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Transport workers unions in Africa call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza

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The Africa Regional Conference of the International Transport Workers' Federation unanimously passed a motion authored by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza, an end to political support for Israel, and expressing solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for freedom.



General Secretary of NUMSA, Irvin Jim, presented the motion to express solidarity with the Palestinian people. Photo: IFT Global Union

Unions in Africa affiliated with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), representing 18.5 million transport workers and 740 unions worldwide, have called for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza, an end to political support for Israel, and expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom and self-determination.

The motion was proposed by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) at the ITF's Africa Regional Conference held in Côte d'Ivoire last week. It was passed unanimously on March 7, the same day that the Israeli occupation forces bombed the headquarters of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) in Gaza City.

The five-story building had attached to it several other facilities providing services to

the Palestinian people, including a kindergarten that served 380 children, as well as a large automatic bakery.

In a statement, the PGFTU added that it was the third time that its headquarters had been bombed, the previous attack being during Israel's 2014 bombardment of Gaza, and three of the Union's branches in the Al-Rimal neighborhood and Yarmouk Street had been destroyed.

Shaher Saed, the general secretary of the PGFTU, said in a statement that the union would rebuild its headquarters, as it had done before, to "continue its important role towards the steadfast Palestinian society".

Israel has killed over 31,000 Palestinians and injured over 73,000 in its ongoing, six-month-long genocidal campaign in besieged Gaza.

African unions call for concrete action against Israel

Addressing the ITF Conference in Abidjan, Irvin Jim, the General Secretary of NUMSA, [read out](#) the motion passed by the Conference.

The motion condemned "the ongoing violence and human rights violations perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza," noting that the South African Union brings a "unique perspective to the issue having ourselves fought against a system of racial segregation, institutional violence and oppression, apartheid."

"The Israeli settler-colonial state...[has] for more than seven decades dispossessed, oppressed, murdered, massacred, brutalized, tortured and imprisoned Palestinians and implemented policies and practices characteristic of an apartheid state".

The statement highlighted the forced displacement and systematic dispossession of the Palestinian people of their homes and land, Israel's military occupation, mass

detentions and targeted killings, its control of Gaza's economy and borders.

Noting that Israel was under binding orders from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to take "all measures within its power" to prevent the commission of acts defined as genocide under the 1948 Convention and ensuring the delivery of essential aid and services to Gaza, "Israel has disregarded the ICJ ruling and continues its attack on Palestinians. This disregard for international law and human rights cannot be tolerated."

The Conference demanded the implementation of an immediate and permanent ceasefire, secure the unconditional release of civilian hostages "on both sides", end political support for Israel's war in Gaza and to implement an immediate two-way arms embargo by all states.

It further called for the implementation of an international mechanism to enforce the ICJ ruling, strengthening funding commitments to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), for the imposition of sanctions on Israel through the UN Security Council, urging the Council to "use all available means to stop the bloodshed in Gaza".

The Conference [echoed](#) calls for the International Criminal Court's Chief Prosecutor, Karim Khan, to expedite the investigation into the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel in Gaza.

Despite repeated calls by Palestinian advocacy organizations and referrals filed by multiple countries, including South Africa, as early as November 2023, the ICC has yet to take any actions to prosecute those responsible for committing the ongoing atrocities in Gaza. The Court already had an open investigation into the crimes being committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories since 2021, long before the start of Israel's current bombardment in October.

Earlier this week, it was announced that Khan had appointed British barrister and

former military prosecutor Andrew Cayley to oversee the Court's investigation. The manner of Khan's appointment to the ICC has raised serious questions, especially around the role played by the UK and the US, especially given that quickly after assuming office, Khan shut down the ICC's investigation into crimes committed by US forces in Iraq.

Cayley, for his part, "played a key role in a process that resulted in the former ICC prosecutor deciding in 2020 to abandon a long running investigation" into alleged war crimes committed by UK forces in Iraq, according to *The Guardian*. Both Khan and Cayley also have [ties](#) to the ruling Conservative Party in the UK, the former through his brother, and Cayley through [donations](#) made to the Party.

Meanwhile, the ITF's Conference last week also called on all its affiliates and to intensify boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against companies profiting from the occupation or operating in illegal settlements, and to support workers refusing to handle goods linked to Israel's occupation.

In the past months, transport unions in different countries, including India, Belgium, and Spain, have refused to handle military cargo bound for Israel, refusing to be complicit in the ongoing genocide in Gaza.

"We urge all to join the global campaign to hold Israel accountable for its crimes, dismantle its apartheid system, and support the Palestinian people's struggle for freedom and self-determination," Jim said.

Source: [Peoples Dispatch](#)



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