HOW CAN YOU HELP VENEZUELA?

August 18, 2026



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By Sonia Alio

July 24 marked one month since the devastating double earthquake struck Venezuela. As our hearts remain with those who are no longer with us, survivors are now facing the difficult task of rebuilding their lives. I wanted to share the names of a few organizations for those who may wish to support the ongoing recovery efforts. Direct donations to reputable nonprofits can make a meaningful difference.

HelpThemDirectly.org centralizes and verifies fundraising campaigns for earth-

quake victims, creating a trusted platform where people around the world can support affected families directly. More than 100 families are currently listed, and their stories are heartbreaking. Each fundraiser is carefully verified, giving donors confidence that their support will reach those in need. No donation is too small. Contributions help cover search efforts, burial expenses, hospital bills and basic needs and help families begin rebuilding their lives.

Global Empowerment Mission/Venezuela Earthquake has been an exceptionally effective disaster relief organization, with a strong boots-on-the-ground presence delivering aid directly to those affected by the earthquake. From coordinating the collection of donations to warehousing, shipping and distributing essential supplies, the organization has demonstrated remarkable efficiency and commitment at every stage of the relief effort.

World Central Kitchen/Chefs for Venezuela. Preparing more than 10,000 meals each day, World Central Kitchen (WCK) recently marked one month of operations by serving more than one million fresh, nutritious meals to earthquake survivors and rescue teams. WCK has been a shining example of compassion and efficiency throughout this crisis, and its teams remain on the ground providing critical support to those in need. I encourage you to visit WCK's Instagram page to gain a better appreciation of the scale of their operation and the extraordinary impact they continue to make.

Fundacion Juan Pablo 2 Santos is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping individuals in need of prosthetic limbs regain their mobility and independence. Working in partnership with the Hospital Ortopédico Infantil, the foundation provides hope and life-changing support to those whose lives have been affected by injury or limb loss.

I encourage you to visit the foundation's Instagram page to learn more about its work. To support its mission, click on "Donaciones" to access the PayPal donation link.

RAC: Red de Apoyo Canino is one of the many organizations leading animal rescue

efforts in the aftermath of the earthquake. Their team has been at the core of the affected areas, providing assistance to animals who have lost their families, become separated from their owners or were already living on the streets. Their networks mobilized all of their programs, including pet food bank, basic veterinary care and surgeries, foster home network and adoption programs.

I sincerely appreciate you taking the time to read this article. I encourage you to consider making a direct donation to one of these verified, independent and nonpolitical organizations. If donating is not possible, simply sharing this information with others can also make a meaningful difference.

Thank you for your kindness, compassion, and support.

Sonia Alio has been a Coop member since 2002. Born in Venezuela, she has lived in Brooklyn since 1994. She has family and friends in Venezuela who lived through the recent double earthquake and its consequences.Through them, she can attest that the situation is dire. Much of the assistance has come through personal initiatives and organizations that provide direct aid or have developed the experience and networks needed to deliver effective relief despite the country's challenging political and economic conditions. Sonia works as a set designer for film, television, and corporate events, and teaches as a guest in two NYC high schools.

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: IN GRATITUDE

August 18, 2026



July 28, 2026

By Jason Weiner, Membership Coordinator

Six years ago, in March of 2020, we Coop members and employees were presented with one of the greatest challenges of our existence. We made the extraordinary decision to shut down the member labor system to protect members from the pandemic as best as we could. The Coop then had to figure out the sudden worker gap. The paid staff were not going to be able to respond to the many needs of Coop members alone—members who still required access to our food—so we put out a call for members who were willing to join the full-time staff on a part-time basis.

These temporary workers filled in all the traditional roles of member labor: unloading trucks, stocking shelves, working in food processing, running checkouts and cashier-

ing. They joined the Coop staff at time of absolute uncertainty.

> THAT TIME FEELS LIKE A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, BUT IT IS ONLY THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY SINCE WE SAID GOODBYE TO THE TEAM OF TEMPORARY WORKERS WHO HELPED US KEEP THIS PLACE ALIVE.

There were no vaccines. We had limited access to PPE and other supplies. We were building social-distancing spaces out of cobbled-together plexiglass and shower curtains. We rotated out and separated workers to create as much safety as possible. We limited entry to the Coop way more than the carrot tags we've become accustomed to. We ate lunches quickly to limit moments our mouths and noses were exposed. We sanitized every surface hundreds of times a week. But through it all, we built connection. We shared our laughter and trauma. We developed friendships and foundations for what would come after.

Those additional workers allowed the full-time staff the breathing room we needed to think. The room to envision and create new systems that allowed member labor to reset and restart into a more equitable and user-friendly way for all.

That time feels like a thousand years ago, but it is only the fifth anniversary (July 2021) since we said goodbye to the team of temporary workers who helped us keep this place alive. Some of those workers found a calling to stay on staff and are now part of the crew you see here on a regular basis during your shifts. Some returned to working shifts when we restarted our vital member-labor system. Some went on to other adventures far from the Coop in the new world, post-shutdown.

I wanted to take a moment to once again thank all those that responded to the call during one of the most difficult times in the Coop's history. We've had over 10,000 new members join the Coop since then, and every one of us owes the present opportunities we have to cooperate to that temporary team that became essential to our

survival.

MEMBER SUBMISSION: GIVE PEAS A CHANCE

August 18, 2026



June 16, 2026

By Cynthia Blayer

“With every true friendship, we build more firmly the foundations on which the peace of the whole world rests.”

—Mahatma Gandhi

In March, I participated in the *Commission on the State of Women (CSW70)* at the United Nations. This global gathering is focused on advancing gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women. Related topics, such as education, cultural bias, domestic violence, environmental sustainability and war, were discussed. It was exhilarating to see thousands of people from all over the world coming together to share information and work towards a common goal. The annual March event is the largest one for the group, but throughout the year there are many other meetings, conversations, plans and initiatives among international organizations continuing to work together.

I was attending as a member of *Servas International*, a non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated to building peace through cross-cultural understanding and friendship, via a network of hosts and travelers who welcome others for day visits and home stays. *Servas* was founded after World War II by Bob Luitweiler, with the aim of creating a more peaceful society and preventing wars. Bob had been inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, who said, "With every true friendship, we build more firmly the foundations on which the peace of the whole world rests." At CSW70, people spoke about peace not being just the absence of war, but a society where racial, cultural and gender bias have been alleviated and people can live together harmoniously.

During the conference, I hosted a *Servas* visitor from Bolivia. It was an opportunity to learn about life in another part of the world. My visitor showed me photos and videos of her family and neighborhood in Cochabamba and how her son and daughter participated in local cultural events, dancing the traditional Bolivian dances they had learned in childhood. We compared notes on our lives, cultures and traditions, and I was invited to visit Bolivia in the future.

The Food Coop, like *Servas*, includes people from many cultures and countries. The Coop can and should be a place that is free of racial, cultural and gender bias, building an underpinning for a peaceable society. How can we better promote cross cultur-

al understanding and friendship? How can we remember that “cooperation” is key to being a cooperative? Without cooperation and teamwork, how are we any different than countries at war?

Coop members had more opportunities to get to know each other before the pandemic. The meeting room served as a focal point for in-person films, cooking classes, game nights, guest speakers discussing environmental issues and much more. While it is good to have virtual options, in-person events are an important part of building a peaceable community.

Many food cooperatives have a member engagement committee. These committees evaluate member engagement within their coops and help to foster more involvement. They determine what might be blocking engagement and find ways to build community. Just as peace is not just the absence of war but a consciously created peaceful society, a food coop can benefit by actively fostering cooperation and community, rather than assuming it is already there.

Cynthia Blayer, a longtime Coop member, has served on the Environmental Committee and as a board member of the Mid-Atlantic Food Cooperative Alliance (MAFCA).

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: INTRODUCING TWO OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE PLASTIC REDUCTION COMMITTEE

August 18, 2026



May 26, 2026

By Zoe Kaplan-Lewis and Lois Wilcken

Lois Wilcken

I joined the Coop in the summer of 1996, in part to learn about cooperatives and in part because I'm a longtime vegetarian with concerns about toxins in our food. I heard from friends that the Coop carried organic food at reasonable prices. As it turns out, toxic micro- and nanoparticles (MNPs) from plastic packaging shed into that nice clean food. I have some quality science I can share with you about that.

I have had a longtime, intuitive antipathy for plastics, and I can recall the rage I felt when my family got its first artificial holiday tree. I refused to decorate it—or even

look at it. I go back to when we drank soda through paper straws, so I know what's possible. We cannot turn back the clock, but we can do a lot better on plastic reduction than we are, and we can start with single-use plastics. We can do it in a cooperative spirit.



Dad shows Lois her first (real) Christmas tree.

Zoë Kaplan-Lewis

My love for food is inseparable from my experiences at the Park Slope Food Coop, like methodically picking out produce with my mom when I was a kid. It felt like the food was teaching me something—a deeper connection and appreciation for nature. Like that every orange is different—some have smooth skin, some have rough skin, and

those will have different tastes. I still love to pick an odd-looking piece of fruit and wonder what it will taste like, how it will compare to the others.

My love for food expanded into an appreciation for growers when I worked on Grindstone Farm, a supplier to the Coop. If you want to read about my experience, check out the *Linewaiters' Gazette* archives for an article my father wrote: "A Visit to Grindstone Farm," August 2, 2007.



Zoë at Grindstone Farm—a supplier to the Coop.

As plastic packaging became more common, I started to notice the plastic more than the food. It began as a sensory issue. Plastic packaging was difficult to open and created so much waste. As I learned more about the health hazards of plastic, I worried about it contaminating my food and affecting my body. I helped found the Plastic Re-

duction Committee because I believe we can make plastic-free, affordable food options more accessible to all Coop members.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON PLASTIC AT THE COOP

We created a survey for members' feedback on plastic use at the Coop. Over 70% of those who have filled out the survey so far report being at least moderately concerned about plastic use at the Coop, and nearly 40% are very or extremely concerned. Plastic packaging is impacting members' buying choices. As one member shared, "I love berries but hardly ever buy them because of the plastic containers."

Thank you to the 400+ members we have heard from so far. We feel your enthusiasm for plastic reduction and love your many great ideas! If you haven't filled out the survey yet, please take a few minutes to do so. We are accepting responses through the end of May. Access the survey here.

Our email: ReducePlasticPSFC@gmail.com

Zoe Kaplan-Lewis and Lois Wilcken are two founding members of the Plastic Reduction Committee, established in 2025.

MEMBER SUBMISSION: A CALL FOR JUSTICE—OUR PROPOSAL TO BOYCOTT ISRAELI PRODUCTS AT THE COOP

August 18, 2026



May 26, 2026

By Alyce Barr, Naomi Brussel and Rachel James

The authors are members of PSFC Members for Palestine and presenters of the proposal to boycott Israeli products. Our proposal text is the following:

“Until Israel complies with international law, including by ceasing unlawful discriminatory practices in its treatment of Palestinians, the Coop will not sell goods produced in Israel (pre-1967 borders) or in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”

We stand together with over 3,500 Coop members who have signed our petition in support of this boycott. For us personally, as Jews, this act of solidarity ties us to gen-

erations of progressive Jewish activism. Never again means never again for anyone!

The Coop is not “just a grocery store.” It is a dynamic and complex social organization. Generations of member-owners have worked to run the store and effect social change, guided and inspired by our Mission Statement, history, and current issues. Our mission mandates that the Coop oppose discrimination, respect the environment, and “seek to avoid products that rely on the exploitation of others.”

Our proposed boycott stands firmly within the Coop’s long and proud tradition of consumer boycotts, in which we joined forces with wider social justice movements. Examples include our boycott of Apartheid South Africa in 1973; a boycott of Pinochet’s dictatorship in Chile that same year; and solidarity with U.S. labor struggles like the United Farm Workers boycott. In 1993, we boycotted Colorado’s products due to its anti-LGBTQ+ laws; we supported strikes at Domino Sugar in 2001; and we voted 59% to boycott Tom Cat Bakery to protect workers from ICE in 2017, though the boycott was blocked by the anti-democratic 75% supermajority requirement for boycotts established the year prior.

Our proposed boycott is a response to the brutal apartheid regime Israel imposes on Palestinians. Similar to the former white supremacist government in South Africa, apartheid Israel uses separation walls, military checkpoints, mass surveillance, home demolitions, and land seizures to dominate Palestinian people. Israeli settlers, with government backing, regularly attack and kill Palestinians to establish settlements illegal under international law.

This long-standing expansionist policy, rooted in ethnic cleansing and dispossession, has escalated into a genocide in Gaza: at least 72,000 confirmed Palestinian deaths from direct attacks, with indirect deaths estimated to be four-times higher due to mass starvation, destruction of virtually all homes and essential infrastructure and a blockade of humanitarian aid. This is one of the worst mass atrocities of modern times, and the slaughter continues with direct U.S. government support.

The global, nonviolent Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was initiated by Palestinians in 2005. It calls for economic pressure to compel Israel to comply with international law. The BDS movement is rapidly expanding, with the UK Coop (6.3 million members) voting 73% yes to boycott alongside the Italian Coop Alleanza 3.0 (2.7 million) and Unicoop Firenze (1 million). Locally, our sister Greene Hill Food Coop voted for a boycott in 2024. Also in the city, the NYC public hospital system canceled its $4 million contract with Palantir, an Israeli military and ICE partner, while the Brooklyn Navy Yard evicted a supplier of drones to the Israeli military and ICE after intense public pressure.

Boycotts are proven, effective nonviolent tools. They were critical in securing victories across the U.S. Civil Rights and labor rights movements and in dismantling South African apartheid. Building on this powerful history, our Coop can send a clear message that Israel must adhere to international law. As Nelson Mandela explained in 1997, “Our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: EXPANDING THE DIALOGUE AT GENERAL MEETINGS—BUT ONLY ON TUESDAYS?

August 18, 2026



May 5, 2026

By Tim Hospodar

Hybrid meeting formats have enabled a larger fraction of the membership to join General Meetings on Tuesdays. The resulting attendance, however, cannot always speak freely due to time constraints. And members who are conflicted on Tuesday nights are not meaningfully accommodated simply through virtual connectivity. Hybrid solves for some accessibility issues, but it does not tackle the concern of members who have Tuesday conflicts or the compression of discussion that comes with growing participation.

At the February GM, during the agenda discussion about boycotts, someone noted that all members of the Board of Directors had their hands raised at the same time. I'll try not to take it personally, having deferred my allotted minutes during the Board Candidates presentation in favor of the boycott discussion, but the fact remains: The

majority of the Board, if not *all but one member*, did not have a chance to speak. This moment demonstrated the difficulty our meetings face under real time limitations, especially when agenda items generate deep and sincere engagement.

To be clear, this is not a critique of how meetings are chaired. The logistics of the GM have changed and the participant count has changed as well. When historians reference our Coop's earliest days, we recall that town hall–style meetings were proportionately smaller—much smaller—than the in-person attendance we can expect at Prospect Park's Picnic House. I'd also like to positively shout out prior GM discussions (July and October 2025), where members presented ideas around digital tools supporting asynchronous conversation. I am a huge fan of digital knowledge sharing and of those proposals. Still, I believe that approach only provides so much support for membership voice, whereas longer meetings enable greater face time.

What would a singular GM look like if it stretched beyond just one Tuesday night? I am not asking for different topics on different nights. I am suggesting that the Agenda Committee size and weigh agenda items in a way that ensures robust discussion is never truncated. This could mean that a meeting is continued across multiple weeknights. To avoid burdening the Agenda Committee, the necessary size of a meeting could also be informed by registration count. When an agenda item triggers a massive number of registrations (including both on-site and virtual preferences) it follows that a massive discussion should be expected and prepared for.

This is also why rotating or adding weeknights other than Tuesday matters. Again, hybrid addresses some accessibility concerns, but it does not resolve conflicts for members who simply cannot attend on Tuesday evenings. A cooperative meeting reveals consensus only after a diversity of voices are shared, and those voices can only be heard when time allows.

If this resonates with you, I invite members to continue discussion around digital communication tools (knowledge bases, discussion platforms, electronic voting and more), and to begin consideration of a redesigned General Meeting format that en-

ables greater participation—even experimentally.

Tim Hospodar is a member of the Coop's Board of Directors—as such he needs to hear as many voices of the membership as possible.