network forum in Tunis in early November. The hands-on training was designed to assist affiliates in playing a lead role in the progressive transformation of their countries.

"PSI believes that building trade union communications capacity is necessary to achieve essential rights to freedom of expression and information, increase pluralism and diversity in media voices, and promote transparency in governance," said Peter Waldorff, PSI General Secretary.

The 50 communicators participated in workshops on video journalism,

photo journalism, investigative journalism, news writing, blogging, social media, mobile messaging, and security. After training and briefings, the union journalists formed teams and headed out to cover stories about public service workers, their unions, campaigns, challenges and victories in Tunisia and the MENA region.

The initiative also enabled participants to build networks with their peers from neighbouring countries and around the world to work together for human and trade union rights, peaceful democratic societies, and quality public services. See [www.psi-can.org](http://www.psi-can.org) for photo essays, news stories, and video and radio reports produced through this project.

PSI represents members in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Palestine, Kuwait, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya and Morocco. ■

PSI union journalists interview local members protesting corruption, Tunis



Marina Waitne



[www.world-psi.org](http://www.world-psi.org)

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- Constitutional changes
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# Trade union rights

**W**orkers and their unions face difficult circumstances in almost every nation. Over the past year, governments around the world have escalated their attacks on free collective bargaining, public services, the common good and human rights.

Public Services International monitors these attacks, and offers solidarity and support to affiliates as they defend their members. Some of these struggles are listed below.

## AFRICA

### ALGERIA

The harassment of unionists and defenders of human rights is intensifying. Vandals, encouraged by police, throw stones at protesters and union offices. There was a thankfully unsuccessful attempt to assassinate Rachid Malaoui, general secretary of PSI affiliate Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'Administration Publique (SNAPAP), just prior to his scheduled meeting with a United Nations special reporter on the right to decent housing. Malika Falil of SNAPAP was arrested while participating in a sit-in. Police have even pressured SNAPAP's landlord to evict them, claiming they had been given instructions by the office of the president to end SNAPAP's activities and ransack their offices.

### BOTSWANA

After a three year wage freeze left salaries well below the cost of living, members of PSI affiliates went on strike in April. The government responded by dismissing hundreds of workers, detaining union leaders, and carrying out acts of violence and intimidation against unions.

### EGYPT

In June, the interim Egyptian Cabinet criminalised strikes, protests and sit-ins that disrupt the economy, a clear

violation of international norms the interim government had pledged to uphold. The government has refused to negotiate with the Egyptian Health Technologists Syndicate (EHTS), a PSI affiliate. PSI has written Dr. Essam Sharaf, acting prime minister, calling on the government to calm growing tensions by living up to its international obligations, including respect of union rights and fundamental liberties.

### MALAWI

In July, peaceful protests arising from the deteriorating economic situation were violently disrupted by police leaving 19 people dead. In addition to the escalating cost of living, fuel and foreign exchange shortages, the protesters were raising their voices against legislative measures which would divest citizens of their right to freedom of expression and other civil liberties.

### NIGERIA

The National Union of Electricity Employees deplored the Nigerian government's deployment of troops on 14 November to guard public power company installations nationwide. They described the action as irrational, considering that talks are still ongoing over the privatisation of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria.

The union asked its members to embark on peaceful demonstrations across the states to protest military occupation of the public power facilities.

NUEE President Mansur Musa said the peaceful marches are intended to protest the non-payment of the 50 percent salary increment since June, as well as the harassment of union members by security officials.

"They have been detaining and releasing our members; this cannot continue. We will continue to protest peacefully until the soldiers are removed," he said.

Musa described as false the government's claim that troops were deployed to guard installations against terrorist attacks by the

Islamic sect Boko Haram.

The union alleged that government deployed troops to ensure that the privatisation sale of the PHCN is pushed through.

### TUNISIA

Early in the year, peaceful demonstrators faced violence that resulted in deaths and injuries. PSI called on then President Zine el-Abadine Ben Ali to release the people who were imprisoned, and to engage in dialogue with all social partners.

### SWAZILAND

Mass pro-democracy protests were held across Swaziland in April, as the country faced bankruptcy due to reckless mismanagement by the ruling regime – an elite group which has grown richer and richer while ordinary people grow poorer. The Swazi authorities responded to the "April 12 Uprising" with a violent crackdown. Hundreds of union leaders and peaceful protesters were detained. There were reports that detainees were mistreated and tortured.

## ASIA PACIFIC

### AUSTRALIA

The government of New South Wales introduced legislation that effectively eliminates free collective bargaining for public employees. More than 40,000 New South Wales public sector employees, including all PSI affiliates in NSW, took to the streets in Sydney on 8 September to demonstrate the start of the state public unions' campaign against the state's planned cuts to the sector and the new laws designed to take away public employees' rights to bargain.

### FIJI

The interim military government of Fiji, ignoring its obligations as a member of the International Labour Organisation, initiated a state-sponsored program of worker and union repression by use of force and



Standing in solidarity with Fijian members, APRECON 2011, Australia

decree. The extreme actions threatened to virtually wipe out or severely weaken both public and private sector unions. The attacks include physical violence, severe limits on freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, and elimination of the existing dues check-off system for public sector unions.

#### **SOUTH KOREA**

The government has prosecuted almost 1,400 public employees and teachers under punitive laws that make it unlawful for them to either support or criticise political parties. Thousands more are facing indictments and prosecution. Many of those being prosecuted are members of the Korean Government Employees Union, a PSI affiliate. In addition, the government continues its unjustified refusal to register the KGEU, infringe on its legal status, and has taken groundless disciplinary action including dismissal of union officials.

## **INTER-AMERICAS**

#### **ECUADOR**

Hundreds of public service workers marched in the streets of Quito on 5 August 2011 as part of a delegation to the Constitutional Court of Ecuador.

PSI affiliate leaders filed a claim

with the court charging that a recent decree made by President Rafael Correa to force public service workers to take partly-compensated retirement – is unconstitutional. The decree could affect the job security of some 300,000 public employees.

“For us, the bottom line is the anti-labour policy that is appearing in Ecuador. We want democracy in this country – and that must include respect for workers, our rights to autonomy, self-organisation and collective bargaining,” said Messiah Tatamuex, President of the United Workers’ Front, speaking for a broad coalition of unions.

#### **PANAMA**

Intimidation of trade unionists, and excessive use of force by police, continues. PSI wrote to President Ricardo Martinelli to express its concern, and to urge the government to engage in social dialogue.

#### **UNITED STATES**

While the attack on union members and their right to bargain collectively in Wisconsin has resulted in the most headlines, similar legislation was introduced in many other states, including Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee. The attacks earned the widespread condemnation of unions around the world, including the PSI

and its affiliates which supported grassroots protests. Amnesty International called the attacks a violation of international law. “The US has an obligation to uphold the rights of American workers – including the specific right to organise and bargain collectively,” said Shane Enright of Amnesty International. Despite that, legislators in as many as 37 states have introduced hundreds of anti-union bills.

## **EUROPE**

#### **TURKEY**

The Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul attempted to intimidate workers to cancel their union membership with Belediye-İş and to join another union organisation instead. PSI, EPSU and ICEM urged the government to use its authority over the municipality to stop all the methods and means used against Belediye-İş members to resign their membership.

Labour laws in Turkey were imposed after the 1980 military coup. Three decades later, the laws have still not been brought into compliance with international conventions to which Turkey is a signatory.

*Chidi King is PSI's Equality and Rights Officer*



# Domestic workers finally achieve basic labour rights



Union activists, ILC, Geneva, Switzerland

**T**here was a strong trade union presence at the 55th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, held 22 February to 4 March at the UN’s headquarters in New York.

Delegations from Public Services International, Education International, the International Trade Union Confederation, and the International Transport Workers’ Federation worked to ensure that the views of workers and their unions would be reflected in the conclusions from the meeting.

Unions also wanted to establish firm links with UN Women, the new entity responsible for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Trade union lobbyists presented their case to a number of governments, including Canada, USA, Sweden, Brazil and the EU. Their drafting and lobbying efforts bore fruit in that the “agreed conclusions” affirm the importance of ILO conventions as part of the normative framework for gender equality, training and promotion of decent work for women.

Trade unions particularly welcomed conclusions that: affirm education as a human right and commit to gender equality; emphasise the need for equal sharing of family responsibilities; express concern at the incidence of gender-based violence in schools and the workplace; focus on the need for policies to overcome the decent work deficit faced by women, and to close the gender pay gap.

The priority theme for the next session of the commission, to be held in early 2012, is “the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.”

PSI will be advocating for better physical and social infrastructure in rural communities, including quality health care, child care, sanitation and utilities, as well as access to public social security. ■

*Chidi King is PSI’s Equality and Rights Officer*

**T**he 100th annual International Labour Conference – involving government, employer and worker delegates from each member state of the International Labour Organization – was held 1-17 June in Geneva.

The conference adopted the first ILO Convention Concerning Decent Work For Domestic Workers. This historic convention states that the estimated 53 million domestic workers in the world must enjoy the same basic labour rights as other workers. This includes the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, reasonable hours of work, weekly rest periods, and clear information on terms and conditions of employment.

PSI worked closely with other global unions and the ILO in the lead up to the discussions on this convention.

The requirements will apply to those countries which ratify the convention, which will be the next challenge. Despite wide support amongst governments for its adoption, a significant number, especially within the European Union, have indicated they are unlikely to ratify it. ■





## Union forum on sexual diversity and rights

The third Joint Forum on sexual diversity, hosted by PSI and Education International, drew 150 delegates from 45 countries, including representatives from civil society organisations. The forum, held in Cape Town, South Africa in July, was co-chaired by Juneia Batista, vice-chair of the PSI World Women's Committee.

Delegates recognised that in a post-financial crisis world, inequalities are growing and the rights of minorities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered members are looking increasingly fragile.

They also recognised that while the struggle for LGBT rights continues within the union movement, progress was being made. There are more opportunities to integrate LGBT issues and rights into broader union agendas. Increasingly, spaces are being created for LGBT members to come together, strategise, share victories and discuss issues. More union leaders and activists are speaking openly about LGBT rights as workers' rights and human rights, including in countries where the legal and social protection for these members is tenuous.

The forum adopted a number of recommendations to the PSI and EI executive boards, including:

- pursuing opportunities for interventions with international agencies, such as the UN and the ILO;
- creating and building alliances with civil society organisations;
- integrating sexual diversity into the Quality Public Services – Action Now! campaign being led by the Council of Global Unions; and
- establishing mechanisms and tools for information sharing among affiliates. ■



Occupy demonstration, Washington, DC

## Unions prepare for climate talks

The stakes will be high for decision-makers at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (COP 17), which will be held 28 November to 9 December in Durban, South Africa. Not only are the emission reduction targets established by the 1997 Kyoto Protocol set to expire in 2012, but another major climate meeting, the Earth Summit, RIO+20, is coming up in June 2012.

As the world gears up for the negotiations, union members are consolidating their top priorities in various conferences and meetings across the globe. On 1 September, COP 17 President and South Africa's International Relations and Cooperation Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane met with various labour representatives from the Congress of South African Trade Unions and Federation of Unions of South Africa. The minister emphasised the important role she hopes unions will play in Durban. "We are of the view that the majority of people who will have to adapt to climate change are the workers themselves," she said.

Experts have argued that previous climate talks have been weakened by the lack of a formal role for business and labour. Authorities say there is a growing appreciation of the emerging role that labour and business can play in mitigating (reducing carbon emissions) and adapting (to inevitable

climate events) to climate change.

PSI supports both mitigation and adaptation as top priorities. In terms of mitigation, energy production, transmission, distribution, and transportation are centrally concerned. For adaptation, the full range of emergency and health services will be needed to deal with the human and infrastructure impacts of extreme climate events and changing temperatures across the planet.

In another meeting addressing labour climate concerns, the 64th Annual UN Department of Public Information and Non-Governmental Organizations Conference, took place in Bonn, Germany on 8 September. Meeting participants discussed sustainable development, and possible results of the RIO+20 Conference. The UN DPI event concluded by highlighting several labour priorities including green and decent jobs, social protection and the Financial Transactions Tax, which would help developing countries to lower their carbon emissions. ■

*Anabella Roseberg, Environment Policy Officer, International Trade Union Confederation*

# APRECON 2011: People First – Quality Public Services Advancing human rights



PSI  
PSI delegates at APRECON, Sydney, Australia



Solidarity message from the Asia Pacific

Public Services International held its 12th Asia Pacific Regional Conference (APRECON) in Sydney, Australia from 17-21 October 2011. Over 200 delegates from 22 countries met to discuss public service and trade union rights issues under the banner theme “People First—Quality Public Services Are Key.”

Workshops covered a wide range of topics including the impact of the economic crisis on women, how increasing levels of precarious work are linked to the privatisation of public services, the role of public services in disaster preparedness and recovery in Japan, Australia and New Zealand, and how to advance human and trade union rights in countries including Fiji, Korea and Indonesia.

Delegates contributed to a five year action plan for PSI in the Asia Pacific region focused on improving public service funding through fair taxation - including a financial transactions tax, providing decent stable jobs instead of low-paid precarious contracts, reversing privatisation trends by promoting the economic and social value of public services, and defending human and trade union rights.

“We believe that quality public services provide the foundation for the democratic, social and economic development of nations, the well-being of citizens, and safeguarding the environment,” said PSI General Secretary Peter Waldorff. “Quality public services are essential to achieving fairness, equality and opportunity for women, in particular.”

Discussion at the conference highlighted that most

# Public Services Are Key Jobs and decent work in the Asia-Pacific



Asia Pacific Youth Network members

nations would have no deficits – and no need to cut services to people – if irresponsible corporations and the super-rich were held accountable and paid their fair share of taxes. Further, cuts in public services mean less opportunity for working people and their families. And when public services are privatised, studies show that the transfer of wealth from citizens to private corporations results in loss of democratic accountability and transparency, lower quality, and reduced access to services.

“We live in truly challenging and shameful times. Years of corporate-led globalization, unbridled capitalism, liberalisation, and privatisation have begot crises upon crises, with the most vulnerable and marginalised among us bearing much of the burden. Our current development models have only led to further exclusion, poverty, forced migration, precarious work, and climate change. We need a shift in paradigm. We need alternatives. We need to break this cycle of injustice and madness. People must come first—not profit, not corporations. And in this struggle towards a better world, public sector trade unions play a key role,” said Annie Geron, PSLINK General Secretary and Asia Pacific Regional Executive Co-chair.

“What we must do now is to create a new paradigm. Investing in public services should be the priority over investing in a casino economy. The Great East Japan Earthquake has made us recognise the importance of public services at the time of disasters,” said Hideaki Tokunaga, JICHIRO President and APREC Co-chair. ■



Taupisioletoga Faamau, SPSA, Samoa, with Sundari Tiruppattur Venkatarao, AIAIASP, India

# Invest in public services before

**O**n International Workers' Memorial Day, 28 April 2011, PSI issued a statement paying tribute to workers who have been injured or killed when saving the lives of others during emergencies and disasters. The statement also called for the United Nations, relevant UN entities, governments and non-governmental organisations to consult and work with trade unions globally to strengthen emergency prevention and response infrastructures at regional and national levels, and to ensure that emergency workers are well-trained and well-equipped to meet any challenge.

Public service workers are the skilled first responders in times of crisis. Emergency services, healthcare, water and energy workers risk their health and lives on the frontlines in the service of their communities. Investment in strong public safety regulations, well-trained and properly equipped public service workers and quality public services are key to effective disaster readiness, risk reduction, response and recovery. When proper building standards are enforced, needless injuries and deaths are avoided in times of disaster. Well-informed urban planning can reduce risks from climate crises. And a well-trained public workforce and strong emergency and health services can quickly and effectively help people during and after a crisis.

## Caring for the workers reconstructing Japan

Japanese public workers continue to work hard to rebuild the communities devastated by the unprecedented earthquake and tsunami that struck the eastern coast on 11 March 2011 and the resulting accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Public Services International affiliate JICHIRO (the All-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers Union) conducted a three-month intensive aid project, sending a total of 2700 workers to the disaster area who completed 19,000 person-days of labour by the end of June.



Public service rescue workers aid citizens following the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami

Building disaster-resistant public services became the focus of their efforts. Usually local governments organise emergency projects and reconstruction efforts, but because of the loss of government workers from the disaster, local governments were unable to deal with the situation. In addition to this work, JICHIRO has responded to the changing needs of the victims by ensuring their safety, providing food, running shelters, assisting application procedures for temporary accommodation, etc.

Mental health care for both the victims and the rescue workers has also become a vital concern. Hideaki Tokunaga, JICHIRO president, said, "Public servants are becoming increasingly fatigued. They have no chance to rest despite the fact that they are victims, as well."

On 29 May, the Children's Center Division of the Sendai Public Servants Union held a symposium entitled, *The Quake and Children's Mental Healthcare*. Panelists shared stories they had heard from victims' families during home visits in affected areas. They emphasised the need for mental care based on mutual trust as well as the importance of mental care for caregivers.

Tokunaga mentioned the heavy

burden on firefighters and others who struggle with the emotionally arduous task of recovering bodies. He emphasised the importance of providing mental care and looking after workers' health and also called for economic compensation for work that entails extreme mental challenges.

The Public Workers' Liaison Office developed a book for those who have completed 1000 hours of post-disaster aid work for the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami. It has become required reading for the staff who were involved in post-disaster work.

Tokunaga also pointed out that the downsizing of public services had prevented adequate response to the disaster. "When we requested support from non-affected municipalities," he explained, "they often lacked the financial basis as well as human resources to make it happen." He went on to say that it was especially difficult to find specialised professionals such as nurses and childcare workers.

There is still much work left to be done in Japan. Public workers continue to work at reconstruction while at the same time looking to rebuild and revive the entire country to create a society centred on solidarity and mutual support. PSI affiliates around the world continue to support these efforts.

# disasters happen



JICHIRO

## Solidarity response to New Zealand and Australia disasters

New Zealand experienced a major natural disaster when Christchurch was violently shaken by an earthquake on 22 February 2011. Several hundred people lost their lives and many buildings were destroyed. A €20,000 contribution was made from the PSI Aid Fund. General Secretary Peter Waldorf said, “We acknowledge the courageous efforts of members of the emergency services, and all volunteers, including the many public services workers who have worked tirelessly in

the rescue effort, offering many forms of support.”

Australia also endured severe flooding in Queensland last January. Thousands of state public sector employees worked around the clock to save lives, help the homeless, and protect the public infrastructure. National Secretary Nadine Flood, of PSI affiliate the Community and Public Sector Union, said, “Our members are serious about the essential services they provide during natural disasters. They are also proud to be playing such an important part in the recovery process.” ■

## Solidarity efforts rebuild Haitian union federation office

In March 2011, representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the Public Service Alliance of Canada visited Haiti to launch the construction of a new office for the sister union federation there.

The former headquarters of the CSTP, a federation of 12 public and private sector unions in Haiti, was destroyed in the 12 January 2010 earthquake that shook the country. The CTSP has had to operate out of a tent since then.

The construction of the new offices is being funded by PSI affiliates CUPE and the PSAC, as well as other Canadian unions including Services Employees International Union, the Syndicat de la fonction publique du Québec, and the Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux.

The delegation also met with the Haitian engineer involved in the reconstruction project. It was quickly realised that having a vehicle was an essential tool not just for the construction project, but also for the longer-term union activities of the CTSP. The estimated costs of the construction project are approximately \$100,000.

The Canadian delegation also offered financial and book-keeping training to 15 local union leaders.

CTSP General Secretary Dukens Raphaël said, “It’s with great satisfaction and solidarity that we accept this contribution. We are extremely pleased to move forward to the concrete ‘doing’ phase of this project.” ■

*From Canadian Union of Public Employees and Public Service Alliance of Canada*



CUPE

PSI members including Sarah Belanger, PSAC representative, Claude Généreux, CUPE National Secretary-Treasurer, and Dukens Raphaël, CTSP General Secretary break ground for new union office

# Union-run clinic opens its doors in Haiti

**F**or many, it's a dream come true. On 15 August 2011, the Workers' Solidarity Clinic opened its doors for the first time in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. In its opening days, more than 130 women and children were seen at the clinic.

"We had a very successful first week," says Mari Cordes, president and one of five Vermont Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals, US, members who went to Haiti to help with the opening as part of the Vermont Medical Response Team. Several Haitian nurses and a doctor were also present.

The clinic is the result of a long-term commitment the VFNHP has made to Haiti. In the aftermath of the earthquake that hit the country in January 2010, hundreds of nurses, doctors, paramedics, respiratory therapists, emergency medical technicians and other volunteers went to Haiti with VFNHP to provide medical assistance. The healthcare workers were committed to providing the devastated country with long-lasting solutions. VFNHP returned to Haiti on an assessment visit during July and August 2010 and concluded that a union-run health clinic would be of great service to union members, their families, and beyond.

The clinic will initially provide maternal and child care, immunisation and preventative healthcare for the Confederation of Workers in the Public and Private Sectors, also known as CTSP, and their families. The services will help to build the capacity of CTSP and its healthcare affiliates by connecting unions to their members via the medical facility. The clinic will also help to strengthen union professional development capacity through the training of CTSP's members as medical assistants.

"Healthcare is a public service. It is critical for the growth and development of our country," said Dukens Raphaël, CTSP's General Secretary. "The training offered through



The Workers' Solidarity Clinic in Haiti welcomed its first patients in August

this clinic will further help our members provide quality healthcare services to Haitian people."

The VFNHP shepherded the project with the help of Public Services International and its Haitian affiliate CTSP. In addition, funds from the AFL-CIO Solidarity Center, the New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, as well as individual donations, have helped to finance the clinic. Eric Klein and the charitable organisation Can-Do.org donated the clinic's dome structure. The volunteers who have visited Haiti also provided support by paying their own airfare and expenses.

VFNHP plans to send teams of five to seven people from Vermont and other states to work in the clinic, which is expected to open one week per month. "We know that things in Haiti will not change overnight," says Cordes, "but we are happy with the initial outcome." Looking forward, Cordes hopes to see the establishment of other clinics in Haiti.

PSI affiliates are invited to donate supplies or services to the Workers' Solidarity Clinic. Please contact CTSP [ctsphaiti@yahoo.fr](mailto:ctsphaiti@yahoo.fr) or PSI sub-regional office for the Caribbean [psicaribbean@sunbeach.net](mailto:psicaribbean@sunbeach.net) for more information. ■

*Sandra Massiah is PSI's Sub-regional Secretary for the Caribbean*



## Sharp Sense video resources for healthcare workers

Produced by Public Services International, this new video series was filmed on location with PSI healthcare members in South Africa. The DVD is available in English/French/Portuguese.

For copies, contact PSI Health Officer Odile Frank, [odile.frank@world-psi.org](mailto:odile.frank@world-psi.org) or see our Vimeo or YouTube channels: <http://vimeo.com/user6551614/videos> and [www.youtube.com/user/PSIglobalunion](http://www.youtube.com/user/PSIglobalunion)

# PSI agreements with multinational corporations

In recent decades, multinational enterprises have become increasingly influential in both the private and the public sectors. Across the globe, there has been a widespread policy shift to cut public spending and privatise public services. While resistance has not been easy, public sector unions all over the world have opposed the widespread privatisation.

Although PSI has not changed its policy that services vital to society must be publicly owned, there is new recognition that PSI and our affiliates need to deal with MNEs where they appear in the public sector. In 2007, PSI adopted a new policy on multinational corporations during the Vienna Congress, with resolutions on monitoring MNEs' activities and lobbying for their improved regulation. These issues are certain to be discussed further during PSI's 2012 World Congress in Durban.

PSI entered negotiations with the French multinational corporation GDF SUEZ in 2009. The company employs more than 200,000 workers worldwide, and its operations concentrate on the energy, water, gas, infrastructure and environment sectors. Negotiations were carried out jointly with PSI's sister organisations, the Building and Wood Worker's International and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions, which both have affiliated unions organising workers in subsidiaries of GDF SUEZ.

An agreement was reached that many see as a model for other companies and global unions. In November 2010, PSI's general secretary signed this agreement, after discussion and endorsement by the PSI Executive Board. The agreement applies to all present and future GDF SUEZ companies, employees, subcontractors and suppliers; it commits the company to respect the rights and dignity of people under all circumstances and to a zero tolerance policy on fraud and corruption.

The company recognises major international standards including



Multinational agreements can help workers when public services are privatised

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines and the ILO Declaration on Multinational Enterprises, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Rights at Work, and many others; these principles are considered to be part of the agreement. GDF SUEZ guarantees equal treatment of all employees regardless their age, origin, nationality, religion, culture, sexual or political orientation. The rights of employees to form or join trade unions shall be respected, and there shall be no discrimination against these workers or trade union or other workers' representatives. GDF SUEZ shall facilitate workers' access to trade union representatives and provide information on its operations to trade unions to aid collective bargaining.

Preference shall be given for permanent, open-ended and direct employment, no excessive use will be made of temporary or agency labour, and bogus self-employment will not be allowed. GDF SUEZ and all subcontractors shall pay social security and pension contributions for their workers where such provisions exist. Best occupational health and safety

practices will be promoted.

The company will endeavour to preserve natural resources and protect biodiversity. It promotes the most efficient technologies to address its greenhouse gas emissions and shall apply ecological management of waste generated by its plants.

The parties to the agreement expressed their intention to conclude follow-up agreements on more specific fields of application, such as restructuring, occupational health and safety, training, sustainable development and climate change. The agreement includes specific chapters on implementation, monitoring, control and reporting and conflict resolution. ■

*Jürgen Buxbaum is PSI Public Administration and Multinational Enterprises Officer*

# FOR DECENT WORK



art by: *Favianna Rodriguez*  
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## QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES ACTION NOW!

A COUNCIL OF GLOBAL UNIONS CAMPAIGN: BWI Building and Woodworkers International • EI Education International • IAEA International Arts and Entertainment Alliance • ICEM International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions • IFJ International Federation of Journalists • IMF International Metalworkers' Federation • ITF International Transport Workers' Federation • ITGLWF International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation • ITUC International Trade Union Confederation • IUF International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations • PSI Public Services International • TUAC Trade Union Advisory Committee to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development • UNI Global Union

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



Poster by: Favianna Rodriguez