

General Council statement on the Middle East

The TUC reiterates its belief that only when a sovereign, independent, democratic contiguous and viable Palestinian state is created, living side by side with a secure Israel will there be a chance for peace and stability in the Middle East. We remain committed to a two-state solution to the crisis in the Middle East and support for the Road Map. We recognize the enormous suffering of the Palestinian people, and we call upon the British Government to make appropriate representations to the international community to secure lasting peace through a negotiated settlement based on mutual respect and self-determination, on justice for the Palestinians and on security for Israel.

The TUC reiterates its condemnation of the Government of Israel's offensive in Gaza which resulted in 1,450 Palestinian deaths and 5,000 injured, as well as the massive, systematic destruction of infrastructure. We also reiterate our condemnation of the rocket attacks from inside Gaza against Israeli civilians. We welcome the findings of the UN investigation which highlighted possible war crimes on both sides of the conflict. The TUC remains concerned about the situation in Gaza and reiterates its opposition to the Israeli blockade, which is in contravention of international law and prevents vital supplies from reaching the people of Gaza. We welcome the contributions unions made earlier this year to the TUC Aid appeal for Gaza.

As a result of the Gaza offensive, the TUC calls on the British Government to:

- (a) condemn the Israeli military aggression and the continuing blockade of Gaza;
- (b) end arms sales to Israel which reached a value of £18.8 million in 2008, up from £7.7 million in 2007;
- (c) seek EU agreement to impose a ban on the importing of goods produced in the illegal settlements; and
- (d) support moves to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement which provides preferential trade facilities to Israel.

The TUC reiterates our pledge to work in solidarity with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and urges unions to support financially the TUC/PGFTU projects funded through TUC Aid as well as the joint Histadrut-PGFTU projects being developed in several sectors under the auspices of Global Union Federations. We welcome the resolution last year of the longstanding dispute over the remittance of membership subscriptions from the Histadrut to the PGFTU, which was brokered by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and support any stronger relations between the Histadrut and the PGFTU that they wish to develop.

The TUC condemns the Histadrut statement of 13 January 2009 which backed the attacks on Gaza and showed insufficient concern for the level of civilian casualties. At the same time, we recognize the recent Histadrut resolution on peace and co-operation, welcomed by the ITUC, which calls on the Israeli government "to make concessions and take courageous and concrete steps towards attaining peace." We will continue to press Histadrut to take a firmer line on these issues. The General Council will raise Congress' concerns with the Histadrut and report back to Congress on future relationships.

To increase the pressure for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories, and the removal of the separation wall and the illegal settlements, we will support a

boycott (where trade union members should not put their own jobs at risk by refusing to deal with such products) of those goods and agricultural products that originate in illegal settlements - through developing an effective, targeted consumer-led boycott campaign working closely with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign - and campaign for disinvestment by companies associated with the occupation as well as engaged in building the separation wall. In undertaking these actions each affiliate will operate within its own aims and objectives and within the law.

We reiterate our encouragement to unions to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and to raise greater awareness of the issues.