



International Officer Report to January 09 Executive Meeting

What is UNISON involved with at the moment?

International development secretary's seasonal greetings

Secretary of State for International Development, Douglas Alexander, sent seasonal greetings to UNISON, thanking the union for its "hard work" over the last year.

Douglas Alexander said he had huge admiration for those who had "turned compassion for the billions of children, women and men who live in abject poverty in developing countries, into practical support for changing those lives."



He went on to say "We'll all feel the impact of the global economic downturn during 2009, but nobody more acutely than those already living on the edge. Those, for whom \$1 a day must feed their family, pay school fees and buy essential medicines. I'm proud of the UK's leadership on international development and our continued determination to fight poverty at home and abroad. I'm also proud to be in partnership with UNISON in the fight against world poverty."

Dignity! Period - right to basic hygiene

Sanitary protection should never be a luxury for women anywhere. But in Zimbabwe, it has become an unaffordable luxury for many women and girls. The spiralling cost of living and shortage of goods means that women may be forced to take drastic measures to protect themselves during their period - putting them at risk of infection.

Lack of access to sanitary protection can also affect their daily lives; women may not be able to go to work during their periods and girls may miss school.



page two

UNISON is re-launching the appeal to support Action for Southern Africa's (ACTSA) Dignity! Period. campaign which received huge support from UNISON members when it was first launched. The re-launch is in response to a request from our sister union, the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) in Zimbabwe. The campaign aims to supply as many women and girls as possible with sanitary protection.

Dignity! Period. has provided the women of Zimbabwe with over 5.5 million sanitary products since the campaign was founded in 2005 but there is more to be done.

50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution

I have sent a message of support to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution to the Cuban Government on behalf of the branch

Demand for banks in Zimbabwe to lift cap on cash

In a courageous act, the ZCTU handed in a petition to the RBZ on 3 December 2008 demanding that the bank remove its cap on cash withdrawals.

I have signed the online petition on behalf of the branch

Iran, another bus union leader arrested.

According to his union, Vahed Syndicate, Ebrahim Madadi was visiting the North Tehran Branch of the Employment Office when plain clothes security personnel detained him with a court order and took him into police custody.

I have sent a letter of protest over his arrest on behalf of the branch.



Mansour Osanlou and
Ebrahim Madidi

Iranian teacher trade unionist at risk of execution

On 24 November, prison guards entered Farzad Kamangar's cell in Section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison. It is reported that the prison guards beat Farzad Kamangar, threatened him with execution, and took him out of the cell, along with some of his personal belongings. Later that day, another prisoner reported seeing him in the prison clinic, apparently unconscious. He is now believed to have been returned to his cell. In Iran, the removal of a detainee from their cell often signals that the person may be executed imminently. Amnesty International is therefore concerned that despite a review of his case being underway, Farzad Kamangar remains at risk of execution.



Farzad

I have protested through Amnesty International on behalf of the branch over this injustice

A book for New Year

It has now been four years since the murder of Hadi Saleh, the international officer of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions.

Not long after Hadi was killed, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Britain published a book in his honour entitled "Hadi Never Died".

"On January 4, 2005," it began, "masked assassins broke into his home, bound his feet and hands, and blindfolded him. Then they tortured and burned his body and, finally, strangled him with an electric cord. A life of idealism and selflessness, filled with solidarity and love for his family, country and the labour movement, came to this terrible, pain-filled end."



The book does much more than describe Hadi's murder. It tells the story of death and re-birth of the Iraqi trade union movement.

"Hadi Never Died" is a large format, full-colour paperback and LabourStart is pleased to be able to offer it for £10.00 with free shipping to anywhere in the world.

Order from ericlee@labourstart.org or from the TUC website, www.tuc.org.uk/publications

Ken Owen