

GUIDANCE SHEET FOR TRADE UNIONISTS ON BUILDING SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

Palestinian trade unions have consistently called for international solidarity in response to Israel's severe human rights violations and the daily injustices Palestinian workers face. Trade unionists around the world have heeded their call, responding with a range of actions.

This guidance document provides information on how you can take action within your union to support Palestinian workers.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD SOLIDARITY WITHIN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT?

As workers, one of the key instruments we have for pressuring states and companies is our trade unions. Trade unions have the power to apply **economic and moral political pressure**.

The trade union movement has a long and proud tradition since its very beginning of **supporting emancipatory movements** around the world through **solidarity actions**. For example, international trade union solidarity played a central role in the movement against apartheid in South Africa.

International trade union solidarity is particularly **important when governments are not listening** to the public and standing on the wrong side of history. Direct action outside of the legislative sphere can play a **critical role in turning the tide in government** and it can also serve to **put pressure squarely on companies** who are complicit in the actions of oppressive states.

WHAT ACTION WOULD HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT FROM MY TRADE UNION?

The actions that make the biggest impact are those that make **direct connections between your industry or employer and Israel's oppression of Palestinians**. For example:

- Dockworkers in many countries have supported or organized **blockades of Israeli cargo** and an Israeli shipping company. Even when blockades have been initiated and organized by external activist groups, support from sympathetic insiders in unions has played a critical role in the success of these actions.

- Actions to **disrupt the manufacture of arms** – as Scottish workers did in the 1970's during the dictatorship in Chile – can be particularly effective. To learn whether your employer is involved in manufacturing arms for Israel, please visit the [‘Who Arms Israel’](#) fact sheet on the Workers for Palestine website.
- University and cultural workers in various countries have respectively organized campaigns to join the **academic and cultural boycott of Israel**. The National Writers Union (NWU) in the US has issued a call to the media for responsible reporting on the war on Gaza and called attention to Israel's targeting of Palestinian journalists and repression of sympathetic journalists abroad.
- Workers employed by companies profiting from Israel's oppression of Palestinians – or whose pension portfolios include such companies – have a special role to play as well. Work with others and urge your employer and/or pension funds to **withdraw investments from Israel**.

Even if you can't find a direct link between your employer or industry and Israel, or you are organizing around this issue for the first time: there are still many ways to build support within your trade union.

- Work with others to **bring a solidarity motion to your union** or central labor council meeting.
- Work with your branch to **develop an educational campaign** about Israel's treatment of Palestinian workers.
- Organize your fellow union members to **attend a protest together as a trade union bloc**.
- **Invite a local Palestine community organization to come do an educational event** with union members.

Every action makes a difference!



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HOW CAN I CONVINCE MY UNION TO STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE?

For some trade unionists, international solidarity – and the issue of Palestine – may be unfamiliar.

Focus on getting your message across in **clear, straightforward language** that gets to the heart of the matter. **You don't need to be an expert** on Palestine to be a good advocate!

As reported recently in Labor Notes magazine, Dave Pinkham, an electrician apprentice who successfully brought a motion to his local union in Austin Texas, shared: “The main question that came up was, ‘What does this have to do with us? . . . We made an **appeal to humanity**: ‘U.S. military support to Israel is supporting violence there. Let’s stop.’ That worked.”

When bringing a proposal to your union, it’s a good idea to come with a clear ‘ask’ (see suggestions on potential actions above), but be open to suggestions from fellow members as well in order to arrive at an action that has broad support.

It’s also a good idea to speak with potential allies in advance to build support. Are there individuals in leadership or other active members who are likely to be on board? What about specific members’ committees, such as committees for workers of color or international solidarity committee?

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WHERE CAN I GO FOR SUPPORT AND TO LEARN MORE?

- Workersinpalestine.org provides up to date information on trade union actions around the world and resources for organizing.
- To learn more about the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement more generally, please visit bdsmovement.org.
- For legal advice, Palestine Legal supports activists in the US while the European Legal Support Center supports activists in Europe and the UK.
- Just as importantly, though, try to build connections with local community activists involved in Palestine solidarity. Face to face support is invaluable and can lead to fruitful collaborations in your local area.