



[John Moloney](#)

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## **Myanmar solidarity conference hears powerful testimony**

John reports from our 20 April conference on the need for UK unions to build solidarity with the trade union movement in Myanmar.

Passed at last year's annual delegate conference, motion A296 called on PCS to 'Work with the Myanmar unions in their struggle to win democracy and trade union rights in Myanmar'.

As a result of this motion, PCS organised a [one-day conference](#) with support from No Sweat, Global Women's Strike and the Peace and Justice Project for the UK trade union movement to engage with the issues of trade union repression and human rights abuses in Myanmar.

The conference, which saw a fantastic outpouring of support for workers in Myanmar, heard from Burmese trade union leaders on the situation of the workers' movement in Myanmar since the coup in 2021, covered how the Burmese people have resisted the military dictatorship, and debated what trade unions in the UK can do to support them.

We listened to powerful testimony not only about the torture of political prisoners and the kidnapping and pressganging of civilians to serve for the military through forced conscription. We listened to the important work that the trade unions are doing to hide people and provide vital medical aid and support to those released from prison.

In light of this, we have launched a crowdfunder. This [Solidarity Fund](#) will raise money to be sent directly to the trade unions on the frontline in support of their

struggle against the military regime.

### **Powerful testimony**

We heard powerful testimony of the suffering of the Burmese people and trade union activists in particular as well as their determined organising for survival and liberation. The Karen Women's Organisation that supports refugees from all ethnic groups, highlighted the situation, needs and contributions of women and children.

Dr Maung Zarni put the struggle of the Burmese people in the context of their colonial past and Britain's imperial conquests. He also pointed out its relationship to the present struggles of people around the world, not least in Palestine.

Our keynote speaker was Khaing Zar Aung, a Burmese trade union leader (president of the Industrial Workers Federation and treasurer of the Confederation of Trade Unions Myanmar) who renewed the union call for greater economic sanctions and for international fashion brands to leave Myanmar. She was joined by campaigners Laura Watson of Global Women's Strike and Jay Kerr of No Sweat, both of which make up the [Myanmar Military: Never in Fashion](#) campaign in the UK.

TUC Vice president Maria Exall opened the event while former leader of the Labour Party - and the founder of the Peace and Justice Project - Jeremy Corbyn gave the final remarks. We take to heart Jeremy Corbyn's comment that unions are often better at passing motions than following up with concrete actions.

Moving forward, we would like to see more action taken among trade unions in the UK and urge all PCS members to join our campaign. Please consider donating to the solidarity fund or bringing a motion to your union branch or conference.

[All the materials that were given out in the conference packs on the day are available online.](#) These materials include a draft motion.

Please get in touch with us at [ags@pcs.org.uk](mailto:ags@pcs.org.uk) if you would like to get more involved in building solidarity with trade unions in Myanmar.

Read more about why [international solidarity is a trade union issue](#) on PCS Knowledge.