



Global Justice is published by the Canadian Union of Public Employees and is available online at cupe.ca/globaljustice.

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Solidarity has no borders

BY MAE SMITH, CHAIR CUPE NOVA SCOTIA GLOBAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE AND KELTI CAMERON, SENIOR OFFICER, INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

A labour leader from one of the world's most dangerous countries made a powerful impression on CUPE members at the annual CUPE division conventions in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador in May.

Margarita Lopez, president of SINTRACUAVALLE, a union representing workers who operate water and wastewater facilities in Colombia, spent 10 days touring the east coast to meet CUPE members and

to present to the conventions. Sister Lopez spoke at community halls, universities and to union locals across Nova Scotia about the importance of international solidarity and the relationship her union has developed with CUPE

Nova Scotia through the support of the CUPE Global Justice Fund. She captivated the attention of hundreds of CUPE activists with the story of her struggle to protect public water, which her union has been fighting to keep in public hands for over a decade despite harassment, intimidation and death threats.

CUPE's partnership with SINTRACUAVALLE began in 2012 and over the past year the collaboration has helped the union undertake an impressive series of educational and organizing initiatives to

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RICHARD MASTERS, MARGARITA LOPEZ AND JUSTIN MCKINNON

CUPE

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Free all political prisoners in the Philippines

BY DEBBIE DOWNEY, CUPE 1763 – NB, CUPE NATIONAL GLOBAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBER

France Castro, the General Secretary of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers (ACT) in the Philippines, toured CUPE locals across Canada in the spring of 2012 as part of a CUPE Global Justice Tour and worker-to-worker solidarity exchange.

At the 2012 New Brunswick division convention, Sister Castro spoke about the struggles facing trade unionists in the Philippines, including struggles against privatization and defending human and trade union rights.

Over 1,200 activists in the Philippines have been targeted with violence and intimidation for their defense of human and trade union rights since 2001. Sister Castro spoke about political detainees and teacher Charity Dino, an organizer and member of ACT who was teaching peasant farmers to read and write when she was jailed under bogus charges. She continues to this date to be imprisoned in the Batangas Provincial Jail in Batangas City, Philippines.

After hearing from ACT, our Global Justice Committee in New Brunswick passed a resolution on the convention

floor to support Filipino unions in their fight against the killings and repression of trade unionists and to show solidarity and international support towards our sisters and brothers in the Philippines.

The CUPE New Brunswick Global Justice Committee

decided as a morale booster to write letters of solidarity to the political detainees in the Batangas Jail and to ask convention delegates to sign letters of support. Over 200 letters were sent in May. Also, on behalf of our provincial division, CUPE NB President Daniel Légère wrote to the detainees as a show of

international support and solidarity.

The committee also wanted to show its financial support for the detainees by holding two fundraisers at social events, which featured mock jails, and raised a total of \$475, an amount that was matched by CUPE National. We are proud to say that our efforts raised \$950, which was sent to the political detainees in the Batangas Jail.

The committee hopes to strengthen its alliances in the Philippines and work here in New Brunswick with other migrant and social justice organizations to expose and oppose the exploitation of Filipino migrant workers in Canada. ●



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: STEVE DROST, STELLA WARD AND SERGE LANDRY.



Worker to worker solidarity and the Global Justice Fund

Our Global Justice Fund is an important tool for connecting and mobilizing workers around our common struggles in Canada and across the globe. If your local is interested in supporting our international solidarity initiatives, please visit cupe.ca/globaljustice or contact Kelti Cameron, International Solidarity Officer, at kcameron@cupe.ca or 613-237-1590 ext. 283.

CUPE in solidarity with Cuban workers

BY PIERRE GIRARD, CUPE 1751 – ON, CUPE NATIONAL GLOBAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEMBER

Pierre Girard reports on his trip to Cuba where he saw firsthand the benefits of the international support offered by CUPE.

In April, I accompanied a group of CUPE members to Havana, Cuba, to visit workers from our partner union, the Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Administración Pública (SNTAP). During a seven-day trip, we shared and compared union work between our two countries and discussed the importance of international worker solidarity.

We met with members of SNTAP working in different sectors: agriculture, municipalities, social services, banking and customs. They spoke with pride about their work, and the importance of our relationship. The economy in Cuba is changing, and our union partners are struggling with the best way to train activists and members on these new structural changes. A new category of self-employed workers is a big departure from the established Cuban system, and SNTAP is grappling with how best to represent these workers.

We also had the chance to attend the festivities for International Workers' Day on May 1 where hundreds of thousands of workers

marched in the streets. The next day was an international union forum, with over 100 countries represented. There were inspiring interventions from speakers from around the world, including a speech from the sister of one of the Cuban Five (the five Cubans who have been falsely charged and imprisoned by the US since 1998 on espionage charges). The theme for the week's festivities was "United for a Prosperous and Sustainable Socialism."

CUPE BC, through the Global Justice Fund, has a solidarity relationship with SNTAP that has existed for over two decades and is focussed on improving their education training conditions by supplying materials to classrooms and offices. We were able to visit the classroom in San Miguel del Padron, where over 2000 members receive union education every year, as well as the main classroom in Centro Habana. The improvements

to these two spaces were impressive, and the direct result of our material contributions.

Despite murmurings of a thawing of relations with the US, the Obama administration has continued its economic blockade, and this remains a powerful force around the world against Cuba. Now, as much as ever, we need to show our solidarity with Cuba, both in Canada and internationally. ●



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: STANDING: DOUG SPRENGER, DEENA MARTINEAU, CAROL NORDBY, SUSAN JANSEN, JEAN FROLEK, BARRIE THOMAS, SHEHNAZ MOTANI, JIM SKINNER. SITTING AND KNEELING: TARSAM BASI, PIERRE GIRARD, DALE WITHFORD AND CAROL WOOD.

Solidarity has no borders

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combat the threat of privatization in the Valle Del Cauca region of Colombia. CUPE Newfoundland and Labrador joined the project in 2013 after raising over \$10,000 for the Global Justice Fund during their convention.

SINTRACUAVALLE is painstakingly building community

support for their ongoing anti-privatization campaign, especially in the municipality of Jamundi, where the region's largest water facility is facing the threat of privatization. They have set up a community-union committee and have developed educational programs on privatization, water as a human right, collective action, neoliberalism and the role of the state.

Several CUPE members empathized with Sister Lopez's struggle noting that every day we struggle in Canada for basic rights in our collective agreements, for the right to accessible education, against contracting out and privatization, for women's rights, for political rights and the right to collectively organize. But we do not face the same

threat to our physical safety as do trade unionists in Colombia.

The struggle for public water knows no borders and we must continue to support our sisters and brothers in Colombia and elsewhere as they courageously resist corporate and government attempts to privatize. ●

1. In July, a CUPE delegation attended the LGBTT conference on human rights, organized as part of the 2013 World Outgames held in Antwerp, Belgium. The World Outgames brings together LGBTT athletes, conference delegates and artists as well as many allies from around the world.

2. As protests spread across Turkey, CUPE stood in solidarity with the Turkish people who courageously rose up in defiance of repressive government policy and police violence. In May, thousands of Turkish people demonstrated to protect their environment and their community spaces, to defend democracy and their right to collectively assemble and organize, and to protest a pro-business agenda that is anti-people.

3. A CUPE led delegation travelled to the Philippines in July to investigate human and worker rights violations. The international fact-finding mission, called "Against the Killings and Repression of Public Sector Workers in the Philippines", was conducted through the ongoing Global Justice Fund project with CUPE 4600 and the Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE) – Philippines. A detailed account of the mission will be reported on in the next edition of the Global Justice Newsletter.

4. In August, the US and their global allies escalated the threat of military intervention in the Syrian conflict. The anti-war movement around the world called for mass mobilizations to prevent this war from happening and to show its solidarity with the Syrian people. In the spring, CUPE and the CLC supported Oxfam's appeal for support for the millions of refugees fleeing violence in Syria.

5. Trade unions in Greece held their fourth general strike in July to protest the imposition of austerity measures that are devastating the poor and the working class across the country. Austerity measures have left 1.3 million workers out of work and cut salaries by an average of 25 per cent.

6. On April 24, the Rana Plaza building near the city of Dhaka Bangladesh collapsed, killing over 1,100 workers and injuring more than 2,500. Workers in Bangladesh continue to struggle for their right to collectively organize into unions and to secure genuine health and safety improvements in the workplace.



NEWS IN BRIEF