

RESOLUTION ON PALESTINE IMPLEMENTING ICTU POLICY ON PALESTINE

This ICTU Biennial Conference is outraged at the continued human rights abuses being suffered by the Palestinian people. We particularly note the following:

- the continued occupation and destruction of Palestinian lands and Palestinian homes in breach of the Geneva Convention and numerous United Nations resolutions
- the continuation of mass arrests, of torture and of extra-judicial killings
- the horrific assaults on the population of Gaza – the frequent killings of civilians including on a mass scale as at Beit Hanun, or the family of Houda Galia wiped out as they sat on the beach; the enclosure of the people of Gaza with razor wire and electrified fences, where they are subjected to frequent invasion and constant surveillance – including the sinister unmanned drones targeting for bombing raids, or the over-flights of ear-shattering jet fighters.
- the deliberate and illegal destruction of civilian infra-structure including electricity and water supplies
- the imposition of collective punishment, banned under international law, including the bulldozing of houses, the uprooting of ancient olive groves and destruction of industrial units
- the policy of ethnic cleansing designed to make life unbearable for all Palestinians under both Israeli and Palestinian authority - the on-going in-depth surveillance and control of the population including the forced division of families, and restrictions on free movement to deny them access to work, to education and to health-care – even in emergency situations such as child-birth
- the enforced bankruptcy of the Palestinian Authority and the impoverishment of the Palestinian People by the withholding of tax revenues [value?]; the impositions on the free movement of finance; the blocking of Palestinian exports and the blocking of international support and grant aid
- the continued building of the Apartheid Wall in defiance of the ruling of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, creating a series of ‘bantustans’ in the West Bank, fracturing families and communities, depriving Palestinians of their most productive land and water supplies and effectively annexing East Jerusalem into Israeli territory
- the continued building of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank, with the associated oppressive policing of the local population, the demolishing of Palestinian homes, the theft of land and water and the disruption of Palestinian infra-structure

The Conference also notes that the British and Irish Governments and the European Union have failed in their obligations under International Law - in terms of the Geneva Convention, the UN and the International Court – to challenge the activities of the Israeli government. A reasonable response would be the imposition of political and economic sanctions. Instead it is the Palestinians who have been punished by the withholding of grant aid, whilst the criminal actions of the Israeli state are further appeased by continuing to grant them preferential trading rights under Article 2 of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement. Conference notes that the European Union is formally obligated under the human rights clause in Article 2 to suspend the trading privileges enjoyed by Israel if it is in breach of human rights. The litany of human rights abuses, atrocities and war crimes should long ago have led to the ending of the agreement – indeed the European Parliament has already on two separate occasions called on the Council of Ministers to take this action.

In pursuance of ICTU policy to campaign in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and in recognition of the depths of oppression being suffered by them, conference authorizes the executive of ICTU to undertake the following:

A) That the ICTU make direct representations to the European Council of Ministers to challenge the withholding of EU funding, and addressing the fact that the EU has failed in its obligations under international law to oppose the actions of Israel. ICTU also demands the ending of the preferential trading status enjoyed by Israel under the Euro-Med. Agreement.

B) That the ICTU could seek a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Irish EU Commissioner to express our grave concerns about these issues, specifically to address the illegality of the Israeli actions, and to call for an appropriate and effective response.

C) That the representatives of ICTU raise these issues at the European TUC, and call upon concerted EU-wide trade union solidarity action to protest at the indifference of EU governments, at the failure of the strategy of 'constructive engagement' with the state of Israel, and at what is effectively the appeasement of the Israeli aggression and territorial expansionism.

D) To actively and vigorously promote a policy of divestment from Israeli companies recognising that it is one of the most effective ways to ensure that the Israeli government is made aware of the extent of opposition to its crimes against humanity. ICTU will encourage affiliates to apply a policy of ethical investment in terms of pension fund holdings, and seek to ensure that investments are therefore withdrawn from Israeli companies as well as companies such as Caterpillar and Irish Cement Roadholdings that directly support the Israeli occupation and destruction of Palestinian land. Affiliates will also be encouraged to use whatever influence they can bring to bear on employers in both the private and state sector to apply such a policy of ethical investment.

E) To actively and vigorously promote a boycott of Israeli goods and services similar to the boycott of South African goods during the era of apartheid. ICTU will proactively support such a boycott policy by working with affiliates on a programme of educational activities, by a media campaign and by working alongside human rights and humanitarian relief organisations.

F) That the solidarity links between the Irish, Palestinian and Israeli labour movements be strengthened by a delegation of senior trade union leaders to the occupied areas. ICTU will also invite Palestinian trade union representatives to visit Ireland to encourage greater awareness of the situation in Palestine today, and to support the call for divestment, boycott and sanctions.

G) That the implementation of ICTU policy be further strengthened by the formation of Trade Union Friends of Palestine groups in the Republic of Ireland to work alongside TUFPP in Northern Ireland. That ICTU hosts a TUFPP conference, with invited international speakers, to further develop trade union solidarity action.