



## stop toxic racism

Richard Downs and Harry Nelson visited Melbourne as part of a national speaking tour against the Australian Government's military intervention targeting Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

They were keynote speakers at an anti-intervention march held on Friday 16 October from Gertrude Street in Fitzroy to Parliament.

Richard Downs is spokesperson for the Alyawarr people, who have walked off their community at Ampilatwatja against the NT Intervention and established a protest camp outside the boundaries of the "Prescribed Area". In mid July 150 people walked off the community in protest at housing conditions and the policies of the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Harry Nelson is a senior Warlpiri elder. His community of Yuendumu has also been at the forefront of resistance to the intervention, holding off the income management system for many months in 2008 and now refusing to sign long-term leases demanded by the Australian government.

The visit was organised by The Melbourne Anti-Intervention Collective, BRAG Black Rights Action Group and supported by AAWL. During the visit Richard and Harry were able to meet with a number of unions, and they received a very warm

welcome as well as expressions of solidarity and practical support.

The Australian government's NT Intervention is draconian. It has caused the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act. It is directly contravening laws and treaties to protect the civil and political rights of all Australians, including Aboriginal Australians, as well as contravening the UN Treaty on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.

The NT Intervention includes direct military control and conditions on Land Rights and funding across Aboriginal programs. Some Aboriginal community shops have gone broke as only some businesses are registered to accept ration cards. There are now separate checkout queues for Aboriginal people in some places. Controls on income and spending are selectively applied to Aboriginal people in a system that resembles Apartheid.

Richard and Harry pointed out to unions that it is very hypocritical for Prime Minister Rudd to say "Sorry" to Aboriginal people, and then organise and continue the racist NT Intervention. Richard Downs requested unions to continue to "fight institutional racism in Australia, and the implementation of policies and laws against our people to have their full rights restored".

**Restore the Racial Discrimination Act  
End the Intervention  
Land Rights Now**



# target companies



On 7 October AAWL held a public meeting on four target companies: Toyota, Posco, Unilever and Nestlé.

Target companies are defined as having five important characteristics:

1. They are strategic in the global industrial process.
2. They are large transnational corporations.
3. They have a history of union-busting activities.
4. There are sizeable genuine unions already present inside these companies.
5. They are already the target of campaigns for workers' rights.



## Toyota

Toyota Corporation was founded in 1937. It now has over 300,000 employees. Number 1 car company. 5th largest company in the world.

In the first 8 months of 2009, it produced over 4 million cars and trucks. This was a 35% decrease from the same period of the previous year. Toyota has factories in 26 countries, over 500 consolidated subsidiaries and over 200 affiliates.

Toyota is credited with having pioneered the 'just in time' production process. This can be defined as an inventory strategy that strives to increase profitability by reducing in-process inventory and associated carrying costs. It requires a high level of internal communications.

Toyota is also credited with having refined the 'Kaizen' method. Kaizen refers to a system of continuous improvement in all aspects of manufacturing and retail activities. This is usually associated with Continuous Improvement Teams of workers, which have the task of constantly increasing their productivity.

Toyota was also a pioneer in automation and internationalisation of manufacturing. Automation allows for labour costs to decrease and achieve a standard quality assurance level while a global production chain allows the company to situate itself in the cheapest labour markets and geographically convenient sites.

## Disputes

In the Philippines, the local workforce has been in dispute against the company since 2000 when Toyota refused to recognise the workers right to a collective agreement. Then, in 2001, Toyota sacked 233 workers. This dispute has attracted a lot of international solidarity and is still continuing.

In Australia, there was a solidarity strike in 2003 in support of a sacked delegate. More recently, this year industrial action occurred at a Toyota supplier of auto parts around wages and conditions.

In the last two years, the Canadian Auto Workers have had a number of disputes and wins at both car dealerships and at manufacturing plants around recognition of the union. In September of this year, a Toyota plant closed in California with the loss of 4,000 jobs.

In Venezuela, there is a current dispute on benefits.



The Pohang Iron and Steel Company, or

POSCO is the world's second largest steel maker. It has been the bedrock of Korea's industrial development over the past 40 years. It had revenues of US\$28 billion in 2005.

POSCO has been involved in bitter and protracted disputes with its own workers. Many unionists have been jailed during these disputes. POSCO is also involved in major land disputes in India.

**australia asia worker links - workers change the world**  
po box 45 carlton south victoria 3053 australia tel: + 61 3 9663 7277 email: aawl@aawl.org.au web: aawl.org.au

# target companies...



Unilever

## Unilever

Unilever is a multinational corporation, formed of British and Dutch parentage, that owns many of the world's consumer product brands in foods, beverages, cleaning agents and personal care products.

While Unilever directly employs 174,000 people, many more people work for the company as casualised contractors. Unilever had worldwide revenues of €40.5 billion in 2008.

### Casual workers

The company receives a lot of criticism due to the malpractice and their treatment of workers. For example, a violent attack against workers in Unilever in Khanewal, Pakistan was instigated by contractors. The attack occurred during a workers campaign for the right to direct, permanent jobs.

This follows the IUF's complaint to the OECD that Unilever's massive use of casual labour at Khanewal violates the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

On early October, unions NSW (representing trade unions in the state of New South Wales) led a protest at the Australasian headquarters of Unilever in Sydney in support of the casual Lipton workers in Pakistan. Members from fraternal unions - the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and IUF affiliates the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and the Australian Workers Union (AWU) - joined the protest.

### Environment

Unilever claims to be an environmentally responsible company. However their record in pollution and health & safety is disastrous. Kodaikanal in India is still contaminated with mercury and the former workers and families from the closed Unilever thermometer factory still

experience terrible consequences. Unilever is also causing forest destruction and speeding up climate change by buying palm oil from companies which are destroying Indonesia's rainforests to make way for palm oil. Unilever are the biggest users of palm oil in the world.

Greenpeace has demanded that all companies involved in palm oil production to commit to stopping further deforestation by supporting a moratorium on all rainforest conversion.



## Nestlé

Established in 1866 in Switzerland.

It started its chocolate business in 1904.

It started making milk powder in 1921. In 1938 Nescafe was first produced. Nestlé now markets 8,500 brands and 30,000 products. It operates 511 factories in 86 countries with a workforce of around 253,000.

It has joint ventures with L'Oreal, Coca-Cola and Colgate-Palmolive.

Total sales in 2008: 98 billion Swiss Francs.

Net profit in 2008: 9.2 billion Swiss Francs.

### Disputes

Hong Kong: The company launched an aggressive assault on the union by suspending the union president. Eventually due to mass action, negotiations ensued and the union was recognised.

Brazil: In 1989 workers at a chocolate plant in Cacapava went on strike. The workers complained of poor working conditions including discrimination against women, lack of protective clothing and inadequate safety. The company sacked forty of the workers, including the strike organisers.

Colombia: 12 Nestlé union activists are among the list of Colombian unionists who have been killed by unidentified death squads.

Philippines: Seven years ago 600 workers at the Cabuyao factory went on strike. Despite winning court orders, the disputes continues with no justice towards the workers. There has been much police repression of the workers on the picket lines and 23 activists have been killed by unidentified death squads.

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# indonesia solidarity visit



In early October, AAWL had the good fortune of meeting with Vivi Widyawati, affiliated with the Indonesian Trade Union, GSPB (Solidarity Alliance for Labour Struggle).

Vivi is the national coordinator of Perempuan Mahardhika Women (JNPM) Indonesia - an Indonesian

women's liberation organisation consisting of local women's committees, coordinating bodies and women's sections of labour, peasant and urban poor organisations committed to the liberation of women.

The JNPM advocates on behalf of women workers who experience discrimination or violence, for example sexual harassment in the factory.

In collaboration with GSPB, the JNPM organises in support of the main demands of the workers movement in Indonesia: against the contract labour system, outsourcing and sackings.

Due to the widespread deregulation of the labour market most workers in Indonesia today are contract or casual workers. For example in the Cakung industrial zone in Jakarta where Vivi works, more than 80% of workers are contract or casual.

During Vivi's visit to Australia, AAWL organized a labour movement solidarity visit program. Many of the workers that Vivi organizes are in the textiles industry, or in food and beverage.

We met with the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, the Trades Hall Women's Committee, the Geelong Trades and Labour

Council and we also visited a construction site in South Yarra thanks to the CFMEU and the ETU.

We also conducted extensive interviews with Vivi on AAWL's radio program, Asia Pacific Currents, and you can download the podcast. Visit the AAWL website at [aawl.org.au/radio](http://aawl.org.au/radio) and follow the links.

This visit was very valuable and we learned a lot about the political and industrial environment in Indonesia.

We have built valuable relationships with the GSPB, and look forward to future collaborations.



Indonesian workers rally in East Java - July 09

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