

DECEMBER 2025

REGIONAL INTERNATIONAL FORUM
NEWSLETTER



LA SOLIDARIDAD CON NICARAGUA CONTINUA

OUR REGION HAS HAD ONGOING LINKS
WITH NICARAGUAN TRADE UNIONS FOR A
NUMBER OF YEARS

This has involved many activities including reciprocal delegations to each others countries in order to share knowledge and experience.

In November/December this year we are sending 3 members to meet our sister unions:



Edoardo Fusi—West Midlands Combined Authority UNISON, Sarah Gee - City of Wolverhampton UNISON, Louise Richards - NSCAG, and Nadieh Pourian - Birmingham UNISON)

There have been two previous Regional delegations to Nicaragua in 2015 and 2019:



2025 delegates said:

"I am eager to learn about Labour Rights and economic development in Nicaragua and as an Occupational Therapist, learn about their occupational performance (how they help individuals over come challenges to improve engagement in valued occupation)"

- Nadieh Pourian, Birmingham UNISON.

"In a world where fake news is the norm I really look forward to learning the truth about the country and the Sandinista government first hand."

- Edoardo Fusi, West Midlands Combined Authority UNISON.

"As an environmentalist, I am very interested to learn of the food and energy security in Nicaragua and will be keen to promote any useful information gleaned for UNISONs year of Green Activity 2026"

- Sarah Gee, City of Wolverhampton UNISON.

The delegation will provide a full report back to the Regional International Forum and Regional Council.

SOLIDARITY WITH NICARAGUA CONTINUES

NICARAGUAN VISITORS WE HAVE WELCOMED TO THE REGION IN RECENT YEARS (their youthful age is worth noting, the average age of a Nicaraguan trade unionist is 33 - ours is 55!)



Regional International Forum Chair goes job-share:

The role will now be shared between Dave Auger and Leo Morgado

Leo introduces himself below

"I am a Chilean-British trade unionist and I have been local government worker for twenty-five years. I came to the UK with my family as a refugee in the 1970s, escaping a dictatorship that tortured and "disappeared" many people including those in trade unions. Internationalism doesn't take our focus away from domestic matters. A global fight for justice and freedom unites and inspires us to strive for changes in the UK.

We cannot fight for better pay in the UK, while UK companies exploit workers abroad. We cannot demand better school and health services for children, while schools and hospitals have been bombed in Palestine and our politicians and media justify the killing of children by Israel with weapons that we supply. We cannot say we support women workers, while we allow sexual violence in Sudan and the rest of the world. Whether it is people with disabilities and LGBT+ our words of support must also be followed with action.

As the old trade union saying goes, "An injury to one is an injury to all."

Leo Mogardo - Joint Chair, UNISON West Midlands International Forum





The British Public and the Sudanese Cause: A Shift in Awareness

In recent months, the British public has shown growing interest in the Sudanese cause - a notable change after years in which information about Sudan was distorted, incomplete, or filtered through unreliable and biased sources. Today, the narrative is shifting. More and more people in the United Kingdom are seeking the truth through independent outlets and credible Sudanese voices that present the reality as it is — away from political manipulation and misinformation.



The Sudanese diaspora in Britain has played a pivotal role in this transformation. Through demonstrations, public events, and awareness campaigns in London and other major cities, Sudanese communities have succeeded in redefining the conflict for international audiences. They have made it clear that what is unfolding in Sudan is not a mere internal power struggle, but a deliberate war waged against the state, its institutions, and its people - a campaign aimed at fragmentation and collapse.

This growing awareness within British society represents a crucial political and humanitarian opportunity — one that must be leveraged to pressure decision-makers in London, Brussels, and Washington to adopt firmer and fairer positions regarding the atrocities and violations faced by the Sudanese people. What is needed today is not sympathy alone, but a principled political stance - one that upholds Sudan's unity, supports its people's right to peace and stability, and confronts those who finance and perpetuate this war

We therefore call upon the British public; citizens, institutions, and parliamentarians alike - to take a moral and political stand in support of justice and peace in Sudan. The Sudanese people are fighting for their freedom and survival, for a civil and independent state free from militias and foreign interference. History will remember those who stood for truth and humanity when it mattered most.

The Voice of Sudanese Abroad

On behalf of Sudanese communities across the United Kingdom, we affirm that our struggle is not only one of arms, but one of consciousness, sovereignty, and will. Our message to the world is clear: Sudan deserves to be heard and seen — not as a humanitarian file or a proxy battlefield, but as a nation striving for dignity, justice, and freedom.

Supporting the Sudanese people at this moment is not merely an act of compassion; it is a moral and political obligation for all who believe in justice and truth.



The Forum welcomed Emily Mcindoe and Tony Luna from Music for Hope, a community music project for young people from the Bajo Lempa of El Salvador,

using participatory music as a tool for community Development.

Music for Hope was originally designed to give youths who were suffering the trauma of recent civil-war an alternative creative focus. It's initial goal soon became one of generating self-perpetuating, non-violent culture amongst young people in a national and regional context of ever-increasing social violence and criminality. The project participants have worked over the past two decades to counter the ever-worsening cycle of violence against young people in the region.

Music for Hope, set up to help youth cope with the trauma of war and displacement, quickly became dedicated to generating an alternative, non-violent youth culture, with solidarity and friendship as core virtues, shored-up by the discipline required to learn and perform music.

Music for Hope empowers youth in non-violent, self and group-expression, thereby undermining the discourses of violence that atomise and silence people, especially youth, through fear and stigmatisation.

The reasons for the development of Music for Hope's aims and the continued need for the project have to do with the ongoing social conflict in El Salvador. The extreme social marginalisation of a significant proportion of the population (especially in the Bajo Lempa region) which was one of the key factors that led to the civil war, still hasn't properly been addressed (if at all). But that fundamental issue has been made exponentially worse by the gang violence that's become so endemic throughout the Central American region.



This is the contemporary context in which Music for Hope now operates, so it's primary purpose has shifted from that of helping young people overcome the trauma of violence and dislocation – which was its original aim – to that of providing a safe, neutral space in the communities for children and young people to spend time together, learn new skills (through music), and draw them away from the culture of violence that's so prominent in the region. If they're involved in the music project, they won't be involved in the gangs, and this considerably lessens the danger that they'll be targeted by gang members themselves or by death squads... *(Continued next page)*



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But there's an outcome of the project that's much further-reaching than this, and it's the civic formation of young people in a culture that holds non-violence as a core-principle.



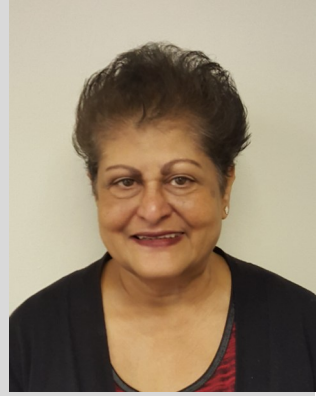
The four music teachers for Music for Hope (who are local and themselves were trained by the project in its early years) don't just teach classes and coach bands, but they also take on mentoring and even parental roles for the youngsters who participate in the project; they facilitate other non-musical activities that help nurture a sense of companionship as well as civic duty. The games they play and activities they carry out strengthen the social bonds that are already forming as a result of the music practices, and the result is better music but also stronger cohesion, confidence, and ultimately, more stable lives for the boys, girls and young women and men who participate in the project.

**MUSIC FOR HOPE CAN BE FOUND ON FACEBOOK
AND INSTAGRAM**

NASIM BALI

Sadly in 2025 we said goodbye to a long time supporter of the Forum - Nasim Bali who sadly died after a long term illness.

A childcare practitioner and a member of UNISON for 20 years, Nasim had been the Branch International Officer of Telford LG Branch for 11 years and will be sadly missed.



Branch International Officer Training



Last year we successfully ran a 2 day training course for Branch International Officers

We are hoping to run it again in 2026

No dates have been agreed as yet but if you would be interested in attending such a course please email m.price@unison.co.uk

FORUM MEETINGS 2026

**ALL MEETINGS ARE HYBRID (LIVERY STREET/TEAMS)
FOR DETAILS PLEASE EMAIL M.PRICE@UNISON.CO.UK**

- **Wednesday, 25 February**
- **Wednesday, 6 May**
- **Wednesday, 9 September**
- **Wednesday, 11 November**

INTRODUCTION TO SPANISH AND LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

Unfortunately the above planned 6 week course, which we were very excited about has been delayed due to the tutor being unwell.

As we feel the tutor is an integral part of the course, we decided rather than seek a replacement, we would delay until he is well. Further details will follow.



We are pleased to share a huge campaign victory. The 40,000 blank arrest warrants that were launched by factory owners to stop workers from organising on the streets in Bangladesh have finally been dismissed. Two years ago on the streets of Dhaka, lines of police aimed their loaded guns at crowds of striking garment workers. Protest chants mingled with the smoke from burning tyres, as thousands of people marched through the streets. The protests were a direct response to the news that garment workers would be paid a poverty wage 12,500 taka (£90) – roughly half the monthly Living Wage that trade unions wanted. With the tyrannical Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina governing Bangladesh the protests fell on deaf ears and the police opened fire killing four garment workers.



In the aftermath of the protests garment workers faced unprecedented attacks on their workplace freedoms and civil liberties. Thousands of people were arrested and 40,000 blank arrest warrants were filed by factory bosses. The fact that at any moment, anyone's name could be added to a blank warrant, created a climate of fear designed to stop people from unionising.

Yet this story is one of victory. A year later, revolution was sparked in Bangladesh by students calling for economic justice and social change. Hope arrived with a new interim government in charge. Trade unionists continued to fight to have this injustice overturned.

Labour Behind the Label worked hard to push for the cases to be dropped. We repeatedly lobbied 14 brands linked to the cases to get the charges dropped. Over 800 of you sent petitions.

Alongside the Rana Plaza Solidarity collective we organised the 'Wages Not Warrants' protests which saw huge crowds and drummers take to Oxford Street fashion stores, and shop actions in Manchester. We worked to build support with British trade unions, pushing the Bangladeshi embassy to act. The real breakthrough came from the work of Bangladeshi unionists negotiating with the interim government to act unilaterally. Finally this autumn, we were able to declare that the cases have been finally dismissed.

We must all be proud to have supported our friends and comrades in Bangladesh through this unprecedented struggle. Thank you to everyone who took part.

URGENT ACTION NEEDED: AMAZON OPEN THE BOX!



Send Amazon a letter to demand they take responsibility for the people who make the clothes the clothes they sell:



AID FOR THE CARIBBEAN A4C



Our work focuses on sending medical supplies to local hospitals and community non-governmental organisations in the Caribbean. Particularly Cuba

We also donate mobility aids for older people, provide food and clothing to communities in need, and supply schools with educational materials.

Poverty remains a serious challenge in many Caribbean countries - but you can help make a difference.

We urgently need medical supplies such as urinary bags, catheters, stoma bags, wound care products, syringes, and similar essentials.

Mobility aids and assistive tools are also in high demand, including wheelchairs, walkers, commodes, and adult nappies.

In addition, we welcome donations of non-perishable food items, clothing, and general equipment to support those most in need.

We are expanding our network of collection sites across UK cities and urgently need volunteers to offer their houses as collection sites as well as help collecting, sorting, and transporting donated items to our final storage locations.

We are also seeking volunteers who are travelling to the Caribbean and would be willing to carry an extra bag of donations - every effort helps deliver vital supplies to those who need them most.

Volunteering with us is a meaningful way to make a real difference.

Appeal - Help us to raise £15K

The Quisicuaba Project, officially known as the Cabildo Quisicuaba Socio-Cultural Community Project, is an initiative based in the Los Sitios neighbourhood, Havana, Cuba. The project aims to strengthen the community's responsible participation in matters related to culture, health, and education.

Quisicuaba has grown into a social reintegration program with a strong focus on vulnerable groups. These include the elderly, children and youth from dysfunctional families, abused women, former inmates, single mothers, black women, individuals experiencing domestic violence, people living with HIV and their families, and victims of gender-based violence. Many individuals who seek assistance from Quisicuaba face challenges such as addiction, malnutrition, poor health, and family-related issues - all of which have been exacerbated by the current economic crisis.

Quisicuaba faces ongoing transportation challenges, spending thousands of dollars each month on truck rentals to move food from fields to the city and distribute donations. Owning a truck would free up these funds for social programs.





As part of its long time support for JFC we invited Nick McWilliams, Campaigns Director to update us on the situation. JFC was set up in 2002 by the British trade union movement to support Colombian civil society in its struggle for human rights, labour rights, peace and social justice.

All JFC work is carried out in response to the demands of poor partners in Colombia: the political activists, trade unionists, peasant organisations, human rights defenders, and other civil society groups who are on the front line in demanding peace and social justice.

JFC promotes links of solidarity between British and Irish trade unions and organisations in Colombia and gives a political voice internationally to Colombian civil society through our work in the British, Irish and EU Parliaments.

When JFC was set up it was in response to the oppression of trade unionists in Colombia which made it the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist.

JFC was directly involved in supporting the Havana Peace Process between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP.

In 2022 President Petro the first leftwing president ever elected in Colombia took office. The Left agenda of his party aiming at improving workers rights has faced hostility from the right and its allies in big business and the judiciary.

A Colombian president can only serve for one term and it has been a battle to see how much could be achieved before his term ends in 2026.

Ahead of the May 2026 presidential election, the candidate for Colombia's governing Historic Pact was determined in the progressive coalition's primary election on Sunday 26 October, with left-wing senator Iván Cepeda the clear preference after receiving 1.5 million of the 2.7 million votes cast.

This situates Cepeda as the Historic Pact's favoured successor to current president Gustavo Petro, with hopes that Cepeda will emerge as the presidential candidate of a broad front including centrist and other sectors in a contest against a likely candidate from the right or far-right of Colombian politics.

Cepeda is a historic representative of the Colombian victims' movement and is a victim himself - his father was assassinated in 1994.



Saturday 7 February 2026
Latin America Day
(Central London)

To express an interest or
for further information
Email:
daveauger61@hotmail.com