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PSI Privatization Update: 1 March 2017



Trade Unions and campaigners around the world accuse the World Bank PPP program of encouraging dangerous hidden debts. The [boycott on the World Bank consultation on Public Private Partnerships](#) (PPPs) was launched after the World Bank ignored repeated calls to stop promoting the off-book accounting of PPPs.

More than 75 trade unions, including many PSI affiliates, and NGOs from four continents have [signed a letter to the World Bank](#) explaining their reasons for the boycott and calling again for change.



Photo: Marcelo Camargo/Agência Brasil - Creative Commons

The mass slaughter that took place earlier this year in a prison in northern Brazil shows that when prisons are managed by private companies it [contributes to their deterioration](#).

The massacre of 56 people in the Anísio Jobim Penitentiary Complex (Compaj) in Manaus, Brazil, due to a dispute between two criminal gangs, [could have been avoided if warnings about this risk had been taken into account](#).

According to experts in the penitentiary system the key question is not a company's performance or the poor conditions in a prison that has been outsourced as such, but rather the negative consequences of the policy of privatization of prisons.

Africa & Arab Countries

Dentons' (the global law firm) attorneys Neil Cuthbert and Udayan Mukherjee offer an analysis of [legal frameworks for "public private partnerships" in Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, and Nigeria](#). Regarding Nigeria, they write, "political instability with frequent changes in Government and/or changes in heads of the relevant ministries and, the **overenthusiastic embracing of PPPs at the cost of properly understanding areas such as risk allocation** have meant that **PPP's are treated with some skepticism.**"

Egypt: Youssef El-Gingihy, the author of *How to Dismantle the NHS in 10 Easy Steps*, sees [social pressures mounting in Egypt as a result of neoliberal policies](#). "The [2015] Sharm el-Sheikh conference was itself emblematic of the unbroken

continuity of neoliberalism in post-2011 Egypt. International Monetary Fund (IMF) bail-outs have, as per usual, come with strings attached. **A massive program of privatization is in progress, attractive to international investors with tax cuts and deregulation proceeding apace.** The conference saw heavy representation from Western and Gulf allies anxious to prevent further disruption to their interests. It was produced by global PR and consultancy firms. Tony Blair—who has advised President Sisi—was a keynote speaker while Lazard—the financial consultancy—is advising Sisi on economic policy.”

Ghana: The Minister-designate for Energy, Boakye Agyarko, says the workers of the Electricity Company of Ghana [have not been adequately consulted or involved in the granting of an American concession for the company](#). “The unionized staff of ECG have been kicking against the concessional arraignment for ECG, saying **it is an attempt by the government to hand over the entity to a foreign firm, adding what was happening was a disguised privatization of ECG.** Ghana signed the Power Compact with the United States of America acting through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), an independent United States government agency, on the sidelines of the US-Africa Leaders’ Summit in Washington DC on August 5, 2014.”

Ivory Coast: [Striking civil servants](#) demand payment of salary arrears dating back to 2007, **denounce the privatization of the school system,** and demand the right to organize, which is being hampered by the government.

Kenya: [Parliament strips itself of its own power to oversee privatization deals, leaving all power with the Cabinet.](#) “During the debate, MPs from both Jubilee and Cord accused the government of **scheming to dilute their role in privatization.**”

Nigeria: [After three years of privatization, “the power sector is still in a shambles](#). When in November 2013 the electricity distribution and power generation companies were handed over to some private operators at an elaborate ceremony, the hope was that daily blackouts and power outages would be minimized until they are gradually eased out. But it is now apparent that those hopes were largely misplaced. **Today, consumers are paying more and getting less power at a time the exchange rate and the tariff structure make both generators and diesel prohibitive.** The question then remains: how can an economy get out of recession if there is no electricity to power basic industrial and domestic operations at reasonable cost?”

Nigeria: [Privatization concerns are sparked by a top management change at the Transmission Company of Nigeria \(TCN\).](#) Although the Minister of Power, Works and Housing, Mr. Babatunde Fashola, said the appointment of an African Development Bank official, Usman Gur Mohammed, as the new Managing Director of TCN, was for efficiency and reform, the company’s workers, **led by their two labour unions—the National Union of Electricity Employees (NUEE) and the Senior Staff Association of Electricity and Allied Companies (SSAEAC)—** continue their protest against his appointment. They allege that Mohammed was at the TCN **to help the government perfects its plan to privatize the TCN.**

Nigeria: The Tax Justice and Governance Platform (TJ&GP) has denounced **government moves to grant further tax holiday to power investors,** “saying it would short-change both government and the public. (...) ‘The proposed tax holiday is not targeted at making electricity available for Nigerians but [to serve the purpose of the elites who are benefiting from the charade, called privatization of the power sector,](#)’ the platform’s steering committee said in a statement.”

Nigeria: [Lagos plans to privatize waste management.](#) The executive chairman of the Lagos Waste Management Authority Agency (LAWMA), Mr. Olumuyiwa Adejokun, **says the government no longer has the resources to manage waste generated by the residents,** that the management of waste costs billions of naira and the present administration did not have the funds to manage waste.

Nigeria: The Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Udo Udoma, says [more privatization is on the way,](#) and will be detailed in February’s budget announcement. “He said the government planned to privatize some selected national assets,” but did not disclose which ones.

South Africa: A citizen demands that South Africa [deals with real issues instead of personalized mudslinging in the coming elections](#)—including **“the privatization of our rivers, dams and other water resources, [and] toll roads and the privatization of freeways, where profits are not paid to the roads department but into the coffers of private**

investors. (...) This comes about when politicians do not act for the benefit of their electorate but to the advantage of the multi-national corporations. Resources, mining rights and corporate GMO farming **have been handed over in a frenzy of privatization.** The so-called 'trickle-down effect' only goes one way—into offshore bank accounts, so they can avoid paying any tax.”

Togo: The IMF and Togo have reached a preliminary agreement for an economic program, [but it is drawing criticism for promoting the privatization of public services](#). “Yet the social cost of these reforms is likely to be cumbersome for Togolese people who are barely recovering from past social crises. For example, the IMF recommends reducing capital spending while maintaining a pace of investment in infrastructure **through public-private partnerships. With the weak capacity of the local private sector, this may lead to the privatization of public services for the benefit of foreign companies.**” The program goes to the IMF board for approval in April.

Tunisia: As the **UGTT labour confederation holds its 23rd congress**, the second since the fall of the dictatorship, [PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli tells the gathering](#) that “in order to ensure the social cohesion and justice necessary to improve the lives of most people in the world, it is essential to fight for tax justice **and against the privatization of public services, public-private partnerships and free trade treaties that perpetuate the colonial economy.** In brief, it is only the solidarity of workers organized in autonomous, independent and democratic trade unions that can challenge the powerful enemies that want to strip us of our dignity.”

The UGTT is “working on [legislative translation of the principles enshrined in the 2014 constitution and we are making our mark on all the major bills in preparation](#), on the grounds of the economy, taxation and education,” said Anouar Ben Gueddour, a member of the executive committee and head of the department of studies.

The UGTT is stepping up its battle against IMF imposed privatizations, which may bring about a clash with the current administration. The IMF programme specifically targets water and sanitation and banking.

Uganda: Mark Keith Muhumuza and Jonathan Adengo look back on [Uganda's bitter experience with privatization](#), and especially at **the role of the IMF in pushing privatization even in the face of improved performance by public sector entities.** “The privatization of UCB (Uganda Commercial Bank) is one of those issues that haunt Mr Ezra Suruma, Uganda's former Finance minister and also managing director UCB. In his book, *Advancing The Ugandan Economy: A Personal Account*, Mr Suruma laments about how the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, in part, forced the sale of UCB at a time he had turned it around into a profitable business. (...) **President Museveni has been rethinking, and in part, regrets some of the privatization policies that were forced down his throat or misguided by advisors linked to the Bretton Woods institutions.** He particularly feels he was misled into selling UCB because he was meant to believe that privatization would lower lending rates and expand banking.”

Middle East

Control Risks, a risk assessment consulting corporation, says “[a privatization push across the Middle East and North Africa in 2017](#), including in **Algeria, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia**, will act as a siren call to investors around the world. As foreign companies prepare bids for new projects **and tune into public debates about the benefits that privatization offers**, they should closely inspect what is on offer—and from whom.”

Asia Pacific

Australia: The Public Services Association **denounces the largest privatization in New South Wales history**, of Public Disability Services, and asks, “**are you next?**” PSA called out all disability workers to [strike on Valentine's Day, February 14](#), saying “The NSW Government wants to destroy your profession by privatizing ALL disability services in NSW. This will be a disaster for you and thousands of people with disability and their families.

There must be a Government safety net for people with disability and [the NSW Government must protect your pay and conditions.](#)”

Around 1,000 disability service workers followed the one-day strike, and over 500 participated in a Sydney meeting then marched to the state parliament. The PSA “is working with delegates in ADHC to combat **the unfair and unjust transfer package, and almost useless protections unilaterally forced upon our members.** We must continue to fight for the protection of jobs, pay, conditions and a government safety net for people with disability. **We believe the privatization of all government disability services will reduce the quality and availability of care and lead to increases in cost for people in supported accommodation.** It is imperative the Government remains a provider of disability services to ensure no-one is left without the care they need.

Australia: [New South Wales Premier Mike Baird resigns.](#) Public Service Association General Secretary Stewart Little said, “Mike Baird’s mass campaign of public service privatization has been a hallmark of his reign yet he has stepped down in the middle of the deeply flawed process leaving the lives of millions hanging in the balance. The privatization of the Land Titles Registry has been universally condemned and will impact dramatically upon the entire economy yet Mr. Baird prided himself on his Government’s alleged fiscal credentials. **The selloff of Disability Services has already thrown countless workers and clients into free fall.** What will the future now hold for them? Similarly, Housing, Prisons and Community Services. Mike Baird will go down in history as the ‘Out of Touch Premier’ who thought lock out laws were more important than quality services for people with disability, land owners in NSW and child protection.” [Blue Mountains MP Trish Doyle says,](#) “I am disappointed but I am not surprised by the news Mike Baird is resigning. **Here is a Premier who has tried to privatize every public asset and government agency,** he has failed to fund our hospitals, he is neglecting public schools across the state, he has decimated TAFE, he has closed women’s refuges. The list of his non-achievements and failures just goes on and on.”

Australia: A group of concerned residents [has formed a working party to gain more information about the proposed privatization of Bowral and District Hospital.](#) “Supplying draft sketches and **relying on little more than 'chat sessions' is not a Public Consultation process.** This so called 'show and tell' by the government and Local Health is perhaps a new method of controlling us. We are given a taster which consists of fairy dust, misinformation (that is because there is nothing to show or tell at this stage) and, as time progresses, perhaps April/May 2017, we become indifferent to the topic and lose interest. **A very dangerous place to be when government is playing with our health care!**”

Australia: [The privatized federal debt collection system, Centrelink, is causing major problems for residents.](#) “Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters is calling for the federal government to completely suspend its automated Centrelink debt recovery system until it can work through a backlog of investigations.”

India: Public health advocates [demand that the Rajasthan State Budget focus stay on health benefit rather than privatization.](#) JSA convenor Narendra Gupta said that **the State government was resorting to privatization of public health facilities and promoting health insurance at the cost of other health programs.** “[The government is promoting privatization in primary health care services.](#) The government has already released tenders for handing over 213 PHCs to private agencies to be run under the Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode,” JSA said. They alleged that this shift **has completely taken a toll on two of the most prominent health schemes of the state,** Mukhyamantri Nishulk Dawa Yojana (MNDY) and Mukhyamantri Nishulk Jaanch Yojana (MNJY), **leaving both the schemes to crumble on their own due to deliberate neglect of the government.**”

India: Health workers in Gurgaon [join a nationwide strike](#) to demand a salary hike and other benefits. “In the memorandum, the workers demanded the budget allocation for Anganwadi workers to be increased to Rs 36,000 crores, **no privatization of the sector,** permanent stature to the workers as Grade 3 and Grade 4 workers of government with a minimum salary of Rs 18,000 per month, paid maternity leave of at least 180 days and all benefits such as gratuity and pension. ‘We have been demanding equal pay to permanent staff. However, our demands have constantly been ignored.’”

India: The Brihanmumbai Electric Supply & Transport Undertaking (BEST) has “**put on hold a proposal by the administration to ‘outsource’ distribution of electricity bills and notices for disconnections through a private courier service.** A few members termed this as 'privatization' of bill distribution **which could cost the jobs of a section of BEST staffers.**” [The Times of India, 7 February 2017]

Indonesia: [Trade unions in Indonesia turned to the Constitutional Court to examine a 2009 law on electricity](#) designed to promote privatization and market-based rules. While the Court’s decision agrees with the union’s stand, it appears to allow private sector participation under certain conditions. PSI will also help unions in Indonesia review the implications of the court decisions for other public services in the country, especially water, such that all public service unions can champion universal access to quality public services.

Indonesia: Asian Development Bank President Takehiko Nakao [says](#) “in the urban sector, ADB will support delivery of citywide sanitation programs. ADB will also support private investment in infrastructure, **including through strengthening the policy, institutional framework, and preparation of public-private partnerships (PPP) projects.**”

Japan: [The government is gearing up to sell another tranche of shares in Japan Post.](#) “Koizumi’s initial plan dictated that Japan Post Holdings will sell off all of its shares in the two financial units by the end of September 2017.

New Zealand: [Double the Quota](#) urges voters wanting to respond to the Muslim ban to [pressure their elected leaders to take action.](#) “Less than a year later, Dunedin welcomed the first of a small but growing population of Syrian families. **Ask local MPs to pledge their support for you and protecting refugees - it is an election year after all and they’ll be itching to help.** At the end of the year a community sponsorship scheme will be trialed with 25 places, likely to be based off of a Canadian model. This number needs to be rapidly scaled up, and as with the Canadian approach, **has to be used alongside a fair quota and not as a user-pays privatization of refugee protection.**”

New Zealand: Suspicion persists that the Waipa Council’s rush to install water meters is because they want to privatize water services. “I’m afraid there is no doubt in my mind that privatization is behind this rush to install meters. **The present government believes wholeheartedly in privatization and they have been looking at water for some time.** As they are liable to be defeated at the next election **they are targeting Right-Wing councils and councilors to get going with water privatization.**” [Waikato Times, 2 February 2017]

Pakistan: Lal Khan, the International Secretary of Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, says “[privatisation of the social sectors of health, education, water, sanitation and others is tormenting the daily lives of the oppressed classes.](#) However, recent strike actions show what can be achieved if workers from different sectors are united in a massive general strike.”

Pakistan: Health association leaders are accusing the government of **driving down the quality of public healthcare as an excuse to privatize.** They say top bureaucrats have “virtually occupied the Health Department for the last five years, causing a complete breakdown of health services, and [the bureaucracy was trying to privatize the health sector to cover up its own failure.](#)” The doctors “castigated the alleged campaign against doctors by the bureaucracy and alleged that bureaucracy had been implementing its agenda of privatization of health sector and **to achieve this purpose they had already divided the department into two sections**”. The doctors demanded that the government stop 'making mockery of health services' by **forcing three patients on one bed in all emergency wards in government hospitals** to prevent the incidents like death of Zohra Bibi at Jinnah Hospital.”

Pakistan: [Paramedics at Lahore General Hospital have held a protest demonstration against the privatization of public hospitals in the province.](#) “The paramedical staff boycotted their duties in outdoor and indoor wards of Lahore General Hospital (LGH) which hampered the health delivery services to the patients. The patients, including those from suburban areas and other districts, were extremely upset by the situation particularly in indoor ward. The doctors and nurses, however, managed to provide treatment services to the patients in outdoor ward of the hospital. The emergency services, however, remain unaffected as paramedics continued to discharge duties there. **They demanded of the government to ensure provision of facilities in the public hospitals instead of outsourcing health facilities to private parties. They vowed to continue and expand the scope of their protest till the withdrawal of the government decision to privatize government hospitals in the province.**”

Pakistan-China: Dr. Aliya H. Khan says [the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\) must be accompanied by an effort to mainstream women into the labour market and secure their rights](#). “The first thing is that the constitution gives freedom to organize, which is basically trade union activity. This would go into a very long debate, but **over the years, especially, after the setting in of the wave of globalization and privatization, there has been a move to make Labor laws more employer friendly rather than employee or worker friendly**. And all this is done in the name of simplification, rationalization and consolidation of Labor laws for reducing the cost of doing business. (...) I think if we miss the golden opportunity on mainstreaming women into these economic and export processing zones, **we would fail to achieve the true returns from the CPEC investments.**”

Pakistan: [Artists Zahra Malkani and Shahana Rajani connect Partition and current day privatization in their work](#). “We were not interested in just looking at Partition as one major event in our history but rather how it has become a lasting practice and is still contributing to an ongoing devastation that is happening even today. **These acts of enclosure and boundary-making by privatization of land are continuing to bring destruction and alienation,**” Shah said. “The transformation that has been happening in the local ecology and community because of influential builders taking it over under the pretext of 'developing' it caught our interest. We worked on it for about six months and had researchers, artists, historians and ecologists working alongside us. We worked thoroughly to share it with the public,” she explained.

Pakistan: [Local residents are protesting the privatization of Kot Addu Power Company Limited \(Kapco\) coal-driven power plant “due to environmental concerns.”](#) “The extension in agreements and liquidity damages amounts to Rs27 billion, which appears on Kapco’s financial statements and is causing bottlenecks in its privatization, stated the Privatisation Division to the Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCoP) in its meeting held on January 27. Due to this hindrance in privatizing Kapco, the government **wants an investor to take greater interest in key decisions related to the coal expansion project envisaged by Kapco.**”

Thailand: The *Economist Intelligence Unit* [reports](#) that “unemployment remains low and rising labour costs have a negative impact on small and medium-sized enterprises. Labour unrest remains relatively rare, **but trade unions vigorously oppose any moves towards privatization.**”

Inter-America

Bahamas: [A coalition has been formed to defend against privatization](#). “The position taken by Mr. Miller, as the Water & Sewerage Corporation’s chairman, appears to have pushed Mr. Demeritte’s group and the [Water & Sewerage Management Union (WSMU)] **to join forces and lobby for a new approach to outsourcing/privatizing Bahamian utilities and natural resources.**”

Brazil: São Paulo Mayor João Doria tells the *Wall Street Journal* that he aims to raise more than 7 billion reais (about \$2.2 billion) in **the largest municipal privatization drive in the country’s history**. “It’s not enough for me to convince the rest of the City Hall; there will be protests, there will be people on the streets,” he said.

Brazil: [A violent protest against the privatization of the water supply company paralyzes Rio de Janeiro](#). “Protesters who **reject the possible privatization of the Regional Water and Sewer Company (CEDAE) clashed with the police in the streets near the headquarters of the Legislative Assembly** of the State of Rio de Janeiro, where the project was to be debated. (...) **Faced with pressure from protesters, lawmakers have so far rejected about a third of the measures proposed** by the Rio de Janeiro governorate to reduce spending and address a historic deficit.” PSI affiliate, the Federação Nacional dos Urbanitários da CUT (FNU-CUT), is leading a national coalition, the [Frente Nacional pelo Saneamento Ambiental - FNSA](#) (National Front for Environmental Sanitation), to fight President Temer’s water and sanitation privatization agenda.

Canada/United States: Alex Hemingway, a public finance analyst at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, B.C. Office, says that both Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Donald Trump [are on the same path to infrastructure privatization](#). “Remarkably, our federal government is working from Trump’s playbook and planning major infrastructure privatization using P3s through the new Canada Infrastructure Bank. **The American and Canadian plans**

both ignore a large body of evidence that P3s are less efficient than traditional public sector infrastructure and on average cost much more. Publicly funded projects have much lower financing costs since governments secure better interest rates than private investors, and public projects don't require paying profits to private investors. This was jaw-droppingly evident in 2014 when the Ontario Auditor General reported **the province lost \$8 billion over a decade by building projects as P3s rather than as traditional public infrastructure.**"

Canada: [Public anger is rising at a deal to give Nestlé cheap access to public water in Ontario](#). "Nestlé and other water users are playing the Ontario taxpayers for suckers and are laughing all the way to the bank. This follows hard on the heels of another privatization disaster of Ontario Hydro that was destroyed by the Mike Harris government in an effort to deliver it to private sector interests leading to the out-of-control hydro prices that are currently hammering customers. Our valuable natural resources are being sold-off and then sold back to us at a massive profit."

Canada: [Nine out of ten senior care facilities in British Columbia don't meet staffing guidelines](#). "Jennifer Whiteside of the Hospital Employees Union, which represents care aides, said there is a staffing crisis in seniors' care, fueled by underfunding and excessive privatization over the last decade. The union is calling on the province to legislate minimum staffing levels and inject funds to enable facilities to achieve those levels. 'Clearly, guidelines aren't working if 90 per cent of facilities aren't providing the minimum standard,' said Whiteside, adding the figures confirm what the union hears from its members. 'There are not enough hands on deck to ensure seniors are getting the care they need. **Workers are stretched to the limit**, seniors are left waiting and families worry whether their loved ones get the care they need.'"

Canada: The debate over solid waste collection "[and whether it can be done more efficiently by city workers or privately continues to rage](#), with Mayor John Tory setting the table for privatizing pickup in Scarborough (Toronto suburb). (...) **Some estimates show privatization in Scarborough may cost more than using city workers, an inconvenient truth in the campaign to privatize more city services.**"

Canada: [School janitors, librarians, IT technicians and administrative support staff go out on strike](#) against the Conseil scolaire de district catholique de l'Est ontarien (CSDCEO) after it refuses to meet with them. **The workers, members of CUPE 4155, say the council is using private strikebreakers.** "They had replacement workers hired on the first day of the strike," said Raymond Giroux, President of Local 4155. "We see now why they refused to meet with us on Monday, the day before the strike began: **they were more interested in hiring contractors to do our jobs, and in renting a bus to deliver their managers past the picket line.**"

Jamaica: Prime Minister Andrew Holness advocates privatizations at an investors conference, but admits "there are also entities which are not loss-making assets, such as the National Water Commission (NWC) and Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA), for which there are stakeholder reservations to their privatization, 'because (they are) making money.'" But he still advocates their privatization.

Mexico: [Political parties are fanning out across Mexico City to explain the most important principles in the city's new constitution to the people](#), such as "**the non-privatization of water**, the passage of public space, principles of electoral equity, the right of assembly, a progressive education budget, and the end of cacicazgo [clientelism] in The High Court of Justice."

Mexico: [Protestors win repeal of water and gas privatization in Baja California](#). "Meanwhile, protesters are blocking state facilities in the state capital to demand the resignation of the local president and the deputies who voted in favor of the water law. They also demanded the state eliminate the gas tax and immediately pay salaries and benefits kept from state employees." The repealed law "**also regulated the installation of desalination plants through public-private partnerships (PPPs)** as an alternative to solve the shortage issues in Baja California." [*La Jornada* 18 January 2017]

Mexico: [Activists organize a shopping boycott against U.S. companies across the border in California](#), and combine this with a protest against "the increases in gasoline prices **and the privatization of water in Tijuana.**" EFE reports Mexico and the United States are in **a tense moment in bilateral relations because of the aggressive tone of the new U.S. president, Donald Trump**, "who aims to tighten immigration control, build a border wall that Mexicans will pay for and renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)."

Mexico: Activists from Cuanalá blocked the federal highway running from Mexico-Puebla for nine hours in protest against a project to privatize water in the zone. They say the Santa Maria Malacatepec authorities agreed to **privatize the water without consulting them.** They have called for a hearing with the authorities so they can explain their reasons for opposing the water privatization. If no one receives them, they will continue with their demonstrations and blockades. [*Metro Puebla*, 9 February 2017]

United States: The National Women's Marches on January 21 linked together "discrimination, hate, anti-environment, and disregard for women's rights" in the new Donald Trump presidency and privatization issues in education, health care and public services. In Montana, Women's March on Montana organizer and Missoula resident Rebecca Weston said "from white supremacy, to the destruction of public lands, to billionaire oil executives, to the threat of Muslim registry laws, **to the gutting of reproductive health care, to the privatization of public education,** to the use of torture and on and on and on ... the march has become somewhat of a net to catch the anger that was unfolding and building, (...) After the election, there was a level of isolation and despair. I'm a therapist and I could literally diagnose many of my clients with election related Acute Stress Disorder. In response, we could either go numb and paralyzed **or we could mobilize and fight back.**"

United States: Donald Trump has imposed a federal hiring freeze, prompting warnings that vital public service jobs will go unfilled. "President Trump's action will disrupt government programs and services that benefit everyone and actually increase taxpayer costs by forcing agencies to hire more expensive contractors to do work that civilian government employees are already doing for far less," **AFGE National President J. David Cox Sr. said.** "We're disappointed but not surprised by President Trump's attack on federal workers," said **AFSCME Council 26 Executive Director Carl Goldman.** AFSCME said the freeze will make federal agencies less effective, hurting people and communities that depend on efficient public services. "You can't make America great by undermining those who've dedicated their careers to serving America," **said AFSCME president Lee Saunders.**"

United States: Protestors block the new pro-privatization Education Secretary's visit to a Washington, DC school. Betsy DeVos "is a billionaire **who has spent three decades lobbying for private school vouchers, charter schools and other alternatives to traditional public schools.** She was one of President Trump's most controversial Cabinet picks and barely won confirmation. Her supporters call her a bold reformer, while opponents fear **she will seek to undermine public schools by funneling taxpayer funding to private and religious schools.**" Her brother is the controversial private military contractor Erik Prince.

United States: Although President Trump cancelled US participation in TPP, Lori Wallach of Public Citizen smells a rat. "If President Trump intends to replace our failed trade policy, a first step must be to end negotiations now underway for more deals based on the damaging NAFTA/TPP model so its notable that today's announcement **did not end talks** to establish the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, the Trade in Services Agreement and the U.S.-China Bilateral Investment Treaty—all of which would replicate and expand the TPP/NAFTA model Trump says he is ending."

United States: Trump has moved toward privatizing the national air traffic control system but Americans Against Air Traffic Privatization say this would destabilize the system, and have launched a petition drive to block it. "**Julia Alschuler, Spokesperson for AAATP said:** "A Republican-led Congress has rejected ATC privatization time and time again on the grounds of safety, feasibility, and overall concern for the American people. **Privatizing Air Traffic Control is a solution in search of a problem at a time when we need to strengthen middle class workers and rural communities instead of leaving hardworking Americans vulnerable to corporate interests.** We hope that Congress and the next Administration will hear the concerns of the American people and finally ground this failed proposal once and for all. ""

United States: Public concern is growing over the possibility that Trump's new interior secretary, Ryan Zinke, will lead a crusade to privatize major parts of the National Park system. "**If they privatize the parks, some employees would be re-hired at minimum wage with no benefits.**" But resistance is increasing: "**Protect Our Public Lands is an organization fighting legislative efforts to push for the privatization of public lands.** Through social media, news, and word of mouth, they want people to fight for public lands alongside them."

United States/Mexico: The General Secretary of Mexico's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Beatriz Mojica Morga, [cemented ties with various anti-privatization currents](#) of the Democratic Party in the U.S. to "confront the racist policy of US President Donald Trump." She also met with labor leaders such as [Larry Cohen of Bernie Sanders' Our Revolution](#) movement, **Lee Saunders of AFSCME**, Catharine Schutzius and Emma Lozano of the Teamsters Local 743 and Elizabeth Gonzalez of the Teamsters Local 777 of Illinois.

Europe

[Health Campaigns Together](#), which includes PSI-affiliated unions, and the People's Assembly are calling for a major demonstration in London on 4 March to protest [the cuts, closures and privatization](#) of the UK National Health Service (NHS) The demonstration is calling for a fully funded, publicly owned NHS and social care service in response to [Theresa May's demands for yet more austerity in the NHS which represent a real risk to the safety of patients and the service.](#)

Cyprus: Akel, the parliamentary opposition party, [will introduce a bill to scrap the state's privatization unit \(PU\)](#). "**Akel spokesman Stefanos Stefanou** explained why they were drafting legislation to scrap the PU: The unit no longer has a purpose. It is costly, its Commissioner is paid some €170,000 a year, so far it has conducted studies costing about €3.5 million, and we feel that this is a waste of public funds." **Akel has been at odds with the government over the PU ever since it was established.** The party is against the privatizations drive announced by the administration, after a March 2013 bailout **deal with international creditors requiring Cyprus to denationalize certain state assets.**"

Ireland: [Legislation protecting Irish Water from privatization could be overruled by a Dáil majority and a referendum on its public ownership overturned](#), a Department of Environment official said. "TDs and senators debated on whether constitutional change is needed to ban the privatization of water, an idea the Government has says it is open to looking at." But "Séamas Ó Tuathail, **a barrister advising anti-water campaigners, disagreed.** He said there was 'widespread concern' about privatization. But **statutory rules could be altered so the 'public have a right to make the decision.'**"

United Kingdom: British Prime Minister Teresa May **has come under pressure not to offer up Britain's National Health Service or other public services for privatization to curry favor with Donald Trump.** SNP Westminster leader Angus Robertson asks May, "will you tell President Trump you are not prepared to lower our food and safety standards [or to open our health systems up for privatization](#)? Or do you believe that is a price worth paying for a UK-US trade deal?" Robertson said, "the European Union, which we are still a part of, has amongst the highest food safety standards anywhere in the world and [we are proud on our continent to have public national health systems.](#)"

United Kingdom: A move to significantly increase the funding of the Commonwealth Development Corporation **raises concerns that it is to be privatized** after Liberal Democrat Baroness Northover, a former international development minister, says the money "**certainly makes it more saleable.**" Former Labour minister, Lord Boateng, "who is president of the Africa International Business Forum, **acknowledged at one point under the Labour government the CDC was being 'fattened up' for privatization** and he said the lessons of the past had to be learned." [Press Association National Newswire (UK), 9 February 2017]

United Kingdom: Controversial [plans to privatize all council sport and leisure services](#) in the Scottish city of Stirling [have been dropped after angry protests.](#) "Stirling had been expected to push through a £25 million deal with private contractor, Sports and Leisure Management (SLM) to take over the running of all its swimming pools, gyms, sports clubs and fitness classes until 2042. But at a meeting of the full council last night, the Tory-Labour run administration accepted an amendment calling for the deal to be cancelled. Stirling will now look to set up a charitable trust similar to those operated in Glasgow, Edinburgh and other Scots councils to run sport and leisure facilities."

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