



The world has changed considerably since our last newsletter. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating health, economic and social impact on workers and communities around the world. The [ILO](#) estimates that the global loss of working hours is equivalent to 305 million full time jobs. The crisis is deepening existing [inequalities](#), with women, informal economy workers, and refugee and migrant workers among those worst impacted.

Workers around the world are bearing the burden of this crisis, and yet we are seeing opportunistic governments and employers using COVID-19 as cover to attack workers' rights and undermine democracy: on 3 June Duterte's administration in [the Philippines](#) passed the Anti-Terrorism Bill which unions and civil society fear will be used to silence dissent; state governments in [India](#) have suspended labour laws and increased working hours; the [Cambodian](#) government has introduced new state of emergency powers that allow it to control media (including social media) and monitor communications; and the [Indonesian](#) government is trying to pass the broad-ranging "Omnibus bill on job creation" labour law that would abolish the monthly minimum wage, reduce severance pay, and increase outsourcing and insecurity. But, even in the midst of restrictive lockdowns, unions are finding ways to organise and build worker power. On 6 May we hosted a webinar featuring Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, and union leaders from the Asia-Pacific region to hear about how unions are organising during COVID-19. You can watch the webinar [here](#).

As the world prepares to rebuild out of this crisis, we cannot return to business-as-usual. The ACTU has outlined [our plan](#) for what is needed to build secure jobs and a fairer Australia, but we are also calling on the Morrison government to take action at the global level to support working people through the creation of a [Global Social Protection Fund](#). This fund would enable the world's poorest countries to provide basic income support and public services to their communities.

Stay safe and stay strong.

In Unity,

Michele O'Neil

ACTU President

Hong Kong: repeal the national security law

Democracy is under fire in Hong Kong. In our last newsletter we reported that the General Secretary of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), Lee Cheuk Yan, was [arrested](#) and charged along with two other prominent democracy advocates with 'unlawful assembly' for participating in a public rally on 31 August last year, as part of the protests against the extradition law. Since then, Lee and a number of other leaders have been charged with two more counts of unlawful assembly for participating in rallies on 18 August and 1 October. We wrote to Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam in May calling on her government to [drop the charges](#) and respect the right to freedom of assembly.

The crackdown on the protest movement has intensified, however, with China's National People's Congress passing the *Decision on establishing and improving the legal system and enforcement mechanisms for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) to safeguard national security* ('the Decision') on 28 May. The Decision empowers the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to impose national security legislation and Chinese state security forces to operate in Hong Kong, and effectively ends the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle.

We interviewed Secretary of the HKCTU about these latest developments and what they mean for trade unions - you can watch the interview [here](#).

The ACTU stands in solidarity with our sister union, the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), in their call for the national security law to be repealed, and in their campaign for democracy and freedom in Hong Kong.

India: Unions stand up against attacks on workers' rights

Central trade unions in India called a joint [nationwide day of action](#) on 22 May, in response to several state governments suspending labour laws and increasing working hours under the guise of increasing economic activity in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ACTU sent a [solidarity message](#) to the unions. Several union leaders were detained by police, including the leaders of INTUC, AITUC, CITU, HMS, AIUTUC and SEWA, for breaching lockdown restrictions by gathering in groups of more than four - the leaders were released later than afternoon. See photos from the protest [here](#).

Take action: Defend jobs and press freedom in the Philippines

On 5 May President Duterte effectively shut down the ABS-CBN television network, the largest television network in the Philippines - resulting in 11,000 workers losing their jobs in the midst of coronavirus. The network's license had expired, but the House of Representatives, controlled by Duterte's allies, sat on the renewal for three years. The closure of the network is a blow to democracy and freedom of the press in the Philippines, which ranks as one of the world's most dangerous places for reporters.

Unions are calling on the government to reverse its decision and reopen the ABS-CBN - sign the petition [here](#).



Take action: Coronavirus Solidarity Fund

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA has established a [Coronavirus Solidarity Fund](#) to support its partner unions and organisations around the world as they take action to stop the spread of the pandemic by strengthening community health, educating workers on health and sanitation, and campaigning for responses to the pandemic that protect the rights of working people. If you can, please make a [donation](#).

Upcoming Events

ITUC Asia Pacific webinar 'The world of work is changing: why ILO C190 matters more than ever', **Thursday 18 June, 6pm (AEST)**. Find out more information and register [here](#).

ITUC Global webinar 'Putting rights at the centre of COVID-19 recovery - the 2020 ITUC Global Rights Index', **Thursday 18 June, 11pm (AEST)**. Find out more information and register [here](#).

AFTINET webinar on post-pandemic trade policy, **Tuesday 23 June, 2pm (AEST)**. Find out more information and register [here](#).

News From Around the World



The Fiji Parliament voted unanimously on 28 May to [ratify](#) the International Labour Organisation's Violence and Harassment Convention 2019, making it the the first country in our region to do so.



The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre has launched a [COVID-19 apparel tracker](#), monitoring global brands actions to the pandemic and the impact on garment workers around the world: 40% of companies still have not committed to pay for all completed orders, despite mounting public pressure.



The findings of the latest [ITUC COVID-19 survey](#) of 100 countries shows the jobs crisis is taking hold, with 87% of countries surveyed reporting that companies are laying off workers as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19, while support for government and employer actions falls.

Please forward this newsletter on to your fellow union members. To give feedback or submit content, [contact](#) ACTU International Officer Clare Middlemas.



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