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# Labor for Palestine Condemns Gaza Freedom Flotilla Massacre, Supports Worker Action to Boycott Israel

June 7, 2010

*“Gaza today has become the test of our universal morality and our common humanity. During the South African anti-apartheid struggle, the world was inspired by the brave and principled actions of dockworkers unions who refused to handle South African cargo, contributing significantly to the ultimate fall of apartheid. Today, we call on you, dockworkers unions of the world, to do the same against Israel’s occupation and apartheid. This is the most effective form of solidarity to end injustice and uphold universal human rights.”*

—Palestinian Trade Union Movement Calls on International Dockworkers Unions to Block Loading/Offloading Israeli Ships Until Israel Complies Fully with International Law and Ends its Illegal Siege of Gaza, June 7, 2010<sup>[1]</sup>

As trade unionists in the United States, we join with labor bodies around the world to condemn Israel’s May 31 armed assault on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

To date, these include the [South African Congress of Trade Unions](#); [National Union of Mineworkers \(South Africa\)](#); [Irish Congress Of Trade Unions](#); [Maritime Union of Australia](#); [New Zealand Council of Trade Unions](#); [International Dockworkers Council](#); [Confederation of Revolutionary Workers’ Unions \(Turkey\)](#); [GSEE \(Greek TUC\)](#); [ADE-DY \(Greek public sector union federation\)](#); [Trades Union International of Workers in the Building, Wood, Building Materials and Allied Industries](#); [International Federation of Journalists](#); [World Federation of Trade Unions](#); [International Trade Union Confederation](#); [International Transport Workers’ Federation](#); [Public Services International](#); [Unite \(U.K.\)](#); [Canadian Union of Postal Workers](#); [Canadian Union of Public Employees](#); [Education International](#); [US Labor Against the War](#); and the [Transport Workers Solidarity Committee](#).

Notwithstanding Israeli propaganda—abetted by the corporate media—the Flotilla Massacre was a premeditated act of state terrorism.

Taking place in international waters under cover of darkness, it targeted 750 unarmed volunteers from 40 countries seeking to relieve the humanitarian crisis caused by Israel’s illegal and immoral collective punishment against the 1.5 million people in Gaza. This criminal assault killed and wounded scores of aid workers, while abducting, jailing and deporting hundreds of survivors.

This crime against humanity only symbolizes a regime rooted in more than six decades of piracy, ethnic cleansing, racism, and apartheid against Palestinians and other indigenous people of the region.

Most immediately, it is a direct extension of the 2008/2009 Gaza massacre that killed 1400 people, most of them civilians, which has been condemned by the UN, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other human rights organizations, including those that are Israeli.

That Israel’s crimes nonetheless continue unabated is due entirely to support from its international sponsors. In the past ten years alone, the US government—with overwhelming bipartisan support—has given Israel \$17 billion in military aid; over the next decade, it will give another \$30 billion.

Thus, this attack, like Israel’s entire war on Palestine, was carried out with US-supplied naval vessels, Apache helicopters and other weapons. Once again, through its not-so-silent complicity, the Obama administration is letting Israel get away with murder.

Workers in this country pay a staggering human and financial price for US-Israeli war and occupation from Palestine to Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Iran.

Yet, top US labor officials—often without the knowledge or consent of union members—collaborate with the Histadrut, the segregated Zionist labor federation that defends every attack on Palestinian rights, including the Flotilla Massacre.<sup>[2]</sup> These same leaders invest billions from our union pension and retirement funds in State of Israel Bonds.

US labor officials’ policies directly violate the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against apartheid Israel, initiated in 2005 by Palestinian civil society—including its entire labor movement.

Inspired by the international boycott that helped topple apartheid South Africa, the campaign demands Palestinian self-determination, including an end to Israeli military occupation, the right of refugees to return, and equal rights for all throughout historic Palestine.

BDS has been endorsed by labor bodies around the world, including the trade union congresses of South Africa, Ireland, Scotland and the UK, and labor bodies in Australia, France, Canada, Norway, Catalunya, and Italy.

Just one day before the Gaza Flotilla Massacre, the University and College Union (UK) voted to “sever all relations with Histadrut, and to urge other trade unions and bodies to do likewise.”<sup>[3]</sup>

South African workers play a leading role in the BDS movement because they remember that Israel was apartheid South Africa’s closest ally, and they agree with the observation of numerous South African freedom fighters that Israel’s treatment of Palestinians is “worse than apartheid.”<sup>[4]</sup>

In February 2009, South African and Australian dockworkers refused to handle Israeli goods and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (COSATU) “call[ed] on other workers and unions to . . . do all that is necessary to ensure that they boycott all goods to and from Israel until Palestine is free.”<sup>[5]</sup>

In response to the Gaza Flotilla Massacre, the Swedish Port Workers Union has announced it will blockade Israeli ships and cargo from June 15-24. The South African dockers (SAWATU) have “salute[d] the Swedish dock workers for their blockade of all Israeli ships” and “call[ed] for an escalation of the boycott of Israeli goods and call upon our fellow trade unionists not to handle them.”<sup>[6]</sup>

Now, the entire Palestinian trade union movement, “calls on dockworkers’ unions worldwide to block Israeli maritime trade in response to Israel’s massacre of humanitarian relief workers and activists aboard the Freedom Flotilla, until Israel complies with international law and ends its illegal blockade of Gaza.”<sup>[7]</sup>

Israel deliberately carried out the Gaza Freedom Flotilla Massacre in order to silence opposition to its strangulation of Gaza. But just as the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre and the 1976 Soweto Massacre spelled the ultimate doom of South African apartheid, Israel’s attack has already had the opposite effect.

New waves of volunteers are coming forward to break the siege, which is already beginning to crack. The BDS movement is exploding. Already, it is clear that the Flotilla martyrs did not die in vain.

Just as labor solidarity played a critical role in toppling South African apartheid, it now has the potential to cripple Israeli apartheid. Therefore, we urge trade unionists in the US to call on our unions, the AFL-

CIO and Change to Win to condemn the Gaza Flotilla Massacre and support the international labor BDS campaign to:

1. End US military and economic aid for, and ties with, Israel.
2. Divest from State of Israel Bonds.
3. Refuse to handle Israeli goods and cargo.
4. Break ties with all Israeli state institutions, including the Histadrut.

#### Notes

- [1] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/712>
- [2] <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/4557>. [The Jewish Labor Committee, the Histadrut's U.S. mouthpiece, has also defended the Flotilla Massacre: [http://www.jewishlaborcommittee.org/2010/06/jlc\\_on\\_the\\_gaza\\_flotilla\\_israel\\_1.html](http://www.jewishlaborcommittee.org/2010/06/jlc_on_the_gaza_flotilla_israel_1.html).]
- [3] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1249>
- [4] <http://dissidentvoice.org/2010/03/israel-and-apartheid-is-it-a-fair-comparison/>
- [5] <http://links.org.au/node/888>
- [6]
- [7] <http://www.cosatu.org.za/show.php?include=docs/pr/2010/pr0604d.htm&ID=3434&cat=COSATU%20Today>
- [7] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/712>

#### (List in formation—ALL UNION BODIES LISTED FOR IDENTIFICATION ONLY.

##### Endorse this statement:

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#### Labor for Palestine

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