

**DRAFT PROPOSAL, Labor Movement Statement, for consideration by the Joint Council of UAW 2865 regarding the ballot Initiative to join the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement**

This September, a coalition of organizations in Gaza issued a renewed call for trade unions and other organizations throughout the world *to divest from Israel as a non-violent means of putting pressure on the Israeli state to end its ongoing violations of the human rights of Palestinians.*

[1] Of the twenty Palestinian organizations that signed on to the call, at least eight were trade unions, including the Palestinian University Teachers Union. A previous call was issued in July by most of the same organizations, amidst a series of particularly deadly attacks on Palestinian civilians by the Israeli government. [2] The six-week long assault left over 2000 Palestinians murdered by Israeli forces, and the Gaza Strip devastated, its material infrastructure crippled and people's lives and livelihoods destroyed. *The Israeli assault on Gaza is the latest in decades of ongoing violence and oppression against Palestinians.*

*We believe that violations of human rights anywhere in the world should concern working people everywhere.* In light of the Israeli state's assault on Gaza this summer, the statewide Joint Council of our union, UAW 2865, the UC Student-Workers Union, endorsed the call for Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment (BDS) and made public its intention to call a full membership vote on this issue during the school year. [3]

In the United States, efforts to support the Palestinian trade union movement's call for divestment have been led by Labor for Palestine. In addition to our local union, North Carolina's Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150 has also endorsed the call for divestment. Several labor coalitions, including Bay Area Labor Committee for Peace and Justice, New York Labor against the War, and the Filipino Workers Association signed Labor for Palestine's founding statement. Members of ILWU Local 10 have taken important leadership on this issue by respecting a community picket set up this summer outside the Port of Oakland to boycott Zim, an Israeli shipping line. The call for BDS is also supported by growing numbers of officers and rank-and-file members in numerous other union locals around the country. [4]

Outside of the United States, the Palestinian call for BDS has seen wide and growing support in the labor movement, including by several unions in the UK and Ireland, UNITE New Zealand, CUPE in Canada, COSATU in South Africa and many dockworker unions around the world, among others. [5] In addition to joining the call for BDS, trade unionists from many sectors have been active in Block the Boat activities in ports around the world, including this summer in Oakland.

*BDS is not the first social justice effort that looks beyond the primary economic and representational activities of the union.* For example, in recent years, campus units and our statewide local have issued statements and taken actions in support of divestment from fossil fuels, the Occupy movement, immigrant rights, justice for Trayvon Martin, the South African Marikana miners and the Chilean student movement, among others. Labor unions, including our own national union, the United Auto Workers, were active in the Civil Rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s.

***It is our right and responsibility to engage in political expression on the critical issues of our time.*** Many American labor unions actively opposed the military dictatorship in Chile during the 1970's and 1980's and played a key role in supporting the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. In fact, our own national union, the UAW, played a particularly critical role in leading the labor movement's divestment campaign to end apartheid in South Africa. Additionally, union members in the United States have been active in the global anti-sweatshop movement and numerous other targeted campaigns against labor rights abuses around the world.

***Labor activists oppose Israeli state policy toward the Palestinian people on human rights grounds.*** We condemn unequivocally Israeli ***state violence*** against the civilian population in Gaza and the West Bank and the ***denial of basic citizenship rights*** to Palestinians living in Israel and the ***denial of Palestinian refugees' right to return*** to their homes and lands as stipulated in U.N. Resolution 194 and numerous other U.N. resolutions. As trade unionists, we additionally express our concern with the ways in which the Israeli occupation enables ***widespread violations of labor rights*** such as the right to organize and the hyper-exploitation of Palestinian workers by Israeli employers. As academics, we condemn the ***denial of academic freedom*** to Palestinian scholars and students under conditions of Israeli occupation. We are also acting in ***solidarity with Palestinian members of our own union*** who have been personally impacted by the Israeli occupation and assault on Gaza.

***Finally, the union's motivation in responding to Palestinian trade unionists' call for boycott and divestment is to oppose all forms of racism, which include anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism.*** We reiterate that while we condemn anti-Semitic and bigoted hate speech, criticism of Israeli state policy is not anti-Semitic; [6] it is principled human rights activism and protected political expression. Many Jewish and Israeli individuals from around the world, including from among our own membership [7], have echoed the call for justice in Palestine, and we support their right to free speech and adoption of a political position divergent from the Israeli state's.

***Working people everywhere have a common interest in opposing oppression and exploitation wherever they are found.*** Working together as a global labor movement to oppose injustice around the world strengthens us all in our individual struggles against anti-labor employers and states and in our collective efforts to build the world that working people deserve. An Injury to One Is an Injury to All.

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[1] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2014/a-call-from-gaza-make-israel-accountable-for-its-crimes-in-gaza-intensify-bds-12627>

[2] <http://laborforpalestine.net/2014/07/12/urgent-call-from-gaza-civil-society-act-now/>

[3] <http://www.uaw2865.org/student-workers-at-the-university-of-california-support-palestine-uaw-2865-joint-council-prepares-for-membership-vote-on-bds/>

[4] <http://laborforpalestine.net/2014/08/05/growing-support-for-labor-for-palestine-statement-stop-the-war-on-gaza-no-arms-for-apartheid-israel-boycott-divestment-and-sanctions/>

[5] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/activecamps/trade-unions>

[6]UAW 2865 has emphasized the difference between criticism of Israel and criticism of Jewish identity in the past. See email to UAW 2865 Members, August 3, 2012, “Sign the Petition! Protect Free Speech Rights at the UC”.

[7] <http://www.uaw2865.org/open-letter-from-jewish-officers-and-members-in-support-of-divestment/>.