

Australian Manufacturing Union – Queensland Branch

19 November 2010

Palestine / Israel Conflict and Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Campaign

Background – BDS Campaign

In 2005, Palestinian civil society, including more than 171 Palestinian organisations, political parties, trade unions, associations and coalitions initiated a Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. The aim of the strategy is to work towards a peaceful resolution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict through non violent actions.

The BDS campaign will continue until Israel recognises the rights of the Palestinian people to self determination and fully complies with International Law and United Nations Resolutions by ending its internationally recognised illegal occupation of Palestinian land.

The coalition calls upon people of conscience all over the world to impose boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa during the 'Apartheid era'.

Consumer boycott, institutional divestment, examination of ethical superannuation investments, cultural and sporting boycotts are peaceful initiatives being undertaken across the world

Over the past 5 years the Palestinian BDS campaign has gone from strength to strength internationally, with trade unions, churches, universities, students, NGO's, Human Rights groups and some politicians endorsing the call and organising campaigns within their membership.

Twenty One Australian Unions including two Peak Councils and 3 Regional Councils have endorsed the call to date.

Goals of the BDS Campaign are to

- Expose the true nature if the Israeli occupation and apartheid practices
- Expose the relentless contravention of human rights inflicted on the Palestinian people and make Israel accountable
- Reveal the complicity of the international community in supporting Israel's regime
- Educate to bring about the end of the Israeli occupation and apartheid with the understanding that apartheid cannot be sustained without external assistance

Recent Events and Ongoing Issues

On 27 December 2008 Israel conducted brutal attacks on 1.5 million civilians known as 'Operation Cast Lead' in the Gaza Strip killing 1400 people injuring 5,000, leaving 2,000 children orphans and many homeless and without medical attention.

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On 31 May 2010 Israel attacked the international humanitarian flotilla the MV Mavi Marmara carrying 700 human rights activists attempting to break the siege of Gaza to deliver 10,000 tonnes of much needed humanitarian aid. The premeditated Israeli attack resulted in 9 people being killed and many more wounded – amongst them a Queenslander. The UN Human Rights Council investigation stated in its report that, “On the basis of the forensic and firearm evidence, at least six of the killings can be characterised as extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions”.

Israel continues its siege and occupation of Gaza where aid is still being denied, especially building materials for homes, schools, hospitals, water infrastructure and adequate levels of food. This contravenes a UN Security Council Resolution.

Israel continues its illegal occupation of East Jerusalem and the West Bank including the building of illegal settlements on internationally recognised Palestinian land and in contravention of United Nations resolutions. Settlement building and the subsequent transfer of civilian populations is a war crime as reported in the latest Amnesty International statement.

While Australian tax payers indirectly subsidise Jewish settlers into at the very least occupied Palestinian East Jerusalem, these settlements are illegal.

The prospects of a just and viable two state solution are becoming more remote through this colonisation.

A just and viable two state solution is also in the long term interests of Israel as the Arab League have twice offered the state of Israel full normalisation for an end to its illegal occupation outside 1967 borders (which still allocates 78% of the land to Israel). It is also in Australia’s interests, as failure to achieve such an outcome also increases the prospect of increased regional and global conflict, including issues relating to terrorism.

The AMWU is mindful of the long standing suffering of the Palestinian people. Recent reports by Queensland unionists who were delegates on the APHEDA study tour of the Middle East in March 2010 verified first-hand the situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian Territories and the plight of refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, the occupied territories including the Gaza Strip.

Recommendation

The AMWU calls upon the ACTU and the ALP to show genuine support for a two-state solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict based on each other’s right to exist and live in peace within secure borders in accordance with UN resolutions and international law.

To achieve this ultimate goal, Council supports immediate steps such as;

- the implementation and upholding of International Law to ensure the human rights of all people are assured

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- the upholding of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and all other relevant resolutions that call for an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian West Bank and East Jerusalem
- a two state solution based on the internationally recognised 1967 borders
- an end to the illegal blockade on Gaza that greatly impacts on the health and lives of 1.5 million people, half of whom are children and twenty percent under the age of five
- an end to the demolition of Palestinian homes on their own land
- an end to the construction of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land
- the dismantling of the illegal separation wall constructed in the Palestinian West Bank & East Jerusalem where it is built on Palestinian land
- an end to the permit regime and movement restrictions placed on approximately four million Palestinians that greatly impacts on the Palestinian economy and severely restricts Palestinian access to reasonable levels of employment
- an end to the oppressive workplace practices and work imposed on Palestinian workers in the illegal industrial zones
- a just resolution to the Palestinian refugee issue based on United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194 calling for the right of return for refugees or just compensation

The AMWU Queensland/ NT State Council condemns violence in all its forms, condemns racism including anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination against individuals based on their race or religion.

Further, until such time as human rights, International Law and United Nations Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions are adhered to in order to bring about a just and viable two-state solution as above we resolve to support

- non-violent resistance through the international Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Campaign against Israel to bring about an end to the illegal occupation
- a consumer boycott of Israeli goods
- a consumer boycott of all companies who assist or profit from the occupation
- a review of our union investments and divestment from Israeli companies
- research/investigations into union superannuation funds to identify investments held with Israeli companies and companies supporting the occupation with a view to pursue divestment of those companies (based on ethical grounds).

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