

FREE PALESTINE! ISOLATE APARTHEID ISRAEL!

COSATU and PSC launch Week of Action for Palestine supported by YCL and other progressive organisations Media Conference, COSATU House, 3 February 2009, 11am

In a historic development for South Africa, South African dock workers have announced their determination not to offload a ship from Israel that is scheduled to dock in Durban on Sunday, 8 February 2009. This follows the decision by COSATU to strengthen the campaign in South Africa for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Apartheid Israel.

The pledge by SATAWU members in Durban reflects the commitment by South African workers to refuse to support oppression and exploitation across the globe. Last year, Durban dock workers had refused to offload a shipment of arms that had arrived from China and was destined for Zimbabwe to prop up the Mugabe regime and to intensify the repression against the Zimbabwean people. Now, says SATAWU's General Secretary Randall Howard, the union's members are committing themselves to not handling Israeli goods.

SATAWU's action on Sunday will be part of a proud history of worker resistance against apartheid. In 1963, just four years after the Anti-Apartheid Movement was formed, Danish dock workers refused to offload a ship with South African goods. When the ship docked in Sweden, Swedish workers followed suit. Dock workers in Liverpool and, later, in the San Francisco Bay Area also refused to offload South African goods.

South Africans, and the South African working class in particular, will remain forever grateful to those workers who determinedly opposed apartheid and decided that they would support the anti-apartheid struggle with their actions. Last week, Western Australian members of the Maritime Union of Australia resolved to support the campaign for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel, and have called for a boycott of all Israeli vessels and all vessels bearing goods arriving from or going to Israel.

This is the legacy and the tradition that South African dock workers have inherited, and it is a legacy they are determined to honour, by ensuring that South African ports of entry will not be used as transit points for goods bound for or emanating from certain dictatorial and oppressive states such as Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Israel.

COSATU, the Palestine Solidarity Committee, the Young Communist League and a range of other organisations salute the principled position taken by these workers. We also take this opportunity to salute the millions of workers all over the world who have openly condemned and taken decisive steps to isolate apartheid Israel, a step that should send shockwaves to its arrogant patrons in

the United States who foot the bill for Israel's killing machine. We call on other workers and unions to follow suit and to do all that is necessary to ensure that they boycott all goods to and from Israel until Palestine is free.

We also welcome statements by various South African Jews of conscience who have dissociated themselves from the genocide in Gaza. We call on all South Africans to ensure that none of our family members are allowed to join the Israeli Occupation Forces' killing machine.

In celebration of the actions of SATAWU members with regard to the ship from Israel, and in pursuance of the campaign for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel, and our call on the South African government to sever diplomatic and trade relations with Israel, this coalition of organisations has declared a week of action beginning on Friday, 6 February 2009.

The actions will be organised under the theme:

FREE PALESTINE! ISOLATE APARTHEID ISRAEL!

Activities that have already been confirmed for this week will include:

- Friday, 6 February: A protest outside the offices of the South African Zionist Federation and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, 2 Elray Street, Raedene, off Louis Botha Avenue. Both these organisations unquestioningly supported the recent Israeli attacks against Gaza, and supported the massacre of civilians and the attacks on schools, mosques, ambulances, and UN refugee centres. Protestors will be addressed by, among others, SATAWU General Secretary Randall Howard, and ex-Minister Ronnie Kasrils. Protest starts at 14:00.
- Friday, 6 February: A picket outside parliament in Cape Town. COSATU members and solidarity activists will be joined by a number of members of parliament. Picket starts at 09:30.
- Friday, 6 February: A mass rally in Actonville, Benoni, at the Buzme Adab Hall. The rally will be addressed by, among others, COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, PSC spokesperson Salim Vally, South African Council of Churches General Secretary Eddie Makue, and ex-Minister Ronnie Kasrils. Rally starts at 19:30.
- Sunday, 8 February: A protest at the Durban Harbour Mouth, off Victoria Embankment [Margaret Mncadi Avenue]. Protestors will be addressed by, among others, COSATU President Sdumo Dlamini. Protest starts at 10:00.
- Sunday 8 February: A mass rally in Cape Town at Vygieskraal Rugby Stadium. The rally will be addressed by, among others, COSATU General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, and Allan Boesak. Rally starts at 14:30.

Patrick Craven (Cosatu National Spokesperson) 0828217456

Bongani Masuku (Cosatu International Officer) 0794996419

Naeem Jeenah (PSC) 0845742674

Melissa Hole (PSC) 0739060017

Salim Vally (PSC) 082 802 5936