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On International Workers' Day: Urgent appeal from the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions

written by Struggle - La Lucha

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The call below was issued in March by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions.



الإتحاد العام لنقابات عمال فلسطين - قطاع غزة
Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions - Gaza Strip

Brothers and Sisters of unions and other labor organizations in the United States of America:

In the midst of pain and blood, in the displacement camps, amidst the rubble and the ruins of our homes, workshops, factories, stores and institutions destroyed by the “Israeli” occupation, using U.S.-made weapons, in the name of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), we call on you for solidarity.

Instead of celebrating with you on May 1, International Workers' Day, we are busy shrouding dozens of people who are being killed around the clock in the middle of a genocidal war against our people — in every sense of that word. This has led to the destruction of everything in the Gaza Strip (hospitals, health centers, schools, universities, streets, water purification, sewage and other infrastructure, factories, shops, cultural centers, mosques, churches and even unborn children), none of which were spared by the occupation's bombs, missiles and shells (including internationally banned weapons, like white phosphorus).

We are living through wholesale slaughter and forced dislocation — ethnic cleansing — committed against us. This devastating war and its catastrophes have forced upon us in the PGFTU in Gaza great responsibilities to collect the broken bodies and even pieces of our people, healing the wounded and trying to ease their pain (without anesthetics, antibiotics or other medicine), dealing with the psychological trauma (especially of the children), while trying to convey the truth of this suffering and the humanitarian and environmental catastrophe to the world.

Since the beginning of the aggression, we in the PGFTU have considered ourselves an integral part of our people — not separated from their reality. We have suffered and lost thousands of members, union offices, facilities and other institutions.

Despite our efforts to provide relief to our people with the limited support we have received and to raise the voice of our people loudly in international forums, we have encountered shocking silence and neglect by the international labor movement. However, we recognize there have been some exceptional examples of unions, clearly demonstrated in leading protests denouncing the Zionist war of genocide being waged on the Gaza Strip.

Dear comrades in the American unions,

Several actions have come to light during the aggression, which must be closely observed and exposed, most notably:

First, U.S. unions need to expose the extent of the war crimes and genocide committed against our people and the biased American position and complicity in enabling the aggression. This must be confronted and continue to be protested to exert pressure against the export of U.S.-made weapons to the occupation. Pressure must be increased on the U.S. administration to abandon these hostile actions against the Palestinian people.

Secondly, there is the Israeli decision to suspend or terminate the contracts of thousands of workers in the Gaza Strip by local, Arab and international institutions in connection with the war of extermination, depriving employees of their rights and compensation. It would have been better for these institutions to strengthen the workers' economic security by implementing support packages instead of firing them from work. This issue must be at the core of your concerns and struggle.

Third, the international labor movement, including the International Federation of Trade Unions, retreated to verbal positions without taking measures on the ground or pressuring the decision-makers to stop this war of extermination, limiting union activities to conferences and statements and not delving deeply into the need to guarantee humanitarian aid or influencing international public opinion to expose the truth about Zionist crimes and the practices of the allied countries that continue to support Israel.

Among these steps is the struggle to ban the occupation's trade unions internationally, as they are partners in the war of genocide. In particular, we call on American unions to boycott these unions to protest their complicity in this genocidal war.

Fourth, unions can play an influential role in the United States to provide relief for hundreds of thousands of workers' families whose homes and workplaces have been destroyed, leaving them to shelter in tents without any work or income. You can contribute to financial projects and relief funds for workers and temporary social security through coordination with the International Trade Union Confederation to alleviate the suffering of thousands of our people.

Dear comrades,

We call on you to be our voice and advocate inside and outside America. What our people are experiencing and what workers and unions in particular are exposed to is the most horrific catastrophe known to humanity in recent decades. We ask that you convey our message and give voice to the suffering of hungry, starving workers and their families — not just to the American people, not just to your unions but to the entire world.

We are a people enduring bombardment, hunger, disease and all forms of suffering, but we are determined to live, to stand firm and to rebuild from this destruction with our blood and many sacrifices.

Thank you for your efforts, and happy new year on International Workers' Day. We will certainly carry the banner of victory despite the killing and destruction.

From your comrades/trade and professional unions in Gaza

Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions

Signatory: Basheer Al-Sisi, Member of the General Secretariat of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions – City of Gaza

