

NATIONAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE 2009

Draft COMPOSITE J

PALESTINE (Motions 72, 74, 77, 78, 79 and Amendments 72.1, 72.2, 72.3 and 72.4)

Conference reiterates its belief that only when a sovereign, independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestine state is created, living side by side with a secure Israel will there be chance for peace and stability in the Middle East. Conference strongly believes that justice for the Palestinian people is essential to any solution to the existing conflict.

Conference reiterates its belief that a just solution must be based on international law and Israel must:

- 1) Withdraw to its 1967 borders;
- 2) Allow the refugees the right of return;
- 3) Remove all settlements from the Palestinian occupied territories and occupied Syrian Al-Joulan;
- 4) Demolish the apartheid wall;
- 5) Respect the Palestinian people's right to national self determination and to establish a state in the West Bank and Gaza.

Conference wholeheartedly condemns the use of violence to resolve this long-running injustice. Violence, whether from Israel against the people of Gaza or Lebanon, or from rocket attacks against Israel or terrorist actions inside Israel, will only lead to further violence. The reality however is that even prior to the December 2008 Israeli invasion Gaza was subject to an eighteen month siege which can only be described as undeserved and unnecessary collective punishment. The United Nations Office for Humanitarian Assistance reported in December 2008 that as a consequence of the blockade people had no access to electricity for 16 hours a day; 80% of water did not meet WHO standards for drinking; unemployment had reached 50% and 79% of the population lived below the official poverty line. The UN report concluded that, "The consequences for the Palestinian population are profound, pervasive and difficult to reverse." Conference notes that this was done in the name of taking action against the democratically elected (in 2006) representatives of the people of Gaza.

Conference notes that Israel used overwhelming military force against the people of Gaza, indiscriminately targeting educational establishments such as the main Universities in Gaza and the three UN schools, especially the attack on the UNRWA AL - Fakhura that killed 40 civilians, hospitals and facilities used by international humanitarian organisations leading to the loss of lives and dreadful injuries for innocent civilians, especially children. Conference notes that the Israeli invasion has been called "the systematic destruction of Palestinian infrastructure" and "a massive violation of the human rights of the Palestinian People", (United Nations Human Rights Council).

We also condemn the British, US and European governments who supported Israel by calling simply for a ceasefire without recognising the rights of Palestinians or the need to negotiate with Hamas who won a majority of the vote in the last general elections. The response of our government has been to issue inadequate calls for

restraint whilst equating the blame equally between the victims and oppressors. The closure of borders of Gaza, the continuing building of illegal settlements and the wall, the dispossessions from their land of Palestinians over the last 61 years with massive refugee camps as a consequence, the multiple violations of UN resolutions by Israel are all crimes about which the British and other governments have been silent. Conference notes the sale of more than £18.8 million worth of British arms to Israel in 2008, up from £7.5 million in 2007.

Conference further notes that the UN Human Rights commission has stated publicly that the Israeli military may be guilty of war crimes in Gaza. Further conference totally deplores the use of Israeli weapons such as phosphorus tipped shells by the Israeli military, as reported on Channel 4 News.

Conference congratulates UNISON's national leadership for its forthright condemnation of the brutal oppression of Gaza by the army, navy and airforce of Israel. Conference also warmly applauds the donations made by our trade union to Medical Aid for Palestine.

Conference welcomes the appeal by the Disasters Emergency Committee to relieve the humanitarian crisis and believes that such measures show the depth of the tragedy. Conference congratulates those broadcasters that showed the appeal and believes that as a public sector broadcaster the BBC's failure to do so must be condemned.

UNISON has long-standing and comprehensive policy on the Middle East and solidarity with the Palestinian people which it reaffirms. Conference believes that trade unions and other civil society organisations have a vital role in creating the conditions for mutual understanding and lasting peace between peoples. However, Conference also believes that this can only be achieved on the basis of justice for, and solidarity with, the oppressed. We recognise the importance of the work within our union to win support for the Palestinian people, to campaign for recognition of their rights and to bring pressure to bear on the British government to end complicity in denying the rights of the Palestinian people. Conference therefore welcomes the increasing involvement of the trade union movement around the world in solidarity with the Palestinians. UNISON should continue to press the case for an economic cultural and sporting boycott of Israel in line with the 2007 National Delegate Conference resolution if the occupation is not ended.

Conference is concerned that the conflict has led to a growing number of anti-semitic attacks on Jewish communities living outside of Israel. Conference totally condemns any attempt to use the conflict to promote anti-semitism, racism and xenophobia.

Conference therefore instructs the National Executive Council to:

- a) Oppose and condemn the use of continuing indiscriminate military and economic violence by the Israeli state against the Palestinian people and the rocket attacks and violence against innocent Israeli citizens whilst recognising the violence overwhelmingly emanates from the Israeli regime;
- b) Call on the British government to support a ban on imports of all goods, especially agricultural products from the illegal settlements in the occupied territories and until such a ban is introduced, to support a boycott of these goods;

- c) Calls for Israel to end their blockade of Gaza and for all suspected war crimes to be fully investigated;
- d) Continue to press the British government to: condemn unreservedly Israeli aggression; to be proactive in stopping attacks on Gaza and Palestine;) to end arms exports to Israel, including components via a third party; immediately end all economic, political, intelligence, and logistical aid to Israel; and to work within the EU to end the EU/Israeli Agreement that allows Israel favoured trading status;
- e) To actively work within the terms of this motion within the TUC, Wales TUC, Scottish TUC, European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), Public Services International (PSI) and other trade union organisations to which UNISON is affiliated to promote the cause of, and solidarity with, the Palestinian people; and to continue to work with and show solidarity with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and to oppose any attack on free and independent trade unions in Palestine from which ever source;
- f) Continue to support both financially and physically the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and demonstrations (including those vigils at the Israeli embassy) organised in support of the Palestinian people;
- g) To work with and support civil society organisations in Israel, including the scores of young Israelis imprisoned for refusing to take part in the army of occupation, who oppose the continuing occupation and support the rights of Palestinians such as Workers' Hotline, workers' advice centres and Sawt el-Amel;
- h) Request both sections of the Political Fund to use links with the international trade union movement to put pressure on the new US administration to use its influence for a long-term peace agreement that is fair for all the people who live in the region;
- i) To actively oppose and condemn anti semitism, racism and xenophobia;
- j) support recognition of the outcome of the last elections to the Palestinian Authority (2006) which were certified as free and fair by international observers;
- k) send a letter of solidarity to the staff and students at Islamic University of Gaza and the Al-Azhar University – Gaza;
- l) Conference also expresses its grave concern at the statement 13 January 2009 of the Histadrut (General Federation of Labour in Israel) supporting the military assault on Gaza, and in general at its lack of opposition to the occupation. We therefore agree to a review of our relationship with the Histadrut's PSI affiliates, Union of Clerical Administrative and Public Service Employees (UCAPSE) and the Government Employees' Union and to call on the TUC, STUC, Wales TUC and ICTU to review their relationship with the Histadrut;
- m) To continue to defend and implement existing UNISON policy as updated by 2009 Conference.

72 National Executive Council

72.1 Scotland Region

72.2 Islington

72.3 Manchester Local Government

72.4 London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

74 South East Region

77 Hammersmith and Fulham, Manchester Metropolitan University

78 Dorset

79 Islington