

About The Olof Palme International Center

The Olof Palme International Center works with international development co-operation and the forming of public opinion surrounding international political and security issues.

The Palme Center was established in 1992 by the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Cooperative Union (KF). Today the Palme Center has 28 member organizations within the labour movement.

The centre works in the spirit of the late Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, reflected by the famous quotation: "Politics is wanting something. Social Democratic politics is wanting change."

Olof Palme's conviction that common security is created by co-operation and solidarity across borders, permeates the centre's activities.

The centre's board is chaired by Lena Hjelm-Wallén, former foreign minister of Sweden. Viola Furubjelke is the centre's Secretary General, and Birgitta Silén is head of development aid. There are 13 members of the board, representing member organisations.

The commitment of these member organisations is the core of the centre's activities. Besides the founding organisations, they include the Workers' Educational Association, the tenants' movement, and individual trade unions. As popular movements and voluntary organisations, they are represented in all Swedish municipalities and at many workplaces. An individual cannot be a member of the Palme Center, but the member organisations together have more than three million members.

In Sweden, the centre carries out comprehensive information and opinion-forming campaigns on issues concerning international development, security and international relations. This includes a very active schedule of seminars and publications, both printed and an e-mail newsletter.

International development co-operation is concentrated on six regions: The Balkans, Eastern Europe and Russia, Latin America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and southern Africa.

The Palme Center and its member organizations are involved in approximately 450 international development projects a year. These range from civic education and organisational structure, to human rights and reconciliation projects.

The centre has a framework agreement with the Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA), which finances the international development projects of the member organisations. Most projects are carried out directly by the member organisations, which together with their local co-operation partners are responsible for project planning, initiation and evaluation. This helps to create very strong local ties. The centre carries out relatively few international development projects on its own, except in the Balkans.

The centre also administers the International Solidarity Fund (the I-Fund), which is the labour movement's fund for international solidarity and development co-operation. All money collected by the I-Fund is used exclusively to support trade union and political development work.

The centre is located in central Stockholm. There are currently 35 employees.

Statutes of The Olof Palme International Center

THE OLOF PALME INTERNATIONAL CENTER - FOR DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE

1 Name and Head Office

The name of the association is the Olof Palme International Center.
The Head Office is located in Stockholm.

2 Objectives

The Olof Palme International Center works in the spirit of Olof Palme for democracy, human rights, and peace.

The Center is the Swedish labour movement's umbrella organisation for co-operation in international issues. Its task is to support the member organisations's international activities.

3 Activities

The Olof Palme International Center works through development co-operation and stimulating opinion. In co-operation with the member organisations the Center shall:

- support and stimulate the creation of free and democratic organisations which work for popular participation, global justice, and common security in different parts of the world; this through mutual and equal co-operation.
- provide relevant information on issues of democracy, human rights, and peace, as a source for the Swedish labour movement; as a foundation for studies, debate, and active stimulation of opinion.
- initiate and co-ordinate activities and fund-raising within the labour movement for democracy, human rights, and peace; this in a spirit of international solidarity.

4 Membership

The funding organisations of the Olof Palme International Center are the LO (the Swedish Trade Union Confederation), the SAP (the Swedish Social Democratic Party) and the KF (the Swedish Co-operative Union). In addition, national organisations directly related to, or which have links with these organisations are eligible for membership.

Applications for affiliation will be considered by the board and subjected to a vote by the General Assembly.

5 Affiliation Fees

The organisations affiliated to the Olof Palme International Center will pay an annual fee determined by the General Assembly. This fee will be calculated on the basis of membership figures on December 31 of the preceding year.

For affiliated organisations which do not have individual members or who are co-operatives or economic associations, the amount of the fee will be agreed on in consultations between the organisation and the board of the Olof Palme International Center. Any such agreements will be subjected to a vote of the General Assembly.

6 Organisation

The organs of the Olof Palme International Center are the General Assembly, the Board and the Executive Committee.

7 General Assembly

The General Assembly is the supreme authority of the Olof Palme International Center. Ordinary General Assemblies will be held in the second quarter of each year.

The LO, SAP and KF will each appoint five delegates to the General Assembly. Other affiliated organisations will each appoint one delegate.

Written notice to attend the General Assembly will be given at least thirty days in advance.

The agenda of the General Assembly will include the following items:

1. election of the official members of the Assembly
2. reports from the Board and the auditors
3. adoption of the reports and accounts of the Board
4. determination of affiliation fees
5. election of the President of the Board
6. election of members of the Board and deputies
7. election of auditors and deputies
8. election of the election committee
9. plan of activities and budget for the following year

Other issues which members wish to submit to the General Assembly must be communicated to the Board at least fourteen days in advance.

8 Extraordinary General Assemblies

Extraordinary General Assemblies may be convened whenever the Board deems it necessary. Notice to attend will follow the same procedure as for Ordinary General Assemblies.

Extraordinary General Assemblies will consider only the issue stated in the notification of attendance.

9 The Board

The Board's activities are directed by a group consisting of 13 members; LO, SAP and KF will propose two members each. The ABF (the Workers' Educational Association) will propose one member. The remaining member organisations will propose a total of six members. Deputies are proposed in the same number and according to the same distribution.

The Board is responsible for managing the affairs of the Olof Palme International Center.

The mandate of the Board will be for the term of one year.

The Board is obliged to present its report to the General Assembly.

10 The Management Committee

The Board shall appoint from its own members a Management Committee to take decisions on behalf of the Board on delegated matters.

11 The Labour Movement's International Solidarity Fund

The Center shall administer the Swedish Labour Movement's International Solidarity Fund. The Board is responsible for the management of the Fund's assets and determines its goals and objectives. The Board shall appoint a committee for the administration of the Fund's assets. The Committee shall serve for one year, and it shall report to the Board.

12 Secretariat

The Board is assisted by a Secretariat which deals with matters in hand and implements the decisions taken. The Secretariat will be headed by a Secretary General appointed by the Board.

13 Signing

The Olof Palme International Center is signed by the person or persons appointed by the Board.

14 Auditing

The Board's administration will be reviewed by two elected auditors before the meeting of the General Assembly. At least one of the auditors and his or her deputy will be a chartered accountant.

The auditor will present his or her report to the General Assembly, with a recommendation of approval or rejection of the Boards' administration.

The financial year will be the calendar year.

15 Alteration of Statutes

These Statutes may be altered by a decision of an Ordinary or Extraordinary General Assembly.

16 Dissolution

On dissolution of the Olof Palme International Center, its assets will be assigned to the funding organisations to be used according to the objectives of the Center. The assets of the International Solidarity Fund will be used according to the objectives of the International Solidarity Fund.

Activities of The Olof Palme International Center

- Development cooperation and party support

It is the vision of a better world that inspires the Palme Center's development cooperation, the vision of a peaceful world where democracy is the ideal and respect for the individual is the rule. A world where people are not the targets of oppression because of their political beliefs, religion or sexual orientation.

Solidarity is the driving force for our work, the desire to contribute to real results and concrete change. We believe that it is through contact and cooperation that lasting change is achieved. Our work is long-term and rests on the local desire for reform. It is about true solidarity, which liberates the recipient rather than creating a dependence on assistance.

Every year the Palme Center and its member organisations carry out around 300 development projects around the world. The extent of our work has grown rapidly in recent years. What characterises our projects is that they contribute to political and social change, and that respect for human rights is pervasive. Our target group is the poorest of the poor, which also includes poverty in power, the inability to influence one's daily life. The Palme Center also has projects in areas marked by conflicts and political and social instability, such as the western Balkans and the Middle East.

We work together with popular movements and other forces striving to strengthen civil society. We believe that broad popular involvement, through strong trade unions and political parties, are key tools in the long-term work to strengthen and protect human rights.

The Palme Center and its member organisations don't come with ready solutions, but instead with support that is adapted to actual needs. In some cases this involves relatively small contributions, while major projects can go on for longer periods and can involve many participants. This could be financing cooperative projects for women or the difficult task of creating free trade unions in former Communist countries. It can range from education programmes for people taking part in free elections for the first time to creating a coordinated plan to meet the threat of HIV/AIDS.

Cooperation means that a Swedish organisation and a local organisation carry out the project together. Projects often begin on a small scale, with joint planning, defining needs, strategies, and goals. Often the project becomes a force which contributes to real changes in society at large. By cooperating people gain the tools they need to continue to work after the project comes to an end.

Everyone grows and learns in the encounter between those involved in the project, both those in Sweden and those in other parts of the world. An important aspect is ensuring that the experience of new Swedes is taken advantage of. This is how we worked in the Balkans, and this is how we continue to work with organisations, in Iraq for example. By taking advantage of their linguistic abilities, their knowledge of Sweden and Swedish popular movements, and their knowledge of their own countries of origin, we can increase the pace of transformation.

The Palme Center is also responsible for the Social Democrats' democracy assistance to political parties, which is intended to support the creation of democratic political parties. Sweden has long experience in organising elections, building up organisations, and achieving gender equality in political activities. This is an important part of our work to strengthen democracy.

Board of the Olof Palme International Center

Chairman

Lena Hjelm-Wallén SAP

12 members of the board

Anders Ferbe IF Metall
Therese Hulthén LO/H&R
Leif Håkansson LO
Lars-Anders Häggström Handels
Nina Jarlbäck KF
Ann Linde SAP
Leif Linde KF
Anne Ludvigsson S-kvinnor
Inga-Lena Wallin Kommunal
Peter Weiderud SKSF
Anders Selin ABF

13 deputy members of the board

Urban Ahlin SAP
Elsie Bäcklund-Sandberg ABF
Kristina Guffars S-kvinnor
Anders Larsson LO
Björn Lind SEKO
Lars Lindgren Transport
Sara Heelge Vikmång Unga Örnar
Mikael Sterbäck Pappers
Ulf Carmesund SKSF
Lennart Hjalmarsson KF
Veronica Palm SAP
Magdalena Streijffert S-studenter
Keth Thapper LO

Auditors

Anita Modin SAP
Lena Svensson, auktoriserad Ö P W C

Deputy auditors

Bo Abrahamsson LO

Åke Danielsson, auktoriserad Ö P W C

About Olof Palme

Olof Palme was born on the 30th of January 1927 as the youngest child in a well-to-do family. His father died when he was only seven years old. He was a sickly child who had much time to read, and who learnt several languages very early in life.

In spite of his upper middle class origin, Olof Palme became one of the Swedish labour movement's strongest leaders.

His political career started in 1953, when Tage Erlander, the then Prime Minister, employed him as his personal secretary. Already at that time Palme had formed the ideas that were to mark his political work: the elimination of colonialism; the right of national self-determination; the need for a new economic world order; the fight against racism; the dream of equal rights; the democratisation of education.

Olof Palme remained a reformer all his life, pursuing traditional Swedish social democratic policies. He believed in a strong society where full employment and the public sector were the two most important means to increase equality between different social groups as well as between sexes. One of his basic ideas was the concept of a general welfare policy: everybody, regardless of their resources, should benefit from the welfare system. This would maintain solidarity and the will to pay taxes, and also help prevent the rich obtaining private solutions out of reach of the poor.

The close friendship and co-operation with Tage Erlander continued through the years, as Olof Palme was made Minister without portfolio (1963), Minister of Communication (1965), and Minister of Education (1967). It was only logical that he, at the resignation of Erlander in 1969, was elected Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, thus becoming Prime Minister of Sweden.

At the beginning of the 1970's the Swedish welfare system reached its peak, and the concept known as "The Swedish Model" was coined. At the end of the decade, however, western democracies in general were beginning to experience what was sometimes called a crisis of democracy. Sweden was not spared. Olof Palme envisioned a renewal of democracy by reforming working life. Many new laws concerning the labour market were passed during these years.

Olof Palme considered the fight against unemployment to be the most important task of social democracy, and much to the irritation of new 'liberal' and single-minded free market advocates he defended a strong society with strong labour unions and general welfare to the very end.

Both outside and inside Sweden, however, it was Palme's international interest and commitment that made him known and esteemed. His international interest and social conscience were awakened in early years, when as a student he travelled through large parts of the United States and Far East. (For his international work, see a separate article "Olof Palme and his international role".)

Olof Palme was basically a reformer, but he was also one of our country's great speakers and agitators. His passionate commitment and challenging terminology aroused strong feelings both inside and outside Sweden. Some individuals disliked him to the point of hatred and pursued a virtual persecution of his person. But the majority of Swedes as well as immigrants and refugees sensed his strong solidarity with the social and economic aspirations of the Swedish people. The news of his murder cast a deep gloom over the country.

Olof Palme and his wife were walking home without security guards from the cinema late in the evening of February 28th 1986, when a man stepped out of the dark and shot him. To this day the murder remains unsolved.

Olof Palme was a man of strong convictions. "Peace was his most important task", said Ingvar Carlsson, his friend and successor, at his funeral, "because he saw war as the greatest threat to humankind."