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Colombia: threats and assassinations - impunity continues

PSI is calling on its affiliated organisations to send letters of protest to President Alvaro Uribe condemning the assassinations of four trade unionists on or around the day of action held in Colombia on 6 March. The day of action "For the Dignity of Victims", which had the full support of the trade union movement, was a tribute to - and in solidarity with - all the victims of arbitrary violence and the armed conflict. PSI is further calling on affiliates to protest against serious threats made against Maria Fernanda Bolaños, an employee of the publicly owned waste and sanitation services of Cali and a member of PSI affiliate SINTRAEMSIRVA. Read the PSI urgent action request [here](#).

ILO Committee vindicates PSLINK



The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) has vindicated the actions taken by Annie Geron and her fellow unionists from PSLINK. The CFA has urged the Philippines Government to ensure that the trade unionists are reinstated in their previous posts and that they receive compensation and damages for unjustified transfers and for the time they were suspended without pay. The case goes back to 2003, when Annie and her colleagues raised concerns about corruption in their workplace. Read more details [here](#).

Ver.di wins more purchasing power!



After tough negotiations and just averting a nationwide strike, PSI German affiliate Ver.di has secured major pay rises for 1.3 million public sector workers in municipal and federal public services.

All salaries are increased by 50€ per month plus 3.1% backdated to 1st January 2008. This represents an average increase of about 5.1%, and more for lower salaries. As of 1st January 2009, there will be an additional increase of 2.8% plus a one-off payment of 225€ for each employee. Trainees and apprentices will receive a monthly rise of 70€, and employers will strive to ensure at least a 12-month regular employment contract for the trainee at the end of the training period.

Employees of municipalities in Western Germany will have to work 39 hours per week starting from 1st July. Employees at federal level and public sector workers in Eastern Germany already work 39 hours, the only exception being hospital employees.

Frank Bsirske, Ver.di General Secretary, said the deal meant that public service workers would receive an increase above the annual inflation rate for the first time in many years.

Turkish health workers fight neoliberal reforms



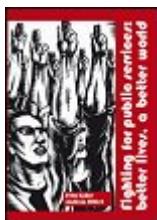
In March and April, thousands of Turkish workers took strike action to protest plans to restructure the pension and social security system, including raising retirement ages. The plans are being implemented by the government, responding to International Monetary Fund pressure.

Many workers, including doctors, nurses, teachers, civil servants, train drivers and metro staff, participated in a two-hour stoppage on March 14. PSI affiliate SES was at the forefront of the demonstration in the capital city Ankara where the workers chanted anti-government and IMF slogans.

A further action was carried out on 1st April. During the demonstrations, police attacked the workers, and four union members had to be treated in hospital.

On 10 April, the reform went through its final stages at the National Assembly. Chidi King, PSI Equality and Trade Union Rights officer, travelled to Turkey to support the unionists. To read more, [click here](#).

PSI History book



On the occasion of the PSI World Congress in September 2007, PSI commissioned a book about its history and the history of public services, "Fighting for public services: better lives, a better world".

The book looks at the major political events of the twentieth century, with a view to seeing what kinds of challenges these presented to PSI and its affiliated unions. It also describes the history of public services: health and social services, pensions, water and sewage, waste management, gas and electricity, police, security and culture. For more information about the book, and to order a copy of this fascinating history of public services, go to <http://www.books-psi.org>.

PSI AFREC meets in Ghana



The PSI Regional Executive Committee meeting (AFREC) for Africa and Arab countries was held in Accra, Ghana, on 18-20 March. Delegates from Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Botswana, Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Tunisia, Togo and South Africa discussed issues of equality, equity and building diversity, union development and international solidarity, winning workers rights and sectoral work. PSI General Secretary, Peter Waldorff, attended the AFREC meeting, the first time regional executive meeting since his election.

To read more, [click here](#).



PSI's IAMREC presses to oppose FTA Agreement

The PSI Inter-American Regional Executive Committee (IAMREC) at its meeting in Panama City, 31 March – 1 April, agreed to send a letter to the House of Representatives to press them to oppose the proposed Free Trade Agreement between the USA and Colombia. The Committee heard a report on the continued and systematic violation of workers' rights in Colombia, including 13 assassinations of trade unionists in the first three months of 2008 alone. Maria Fernanda Bolaños, a leader of the PSI affiliate, SINTRAEMSIRVA, also recently received death threats, which in the case of Colombia must be taken very seriously. Read the letter IAMREC addressed to the US House of Representatives [here](#).

PSI has recently learnt that the FTA proposal has been withdrawn from the fast-track process. PSI General Secretary, Peter Waldorff, welcomes this development.



PSI
APREC
meeting
condemns
power
privatisatio
n in
Indonesia

The PSI Asia and Pacific Regional Executive Committee met on 8-11 April in Bali, Indonesia. The committee passed a resolution against the privatisation of the power sector of Indonesia. Participants heard a report from a workshop on China that had been held prior to the meeting, which concluded that the trade union movement needs to become engaged in China. Participants also discussed pension reform, including a report by Glen Barclay, Health and Social Services Coordinator for the region. They discussed the formation of several networks, including a Steering Committee for the regional on public and state administration, a network for fire-fighters and ambulance workers, and recognised the formation of the Asia Pacific Youth Network which had just held its first meeting. The meeting further discussed the dialogue that has been held with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) since 2005 on issues of common interest. The Committee will send a delegation to the 41st ADB Annual Meeting in Madrid to pursue the dialogue on core labour standards and the creation of a labour desk at the ADB. The meeting was also preceded by a meeting of the Asia Pacific Women's Committee that will be reported on separately.

Public sector strike in Aruba



In Aruba, PSI affiliate SEPPA together with four other public sector unions, has been on strike since 11 March. They are pushing for the adjustment of salaries to the inflation rate. The judge has called upon two commissions to solve the dispute, but neither of them has been successful. The judge did not contend the workers' right to strike, but he conditioned

the strike on a minimum service level in the police, firefighting, prison and immigration departments.

The unions agreed with the directors of these departments that the strike would start again on Monday 7th April. Magaly Brito, former Vice-President of PSI, and President of SEPPA, was at the forefront of the activity and demonstrated her trade union leadership.

The most recent action by the unions is the occupation of the Parliament of Aruba and they are determined to remain there until a solution is reached.



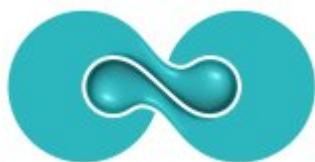
Public sector strike in UK

In the UK, more than 100,000 civil servants from PSI affiliate PCS will join teachers in a one-day strike on 24 April.

Three Government departments - the Department for Work and Pensions, the Home Office and the Department for Transport - are involved. Seven government agencies will also be affected: the Driving Standards Agency, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Highways Agency, the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency, the Vehicle Certification Agency, the Land Registry and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. The workers who will join the strike include teachers, coastguards, driving examiners, jobcentre and benefit staff.

Pay in the civil service is among the lowest in the public sector, and civil servants are now facing below-inflation pay rises. Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary, says below-inflation pay rises are an insulting pay cut for workers. "The Government is alienating its own workforce by driving down the pay of some of the lowest paid in the public sector with a policy of below inflation pay caps and pay freezes," he said.

First preparatory meeting for the 5th World Water Forum



Turkish unions, engineer associations, academics and civil society groups hosted a three-day meeting, 21-23 March in Istanbul, to lay the groundwork for the 5th World Water Forum in March 2009. The Turkish situation is complex, in some cases volatile, but the groups showed deep knowledge and serious commitment to prepare for the Forum. Seventeen international guests, including Carlos Sosa, General Secretary of FFOSE, participated. To read more, [click here](#).

Preparatory meeting for the European Social Forum



The next European Preparatory Assembly (EPA) to the 5th European Social Forum (ESF) will be held on 6-8 June 2008 in Kiev, Ukraine. This will be an important instrument to mobilise social movements, trade unions and civil organisations. The initiative to hold the EPA in Kiev was supported by the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU). Participants in the EPA in Kiev will also join the march in support of Ukraine's ratification of international conventions on migrant workers.

The ESF will take place from 17-21 September 2008 in Malmö, Sweden and will have special focus on the inclusion of women. The planning groups of the Nordic Organising Committee and the European will give priority to proposals where there is a commitment to gender equality. For bigger ESF-events such as assemblies there will be a quota rule. For more information on the ESF, see <http://www.fse-esf.org/>

28th April - World Day for Safety & Health



The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has initiated its 28 April website for this year, which now includes materials it has produced for its selected themes: "My life, my work, my safe work - Managing risk in the work environment: Managing Risk in the Work Environment". A special report on the subject is now available, as well as a poster, bookmark and postcard, produced in English, French and Spanish:

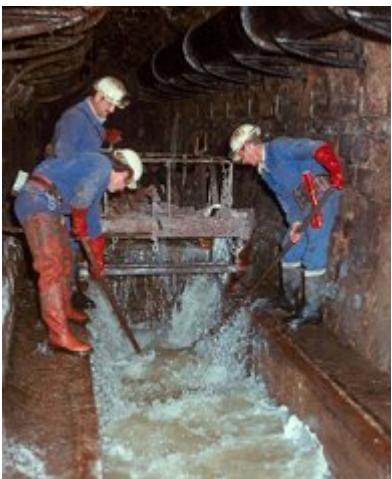
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/worldday/index.htm>.



Labour clauses in public contracts – ILO Convention 94

The ILO Committee of experts has recently reported on one of the most important ILO Conventions, that protects the rights of workers around the world, but is also underused. ILO Convention 94 sets out an ILO standard on labour clauses in public contracts, and aims to avoid companies underbidding by cutting labour costs in a contract. It requires that all bidders respect prevailing standards, including those set out in collective agreements. Last year the ILO conducted a General Survey of all members on this Convention. Only 60 countries have ratified, and only one quarter of those fully respect the Convention. The Committee concludes that the Convention remains an important tool to protect workers' rights, and the ILO and its constituents should do more to promote understanding and ratification. To download a copy of the full report, [click here](#).

Sewerage works



Public sector trade unions are calling on their governments to take the necessary steps to resolve urgent water and sanitation problems. PSI and UK affiliate UNISON have sponsored a research paper by the PSI Research Unit, entitled, "Sewerage Works – Public investment in sewers saves lives". This paper clearly outlines the need for systematic public investment in sewer systems for all urban populations. It concludes that ad-hoc septic tanks and outdoor latrines are not viable in the long-term. Read the report here: <http://www.psiru.org/reports/2008-03-W-sewers.doc>.

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