

up front

spring / summer 2019 waronwant.org



THE CRISIS OF INEQUALITY

Stop Arming Israel
CAMPAIGN VICTORY!

The cost of mining in
LATIN AMERICA

**WAR ON
WANT**

FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

WELCOME



War on Want has always believed that poverty is political: a result of decisions made by powerful governments, corporations, and

elites to maintain the status quo for their own benefit. In this edition of *Up Front* we highlight the crisis of inequality we are currently facing: with the concentration of power in the hands of such a small few, we know the global economic system is broken. But the crisis of inequality can and will be overcome, and we're proud to have you with us in this fight. In this edition, read about our recent Stop Arming Israel campaign victory, and about the launch of our new campaign to stop corrupt corporate courts. We highlight the devastating impact of mining in Latin America, as well as a recent victory for land rights in South Africa. As always, thank you for your membership with War on Want. We couldn't continue any of our work without our members like you.

In solidarity,

Asad Rehman
Executive Director



FIGHTING GLOBAL POVERTY

War on Want

44-48 Shepherdess Walk

London N1 7JP

tel 020 7324 5040

email support@waronwant.org

web waronwant.org

Registered Charity No. 208724

Follow us:

@waronwant

[facebook.com/waronwant](https://www.facebook.com/waronwant)

Please help spread the word and save money by sharing this copy of *Up Front*

Front cover: © Cris Faga/NurPhoto/Getty Images

All images © War on Want unless otherwise stated

THE CRISIS OF INEQUALITY

In January, Home Secretary Sajid Javid called 200 people seeking safe haven in the UK a 'crisis.'

We are without a doubt in crisis. However, the Home Secretary seems to have missed the point, while at the same time showing complete disregard for the plight of those men, women and children risking their lives. **The crisis we are facing is that of deepening extreme inequality:** a consequence of a failing economic system where less than 1% of the global population has amassed half the world's wealth. Tackling global migration requires the Home Secretary and the government to focus on **the real crisis of inequality** and the structural reasons why people are forced to move from their homes, instead of engaging in the toxic logic of walls and fences.



While the small elite continue to get richer and more powerful, half of the world's population survives on \$5 a day. Billions are denied the right to housing, shelter, education and health – fundamental rights, enshrined in international human rights law. Meanwhile, the bosses of big business award themselves millions, and manoeuvre their corporate interests to ensure their companies pay the least tax possible.

In this pursuit of profit over people, protection of human rights has been undermined and disregarded. Even 70 years after the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, millions are still denied the right to live free from persecution and injustice. Far too many people are still denied access to education, and affordable healthcare. Workers face dangerous factory conditions and remain stuck in poverty wages just to survive. Despite commitments to human rights, our own government is complicit in fuelling conflict by **doubling its arms sales in the past year to countries on its own list of human rights abusers** such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel and Pakistan.



With the concentration of power in the hands of such a small few, we know the global economic system is broken. Not only has it caused a crisis of shocking inequality and human rights abuse, but **a crisis of climate injustice**. Increasing global temperatures have unleashed killer floods, droughts and famines across the global South. Corrupt corporations are responsible for the majority of carbon emissions, yet it's those least responsible for climate change whose lives are devastated by these catastrophes – damaging their ecosystems and livelihoods. The poorest half of the world who are responsible for only 10% of global emissions find that climate change fans the flames of all other existing inequalities.

We have always believed that poverty is political: a result of decisions made by powerful governments, corporations, and elites to maintain the status quo for their own benefit. **The crisis of inequality can and will be overcome.** Not by the billionaires at Davos or by politicians demanding fences and walls, but by ordinary people of conscience around the globe.

Winning the war on want will require transformational change. It will require active solidarity with frontline communities across the world fighting for their rights and defending their livelihoods. It will require collective power on the streets as we reject the current politics of hatred and bigotry, which has added fuel to the fire of shocking inequality.

War on Want will continue to hold corporations accountable for their long lists of human rights violations in pursuit of profit. At the end of 2018, we saw global banking giant HSBC bow to our campaign pressure and divest from Elbit Systems, one of the world's leading weapons manufacturers. Earlier this year, we saw people coming together nationwide in solidarity with the Stansted 15 human rights defenders, which reiterated our rejection of the government's hostile environment of deportations and detentions. We saw a landmark victory with our long-time partner in South Africa, affirming their right to say no to destructive mining in their community.

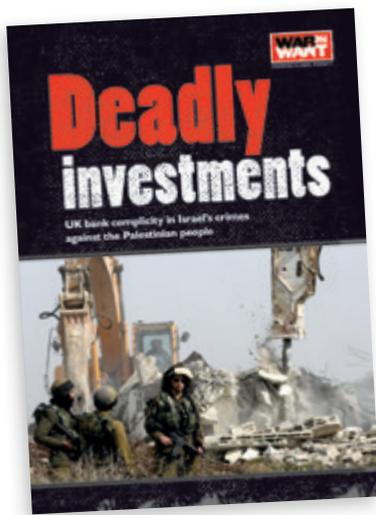


We must continue to build our movement against powerful odds. Our message is clear: we are committed to creating a fairer, safer and more equal world for us all amongst the crisis of inequality. We will do so with compassion, humanity and commitment. **We're glad to have you with us.**

Elbit victory!



After just over a year of pressure from War on Want and our allies, global banking giant HSBC confirmed to us in December 2018 that it has divested completely from Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems.



From Palestine to the US-Mexico border, Elbit Systems has been a leading force in militarised walls, state surveillance of civilians, and deadly drones. Elbit has been excluded from investment funds and banks around the world over its involvement in producing white phosphorous, as well as its provision of materials for Israel's illegal Apartheid Wall. Elbit has also produced artillery systems that can be used for cluster munitions, which made HSBC's investments in the company even more shocking, as it violated HSBC's own policies.

We were the first to discover HSBC's shareholdings in Elbit, and exposed it in our 'Deadly Investments' report in July 2017. We spearheaded the campaign to get HSBC to divest from Elbit, and after nearly 25,000 people took action to press HSBC to divest, the bank finally listened. **What a testament to the power of grassroots campaigning!**

Campaign timeline

In **July 2017**, we published our report 'Deadly Investments: UK bank complicity in Israel's crimes against the Palestinian people', in which we exposed HSBC's shareholdings in Elbit Systems. We had already communicated with HSBC beforehand to notify the bank of our research and to give it the opportunity to divest and stop lending and investing in companies complicit in human rights abuse. Campaigners across the UK held pickets and protests at HSBC branches calling on the bank to Stop Arming Israel, and thousands of War on Want members and supporters emailed HSBC to get the message across, along with allies from the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

After an inadequate reply sent to supporters, HSBC eventually called us in for a meeting, and it was clear that their operations were in breach of their own ethical policies. We made clear that doing business with companies like Elbit lends legitimacy to its actions, such as boasting of its 'combat-proven' technology, weaponry tried and tested in crimes against Palestinians.

HSBC divests from arms manufacturer following **War on Want** report and campaign



Groups around the UK increased their participation in the popular campaign to get HSBC to stop arming Israel, reaching a high point at the bank's AGM in **April 2018**, when we showed up and grilled execs over the bank's business links with companies arming repression.

But we didn't stop there...as the Israeli military cracked down on Palestinian protestors in the Gaza Strip over the summer, we redoubled our efforts to stop UK institutions, like HSBC, from participating in a deadly weapons trade that keeps the Israeli military armed to the teeth.

In September, we wrote a letter to HSBC providing more detail on the reason why Elbit has been excluded by banks, investment and pension funds around the world. A national day of action pushed the bank on the issue as well.

In the last days of **December 2018**, HSBC emailed us to confirm that the bank had finally completely divested from Elbit, stating "HSBC Asset Management is fully divested from Elbit with effect from close of business, 20 December 2018".

In other words, HSBC bowed to our pressure – we won!

What's next?

But there's much more work to do. HSBC still has a long way to go before it can claim to be an 'ethical' bank. It still maintains business with BAE Systems, complicit through the selling of weapons used in war crimes committed by Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other repressive regimes, as well as **Caterpillar**, whose equipment is used in the destruction of Palestinian villages (you can read more about this in our 'Deadly Investments' report). Still, this is a positive first step and a case study in how War on Want's expert research and hard-hitting campaigns can have a real impact.

Palestinians have been clear in their requests for support from us here in the UK: they don't want our sympathy, they want our solidarity, and that means working to end our own government and institutions' complicity in the violence and abuse they are subjected to.

In 2019, we'll be ramping up the pressure on HSBC to end its links with Caterpillar and other companies complicit in human rights abuse. War on Want is committed to continuing our bold campaigns in support of Justice for Palestine, and we need the support from our members to keep it up!



Demanding the right to say “NO” to corporate greed in South Africa

As global carbon emissions surge, and extreme weather ravages territories across the world, communities fighting for a right to say no to mining developments that do not address their needs or livelihoods are at the forefront of the battle to stop deadly extractivism and climate change.

In October last year, we had the privilege of inviting Nonhle Mbuthuma of our partner organisation, Amadiba Crisis Committee (ACC) to the UK. Nonhle’s visit intended to raise the profile of the growing movement, led by mining-affected communities throughout South Africa and beyond, for ‘the Right to Say No’ to mining in local communities.

Her community, Xolobeni, which has been resisting the entry of a destructive mining project into their land for over 15 years, had taken the South African Department for Mineral Resources (DMR) and the Australian company seeking to mine their territory to court.

This Right to Say No campaign, which emerged in South Africa but has spread to many countries, is supporting communities’ fundamental right not only to be involved in and informed about plans that affect them but also – in cases of unsatisfying outcomes of negotiating processes – to reject the proposals.

Later in 2018, we were lucky and honoured to visit Nonhle and her community in South Africa, where we met at the Thematic Social Forum on Mining and Extractive Economies.

The forum – the first of its kind – set out to bring together the experiences needed to plan and build a future free from the systemic harm and destruction of an extractivism model. The forum was as much a space to converge around visionary alternatives and struggles for solidarity, as a moment to debate and discuss the differences that need to be overcome to challenge the very structures that perpetuate inequality and injustice.

It was in this context, and during our visit to South Africa, that we learned of their outstanding victory. The North Gauteng High Court ordered the DMR to obtain full consent from the community represented by the Amadiba Crisis Committee before issuing any mining licence.

The right to say no in this case is both an enforceable right and a principle that puts people first, and something which binds peoples and organisations through our collective struggles for real development.

This ruling could have far-reaching implications for the future of mining in the country, which is why the DMR has since unfortunately repeatedly tried to undermine the democratic and traditional rights of communities by actively distorting the court ruling.

What the DMR fails to understand is that the right to say NO is an affirmation of the things that communities are saying YES to: alternative ways of living in harmony with the planet; valuing the work of subsistence and care; and promoting production for use and not exchange.

War on Want stands in solidarity with all those communities saying NO to destructive mining and YES to putting people and planet above profit.



We're building momentum: let's put an end to corrupt corporate courts

Imagine a world where transnational corporations don't have to follow the same laws as everyone else, but instead have their own corporate courts, where the law is tailored to their interests. Not courts where the companies are put on trial, but where corporations sue governments for huge sums of money and bully countries to get their own way.

It sounds like dystopian science fiction, but corporate courts are real. Formally known as investor state dispute settlement (ISDS), these special privileges are granted to transnational companies by rules in trade and investment deals.

ISDS has enabled corporations to sue countries for doing almost anything they don't like – environmental protection, regulating finance, renationalising public services, anti-smoking policies – you name it:

- Infinito Gold is suing Costa Rica over the introduction of a ban on open cast mining for metals
- Cargill sued Mexico when it first introduced tax on sugary drinks
- Ethyl sued Canada over a ban on the chemical MMT in petrol, which is suspected of causing nerve damage
- Vattenfall is suing Germany for deciding to phase out nuclear power following the Fukushima nuclear disaster
- Lone Pine sued Canada when Quebec introduced a fracking moratorium
- Veolia sued Egypt over the introduction of a minimum wage.

Cases are heard in secretive tribunals, where the law is tailored to uphold investor's interests – the tribunal won't try and balance that against the public interest or environmental concerns. The amounts at stake are hundreds of millions and corporations use the threat of a case to pressure governments to change important policy decisions.

ISDS is an unjust mechanism that should have no place in trade deals, and as the UK formulates new trade and investment policy post- Brexit, it is crucial we say no to corporate courts. Right now, we have a chance to get rid of them.

Across the world, countries have been rejecting ISDS: South Africa, India, Ecuador, Tanzania, Indonesia and New Zealand have all taken steps to review, limit or terminate existing ISDS deals and refuse to sign new ones. At the same time, the movement against toxic trade deals TTIP and CETA has exposed the illegitimacy of ISDS. The system is vulnerable.

Together with allies in the UK and across Europe, War on Want is gearing up to create an unstoppable momentum for change. We're at a tipping point, and if enough of us come together, we could bring ISDS down altogether. As the UK reassesses its trade and investment policy in the light of Brexit, we have an opportunity to ensure that ISDS has no place in it:

- No ISDS in new and replacement trade deals
- Removal of ISDS in existing investment deals.

We've launched a groundbreaking new campaign and invite you to join the global fightback to stop ISDS in 2019: waronwant.org/stop-isds



The devastating cost of mining **in Latin America**

The sobering but unsurprising report released by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change at the end of 2018 says we have just over a decade to curb global warming beneath 1.5°C and protect millions from drought, heat waves, storms and floods – particularly in the global South.

But extractive industries like mining – responsible for fossil fuel extraction and most global emissions – are continuing to expand, ignoring this call to arms.

Our new report 'The Rivers Are Bleeding' examines the activities of some of the biggest UK-listed mining companies operating in Latin America. Particularly, we looked at three giant corporations, Anglo American, BHP Billiton and Glencore – and 17 of their most destructive and contested mega-mining projects.

The heart of global mining industry beats in the City of London, where most of the world's biggest mining companies are incorporated. Though licensed in the UK, they are not held accountable by the UK government and instead enjoy political and financial support.

The Latin American enterprises of all three firms have consequences for resisting the effects of climate change globally. Last October, organisers on the frontline of opposition to these mega-projects flew out to challenge BHP at their annual general meeting.

Our partner, The Wayuu Women's Force – an indigenous group defending their land from Cerrejón, Colombia's largest open-cast coal mine currently operating on their ancestral territory, came to London to highlight the human rights and environmental abuses their communities have suffered as a result.



“We have long worked under threat of violence in our communities to defend our water, our territory and the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendent people from the multinational corporations that steal and pollute our land. We cannot surrender. This is already a fight for our lives.”

For others taking up activism against mining projects, a pattern of deadly violence and threat is evident. Mining is the second deadliest industry for environmental human rights defenders. Harassment, intimidation by police and human rights violations are frequently associated with protesting against mining projects.

Leticia Oliveira from another of our partner organisations, the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB), also joined us for the week of action. MAB is one of Brazil's most powerful social movements and has been particularly active since the catastrophic collapse of a toxic waste dam killed 19 people, destroyed a whole river basin, and affected almost one million people.

‘They [residents] have no way to plant, to fish, to live as they always have. Their lives are completely disrupted and many health problems follow as a result, including depression and suicide, all because of this enormous, traumatic change.’

The Samarco crime, as it's come to be known, was owned by BHP and Brazilian mining corporation, Vale.

MAB argues that the impunity enjoyed by these companies is precisely what led to another catastrophic disaster. Earlier this year, a tailings dam at the Córrego do Feijão iron ore mine collapsed, and unleashed 12 million cubic metres of toxic mining-waste. It would leave a trail of devastation in its wake. At the time of writing, 150 have been found dead, with over 180 inhabitants and workers still missing. A significant part of the Paraopeba river ecosystem has been contaminated, affecting countless communities.

This was not a sudden tragedy, but a corporate crime foretold, emblematic of an extractive industry geared to sacrifice communities for the sake of greater earnings.

Extractivism is a highly destructive model of economic development based on the exploitation of nature: metals, minerals, land, water and people.

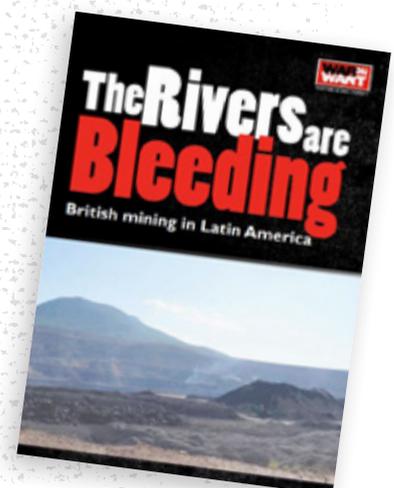
Yet, while it has become a mechanism for plunder contributing to climate change, inequality and human rights violations, extractivism is presented by international institutions, economists and governments as the only road to ‘economic development’ in the global South and perhaps, more worryingly, as a concoction of techno-fixes to address climate change.

The consequence is the unchecked growth of an industry that is devastating to the environment, deadly for communities and posing a clear and present danger to democracy and self-determination.

That is why War on Want has joined the fight for binding legislation that can guarantee the rights of communities, workers and the environment, and hold corporate power to account.

The disparity between communities bearing the brunt of this crisis and the companies responsible show that the solutions will not come from the corporations that have created the crises in the first place, but from people power and fighting for regulation in the mining industry.

To read our ‘The Rivers Are Bleeding’ report in full, please visit: waronwant.org/resources/the-rivers-are-bleeding



Garment workers demanding their rights

Textiles and garment manufacturing is hugely important to Sri Lanka, employing almost 300,000 people and accounting for 45% of its total exports in 2015 and second for foreign exchange earnings.

However, the wealth produced from the garment industry is not benefiting the vast majority of its workers. Instead, long hours, poverty wages, dangerous working conditions, and unfair dismissals are all too common.

Many garment factories supplying well known UK high street brands such as H&M, Marks & Spencer, Next, Gap, as well as high-end designer brands Calvin Klein, Gap, Giorgio Armani can be found across Sri Lanka's 13 Free Trade or Export Processing Zones (FTZ/EPZ)*.

Free Trade Zones were started in the late 1970s as part of the "liberalization" of the economy. The modern infrastructure and generous economic concessions designed to attract investors to establish export orientated manufacturing businesses. In these 14 fenced off, militarised zones, workers are deliberately prevented from learning about their rights and coming together to fight for better working conditions.

War on Want partner, The Free Trade Zones & General Services Employee Union (FTZ&GSEU) was founded in 1982 and was the first union to represent workers from companies in the Free Trade Zones. Currently it has 14,000 members in 22 branches throughout Sri Lanka and has grown to be the biggest union in the garment industry as well as the biggest union in the country's FTZs.

Freedom of association and the right of workers to organise in the FTZs has been continuously threatened, and although the Sri Lankan Constitution and law give all workers the right to join a union, companies have persisted in anti-union actions. Despite the challenges, FTZ& GSEU has worked unwaveringly to turn the tide against rights abuses in the workplace and the attempts of companies to suppress workers.



© FTZ & GSEU

Together with workers, they have won some landmark victories, such as collective bargaining agreements with some companies and successful lobbying for improvement in health and safety law. FTZ& GSEU is helping women workers organise themselves and campaign to uplift not only their labour rights, but also their social dignity, so they can come together and fight against injustice.

War on Want has been proud to partner with FTZ&GSEU for over ten years. Earlier this year, we stood in solidarity with their members at company ATG Ceylon, where employees faced mounting intimidation, harassment, and unfair dismissals. Over 3,500 War on Want supporters wrote to the chair of the company demanding he end the toxic culture of harassment and discrimination against union members.

In March, we ramped up the pressure and delivered a petition to the Sri Lankan High Commission. Over 6,000 supporters signed the petition in just five days, calling on the Sri Lankan government to protect workers at ATG Ceylon from this continuing abuse.

Together with our supporters, we won't stop standing with our partners around the world in their struggle for justice. More info: waronwant.org/global-partnerships

* From "Labour Rights in Export Processing Zones" Report of Directorate General for External Policies: Policy Department for European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights, June 2017

Historic day of action: **Fast Food Shutdown**

● Last autumn, War on Want helped bring workers together from McDonalds, TGI Fridays, and Wetherspoon's as they took on their highly profitable employers to demand a living wage of at least £10/ hour, guaranteed hours and for their right to a union in a national day of action to support their historic joint strike Fast Food Shutdown 4-10.

For a report on this momentous day, visit waronwant.org/media/fast-food-shut-down



Legacies of the **Anti-Apartheid Movement**

● For decades, thousands of people dedicated years of their lives to campaigning in solidarity with South Africans fighting apartheid. War on Want stood out amongst charities for taking a strong stance against apartheid. The legacy of our past work, and the movements we've supported, is key to who we are today.

Our project '**Evolution of Struggle: Legacies of the Anti-Apartheid Movement**' brings people together to discuss the contemporary relevance of the global struggle against apartheid. Our first events in Norwich and Brighton focused on 'Building the Boycott' and 'Student Organising.' We've got two more events coming up, in London and Leeds.

More details: waronwant.org/evolution-struggle

Week of Action for garment workers in Bangladesh



● Earlier this year, garment factory workers in Bangladesh striking for better pay hit the headlines as their protests were met with violent repression. Police used tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons, resulting in over 50 people injured and 1 killed. Garment workers in Bangladesh have been fighting tirelessly for a minimum wage increase up to the amount needed to survive, and safer working conditions after the devastating Rana Plaza collapse in 2013.

Since the strikes, 7,000 garment workers have been sacked for standing up for their rights. In January, activists, organisations and unions took part in a week of action for workers in Bangladesh, highlighting serious escalating concerns over dangerous working conditions and the possible closure of the Bangladesh Accord. War on Want joined a demonstration at the Bangladesh High Commission in London to support workers demanding their rights, and we'll continue to stand in active solidarity with garment workers across the world fighting for better conditions and a living wage.

More information: waronwant.org/workers-rights

ARE YOU SIGNED UP ?

Make sure you're getting the latest campaign updates and urgent actions direct to your inbox.

Sign up to our email list at waronwant.org/get-updated

