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International labor union actions support Palestine

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December 21, 2023



Photo: 1199 SEIU

Presentation given at the Socialist Unity Party national plenum on Dec. 16, 2023.

We have just learned that the Health Care workers 1199 SEIU has called for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to allow for urgent relief amid the destruction of health and other infrastructure.

A deep shift is going on in the organized labor movement, shown by the emerging support for Palestine. It's a turn away from what some call "business unionism," a narrow struggle for a few crumbs off the bosses' table. There is a new class consciousness rising — international solidarity.

The United Auto Workers' official call for a ceasefire is awesome. They are creating a "Divestment and Just Transition" study group on the history and the union's economic ties to the conflict. Union leaders thanked all the rank-and-file members who made this happen.

Truly, the UAW's position was initiated by the rank and file: Black, people of color, and gender-oppressed auto workers in the coastal regions, along with Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska. The auto workers have been empowered by last summer's victorious strike wave.

Palestine workers call for support

On Oct. 16, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) issued an urgent call for action against governments, like the U.S., that are arming Israel.

Unions have been taking action, often in opposition to their own governments. The postal workers, auto workers and the National Writers Union are leading the U.S. labor movement. A Starbucks Workers United leaflet read: "We Stand with Palestine."

The UAW, UE, and UFCW 3000 initiated an online petition calling for an immediate

ceasefire and end to the siege of Gaza.

It has been signed by some 3,200 unions, union locals, and sections of unions, including the CWA • IBEW • SEIU • Teamsters • AFSCME • OPEIU • Unite Here • USW • AFT and Education Unions more than a dozen states • Amazon Labor Union • Austin and San Antonio AFL-CIO Central Labor Councils • Coalition of Labor Union Women • Painters, Roofers • NJ State Industrial Union Council • Pacific Media Workers • Philadelphia Labor for Black Lives Coalition • Pride at Work • Restaurant Workers United • Unemployed Workers United • Western Massachusetts (AFL-CIO). More unions are joining this list by the hour.

In the beginning of November, the Ports of Oakland and Tacoma were blockaded by protesters who delayed the departure of a U.S. military vessel after merchant marine workers told organizers the ship's cargo of weapons was destined for Israel. In New Orleans, where Healthcare Workers demand a ceasefire, workers groups are organizing to Stop Helping Israel's Ports - NOSHIP.

The longshore union ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco unanimously passed a resolution in solidarity with Palestine. They said: "The U.N. calls Gaza an 'open-air prison' of 2.2 million Palestinians. ... It is no surprise that there would inevitably be a rebellion." The Local 10 resolution was presented to the Oakland and San Francisco City Councils.

The Inland Boatmen's Union in San Francisco issued a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire as well as the delivery of life-saving aid.

ZIM, one of the world's largest shipping lines, is carrying military supplies to Israel. Workers in Palestine see ZIM as a strategic target. On Nov. 17 in Norfolk, Virginia, a demonstration at the ZIM headquarters organized by the Southern Workers Assembly shut down ZIM.



As reported on Labor Video, thousands of labor unionists from around Northern California rallied in Oakland on Dec. 16 to oppose the genocide in Gaza. It was endorsed by SEIU 1021 which has over 50,000 members, AFSCME 3299, OEA, UESF, SEIU 1021, ILWU Local 10, Inlandboatmen's Union SF Region-ILWU, UNITE HERE Local 2, IFPTE Local 21, CWA NewsGuild Pacific Media Workers Guild, Stanford Graduate Workers, Trader Joes United, IWW Bay Area, IWW 460-650 - Ecology Center.

A San Francisco labor group rallied on Dec. 14 in front of Google offices to stop Google's AI support for the Zionist apartheid regime. Google has the \$1.2 billion Nimbus contract with the Israeli military. The workers also reported that Google is targeting their Muslim workers who challenge genocide.

Around the world

All around the world, the union movement has been responding with solidarity actions to block the arming of the Zionist entity.

Belgian, Italian, Spanish, and French unions called on their members to refuse to handle arms shipments.

In the Port of Melbourne, Trade Unionists for Palestine are blocking ZIM. The red,

gold, and black flags of the Indigenous peoples of Australia are seen on the picket line.

The Liverpool dock workers are blocking the shipment of war materiel. They held a community meeting to talk about Gaza and the West Bank.

United Tech & Allied Workers of Britain called for the “international labor movement to end all complicity and take concrete action against arms supplies to Israel.”

British health workers, teachers, hospitality workers, academics, artists, and more — members of some eight union federations — set up a picket line to prevent deliveries to BAE Systems, England’s largest weapons firm, under a banner that read “Workers for a Free Palestine.”

The Japanese National Railway Union, Dora Chiba, has pledged to fight their government’s policy of arming the Zionist military.

Although not reported as much here, similar actions are occurring all over the world. The **Brazilian** trade union federation, representing more than 7.4 million workers, pledged unwavering support for Palestine. The **Canadian** Union of Public Employees called for the “end of arms sales to Israel.” In **Colombia**, the miners’ union is demanding a suspension of the supply of all minerals and fuels. The largest **Polish** confederation of trade unions is calling for an end to military cooperation with Israel.

India’s twelve union federations, representing one hundred million workers, are strongly opposing talks to send one hundred thousand construction workers to replace the Palestinian workers whose work permits Israel has canceled.

The Central Trade Union Council of **India**, representing more than 600,000 workers, is calling for a boycott of arms shipments.

Workers in Palestine, the group formed by Palestinian unions, has created a number of online resources, including a [guidance sheet for unions](#) on building solidarity with Palestine, a companion [guide for community activists](#), and a [model motion](#).

The comprehensive “[Who Arms Israel?](#)” toolkit offers guidance for action and suggests locations. Lockheed Martin, Boeing, BAE Systems, Leonardo, and Raytheon all provide arms crucial to the Israeli military.

Internationally, many global federations like that of the Transport Workers have pledged to support the [Palestinian workers’](#) struggle for justice, dignity, and peace.

