



ICTU Policy Motions on Palestine

ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference 2007

Implementing ICTU Policy on Palestine.

This ICTU Biennial Conference is outraged at the continued human rights abuses being suffered by the Palestinian people. We particularly note the following:

- the continued occupation and destruction of Palestinian lands and Palestinian homes in breach of the Geneva Convention and numerous United Nations resolutions;
- the continuation of mass arrests of torture and of extra-judicial killings;

the horrific assaults on the population of Gaza – the frequent killings of civilians including on a mass scale as at Beit Hanun, or the family of Houda Galia wiped out as they sat on the beach, the enclosure of the people of Gaza with razor wire and electrified fences, where they are subjected to frequent invasion and constant surveillance – including the sinister unmanned drones targeting for bombing raids, or the over-flights of ear-shattering jet fighters; I the deliberate and illegal destruction of civilian infrastructure including electricity and water supplies;

- the imposition of collective punishment, banned under international law, including the bulldozing of houses, the uprooting of ancient olive groves and destruction of industrial units;
- the policy of ethnic cleansing designed to make life unbearable for all Palestinians under both Israeli and Palestinian authority – the ongoing in-depth surveillance and control of the population including the forced division of families, and restrictions on free movement to deny them access to work, to education and to health-care, even in emergency situations such as childbirth;
- the enforced bankruptcy of the Palestinian Authority and the impoverishment of the Palestinian People by the withholding of tax revenues, the impositions on the free movement of finance; the blocking of Palestinian exports and the blocking of international support and grant aid;

- the continued building of the Apartheid Wall in defiance of the ruling of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, creating a series of 'bantustans' in the West Bank, fracturing families and communities, depriving Palestinians of their most productive land and water supplies and effectively annexing East Jerusalem into Israeli territory;

- the continued building of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, with the associated oppressive policing of the local population, the demolishing of Palestinian homes, the theft of land and water and the disruption of Palestinian infra-structure.

- Conference also notes that the British and Irish Governments and the European Union have failed in their obligations under International Law – in terms of the Geneva Convention, the UN and the International Court – to challenge the activities of the Israeli Government. A reasonable response would be the imposition of political and economic sanctions. Instead it is the Palestinians who have been punished by the withholding of grant aid, whilst the criminal actions of the Israeli State are further appeased by continuing to grant them preferential trading rights under Article 2 of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement. Conference notes that the European Union is formally obligated under the human rights clause in Article 2 to suspend the trading privileges enjoyed by Israel as it is in breach of human rights. The litany of human rights abuses, atrocities and war crimes should long ago have led to the ending of the agreement – indeed the European Parliament has already on two separate occasions called on the Council of Ministers to take this action.

- In pursuance of ICTU policy to campaign in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and in recognition of the depths of oppression being suffered by them, Conference authorises the Executive of ICTU to undertake the following:

a) that the ICTU make direct representations to the European Council of Ministers to challenge the withholding of EU funding, and addressing the fact that the EU has failed in its obligations under international law to oppose the actions of Israel. ICTU also demands the ending of the preferential trading status enjoyed by Israel under the Euro-Med Agreement;

b) that the ICTU could seek a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Irish EU Commissioner to express our grave concerns about these issues, specifically to address the illegality of the Israeli actions, and to call for an appropriate and effective response;

c) that the representatives of ICTU raise these issues at the European TUC, and call upon concerted EU-wide trade union solidarity action to protest at the indifference of EU Governments, at the failure of the strategy of 'constructive engagement' with the State of Israel, and at what is effectively the appeasement of the Israeli aggression and territorial expansionism;

d) to actively and vigorously promote a policy of divestment from Israeli companies recognising that it is one of the most effective ways to ensure that the Israeli Government is made aware of the extent of opposition to its crime against humanity. ICTU will encourage affiliates to apply a policy of ethical investment in terms of pension fund holdings, and seek to ensure that investments are therefore withdrawn from Israeli

companies as well as companies such as Caterpillar and Irish Cement Holdings that directly support the Israeli occupation and destruction of Palestinian land. Affiliates will also be encouraged to use whatever influence they can bring to bear on employers in both the private and state sector to apply such a policy of ethical investment;

e) to actively and vigorously promote a boycott of Israeli Congress BCD Agenda 2007 53 goods and services similar to the boycott of south African goods during the era of apartheid. ICTU will proactively support such a boycott policy by working with affiliates on a programme of educational activities, by a media campaign and by working alongside human rights and humanitarian relief organisations.;

f) that the solidarity links between the Irish, Palestinian and Israeli labour movements be strengthened by a delegation of senior trade union leaders to the occupied areas. ICTU will also invite Palestinian trade union representatives to visit Ireland to encourage greater awareness of the situation in Palestine today, and to support the call for divestment, boycott and sanctions.

g) that the implementation of ICTU policy be further strengthened by the formation of Trade Union Friends of Palestine groups in the Republic of Ireland to work alongside TUFPP in Northern Ireland. That ICTU hosts a TUFPP Conference, with invited international speakers, to further develop trade union solidarity action.

Derry Trades Council

Belfast Trades Council also submitted this motion

ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference 2009

Palestine

This BDC welcomes and endorses the report of the visit of the ICTU delegation to Israel and Palestine in November 2007.

BDC commends the solidarity work of TUFPP, North and South.

BDC condemns Israel's criminal attack on the citizens and infra-structure of Gaza between 27th December 2008 and 18th January 2009, when the entire population of Gaza, already imprisoned by the illegal Israeli-imposed siege, was forced to endure intensive bombing of densely-populated civilian areas as well as the bombing of ambulances, hospitals, schools and UN compounds being used for refuge. We note that many civilians suffered devastating injuries from white phosphorus bombs and new types of weapons such as Dense Inert Metal Explosives (DIME). Over 1400 Palestinians, a large majority of them civilians, including more than 400 children, died as a result of this merciless military assault.

The assault on Gaza confirmed that Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people can be likened to the oppression of the black majority in South Africa under Apartheid. The parallel with Apartheid has been noted by Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ex-President

Jimmy Carter, a number of UN Special Rapporteurs and many others of high standing in the world. We note the call of the current President of the UN General Assembly, Fr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, for a global response to the oppression of Palestinians along the lines of the non-violent campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions which helped bring Apartheid to an end.

BDC registers its concern that, despite mass popular opposition to the brutality of the Israeli occupation across the European Community, the Governments of the EU and the EU Commission have failed to take effective action to sanction Israel. This BDC therefore:

1. Calls for the establishment of a War Crimes Tribunal to investigate Israel for crimes against humanity and breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention and International Humanitarian Law during the assault on Gaza

2. Recognises that, in the absence of UN or Governmental intervention, the most effective action which it is open to us to take in support of the Palestinian people is to assist in the mobilisation of civil society behind the campaign for boycott and divestment. We note the statement, 'We are all Gazans', issued by the PGFTU in the midst of the Gaza massacre, calling for 'support and encouragement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel'. We note that this call was directed to all sister labour unions world-wide, and particularly to unions and union federations in Europe and the USA. Accordingly, this BDC calls for adequate officer time to be allocated to the implementation of the current strategy

3. Calls for the recommendations of the delegation report published last year to be implemented in full

Derry Council of Trade Unions

ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference 2011

Palestine:

Despite growing world recognition of the mass violations of Palestinian human rights by the Israeli State, in breach of countless UN resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention, the plight of the Palestinian people remains one of being subject to apartheid, colonialism and occupation.

This Conference applauds however the rapid growth of the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in solidarity with the call of Palestinian civil society, including all sections of the Palestinian trade union movement, to take peaceful protest action similar to that which helped to bring about the downfall of the apartheid regime in South Africa.

We recognise the significant contribution shown by the Executive Council, by ICTU Global Solidarity, by Trade Union Friends of Palestine and by individual affiliates in this regard.

We commend the organisation of the Dublin Castle conference in 2010, the protest against the accession of Israel to the OECD, and the public protest in response to the slaughter of human rights activists on board the Mavi Marmara as they attempted to breach the siege of Gaza. We also commend Congress for the production of publicity and educational materials highlighting and promoting ICTU policy.

In order to further our campaign of standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people conference calls on ICTU to:

- 1. Organise with TUFFP an initiative involving all relevant sectors of Irish civil society including the churches and in particular those organisations and individuals that have a public position of supporting BDS, with the aim of launching and coordinating a mass Irish civil society BDS campaign.**
- 2. Organise through its education a programme of divestment and sanctions seminars in both jurisdictions to inform ICTU affiliates of the most effective and legal means to promote both.**
- 3. Declare the support of Congress for the courage and commitment of all those involved in the Free Gaza campaign, and to encourage affiliates to materially support and if possible to participate in the attempts made by land and sea to breach the siege of Gaza and bring humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza.**

UNISON

Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

This Biennial Delegate Conference applauds all those in the trade union movement here, including Congress officials and Trade Union Friends of Palestine, for their continued commitment to demonstrate effective solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Conference recognises that the ICTU taking the lead in coordinating and promoting a mass mobilisation of civil society across all of the island of Ireland would be one of the most effective ways to strengthen this campaign.

Conference therefore authorizes the Executive Council to explore the promotion of an 'Ireland Declaration for Palestine,' encompassing support from all sectors of Irish civil society, that calls for an end to Israeli human rights abuses, the implementation of UN resolutions and support for the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions.

Conference welcomes:

- the progress made in producing educational, publicity and briefing material to help promote ICTU policy. We consider it essential, as part of the campaign of education of global solidarity leaders, and of the wider membership, that information is provided on the historic and continuing role of key Zionist institutions like the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund in planning and implementing the vast array of

discriminatory policies against Palestinians that have now created conditions of Apartheid.

- the decision of both the British TUC and the Scottish TUC to undertake a review of their relationship with Histadrut.
- the campaign led by Jewish people of conscience across the world, including Holocaust survivors, to have the charitable status of the Jewish National Fund withdrawn.

Conference also wishes to record its deep concern at the alarming deterioration of Palestinian human rights in East Jerusalem. We note the statement of the UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk that “the continued pattern of settlement expansion in East Jerusalem combined with forcible eviction of long residing Palestinians are creating an intolerable situation that can only be described, in its cumulative impact, as a form of ethnic cleansing”.

We are outraged that the Israeli government continues to impose an illegal blockade by land, sea and air of the people of Gaza creating conditions of immense human suffering. The planned, deliberate and very public suppression of the people of Gaza, including acts of mass slaughter as in operation Cast Lead, are not just a denial of the human rights of Palestinians but are a most serious undermining of the value and authority of International Law itself and may have the gravest implications for all of humanity.

We applaud, therefore, the efforts of all those who are attempting to breach the siege of Gaza and to bring humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza by land and sea. We similarly applaud and will seek to offer support to the efforts of all those Palestinians, Israelis, and international humanitarian activists who, despite being subject to increasing Israeli state surveillance and repression, struggle to uphold the rights of Palestinians in the West bank and East Jerusalem. **We particularly applaud and will also offer support to the heroic activity of the Bil'in Popular Committee in its weekly protest action against the building of the Separation Wall and the seizure of Palestinian land.**

We authorize the Executive Council to register a strong protest regarding the situation in Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Occupied Palestinian Territories to the Israeli government. We also authorize the Executive Council to seek to have a meeting with the Irish Government at the highest level to register our concerns and to call on the Irish Government to take effective action including within the European Union to defend International Humanitarian Law and the rights of the Palestinian people.

Derry Trades Union Council

ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference 2017

Palestine Solidarity

This conference applauds the ICTU Executive Council and Congress affiliates, as well as Trade

Union Friends of Palestine, for the wide range of actions taken to highlight the injustices suffered by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, colonisation and apartheid. We applaud in particular the leadership role played by Congress in supporting the establishment of the European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine. Conference calls on all affiliates to endorse, to publicise and actively support the work of the European network in challenging EU complicity, corporate complicity and the arms trade with Israel. Conference also notes the support for ICTU BDS policy (adopted at 2007 BDC) by the recent UN report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) titled *'Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid'*. The primary and unequivocal conclusion of this document is: 'This report establishes, on the basis of scholarly inquiry and overwhelming evidence, that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid.' The recommendations of the report include that 'National Governments should support boycott, divestment and sanctions activities and respond positively to calls for such initiatives.' The recommendations for civil society and private sector actors are particularly relevant. These are:

"1 Civil society actors should be invited to submit to the Human Rights Council reactions to this report. A special meeting should be convened to consider those reactions and to plan appropriate next steps, including recommendations to the Human Rights Council and to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

2 Efforts should be made to broaden support for boycott, divestment and sanctions initiatives among civil society actors.

3 Private sector actors should be made aware of the findings of this report and requested to act accordingly, including by informing the public about the criminality of the apartheid regime, and urging Governments to fulfil their obligations under the Apartheid Convention and to propose initiatives that could be undertaken by civil society. Private sector actors should also be reminded of their legal, moral and political responsibility to sever ties with commercial ventures and projects that directly or indirectly aid and abet the apartheid regime imposed."

Given the extreme gravity of this finding, and the high standing of the UN body that produced the report, **conference authorises ICTU to circulate the report to all affiliates with the recommendation that it be widely disseminated throughout the membership. The report should be highlighted on the ICTU website. Conference also mandates the incoming Executive Council to submit to the UN Human Rights Council the response of ICTU to the report, including a call for the appropriate UN bodies to take the remedial action recommended by the report.**

Conference furthermore recognises that the moral and civil imperative to support BDS against Israel until it complies with international law is now being actively suppressed by Israel. The Israeli government and its allies in the West – prompted by the doctrine of 'Israeli exceptionalism', permitting it to be exempt from international law - are attempting to criminalise the BDS movement and to accuse its supporters of being anti-Semitic. Israeli government ministers have publicly called for a campaign of 'civil assassination' against BDS activists. Israel, the so-called 'only democracy in the middle east' now openly proclaims its sectarian and racist character by declaring itself a Jewish state. BDS activists are now legally

prohibited from entering Israel. A 'tarnishing unit' has been created by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs tasked with undermining the credibility of BDS activists. We have recently seen the outworking of this in the arrest and interrogation for 12 days of Omar Barghouti, the leading spokesperson for the BDS movement. Barghouti has since April 2016 been subjected to a travel ban, now extended, and which is timed to prevent him from travelling to the USA to receive the Ghandi Peace Award. Conference also expresses grave concern at the proposed collaboration between the Ministry for Strategic Affairs and the Israeli trade union federation Histadrut. As reported in the respected Israeli newspaper Haaretz: 'Last September, the ministry also stated its intent to launch a cooperative effort with the Histadrut through a Histadrut NGO called the International Leadership Institute, at a cost of 22 million shekels. The program's purpose would be to "work among labor unions and professional associations abroad to root out the ability of BDS entities to influence the unions."' (<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.779434>)

In the light of these developments conference commits ICTU to publicly defending whenever necessary the democratic rights of human rights defenders like Omar Barghouti. We call on the ICTU executive to respond to the attempts to smear and criminalise our movement, and its defence of human rights, by intensifying its efforts to implement ICTU BDS policy. We furthermore mandate the EC to seek a meeting with the Irish Government, at the highest level, to inform them of our determination, and to advance the case for effective action to end Israeli breaches of international law and EU complicity with this.

Derry Trades Union Council