

## Labor for Palestine

# 60 Years of Racism & Apartheid Is Nothing for Labor to Celebrate

Israel was founded as a European colonial outpost through the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948, when Zionists massacred 13,000 Palestinians, erased 531 towns and villages, emptied 11 urban neighborhoods, and expelled more than 750,000 (85 percent) from 78 percent of their country. In 1967, Israel seized the remaining 22 percent of Palestine — including East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza — which, in violation of UN resolutions, remains under Israeli military rule.

Today, because of these policies, at least 70 percent of the 10 million Palestinians are refugees — the largest such population in the world. Despite other UN resolutions, Israel vows that it will never allow them to return.

Palestinians who managed to remain within the 1948 areas — today, 1.4 million (or 20 percent of the population in Israel) — are permanently separated from their families in exile, subject to more than 20 discriminatory laws, treated as a “demographic threat,” and threatened with mass expulsion.

In East Jerusalem and the West Bank, 140 illegal, ever-expanding Jewish-only settlements and road systems dominate the water resources and control 40 percent of the land. Palestinians are confined, separated, denied medical treatment, and degraded by an 8-meter-high separation wall, pass laws, curfews and 600 military checkpoints.

Since 2006, Israel has carried out collective punishment to overthrow the democratically-elected Hamas government, by turning Gaza into the world’s “largest open air prison,” assassinating activists, and cutting-off essential goods and services to 1.5 million people.

In recent months, Israel massacred hundreds of Palestinians in Gaza, and threatened them with a “shoah” (Hebrew for Holocaust) -- further proof that Gaza is today’s Warsaw Ghetto. It is no surprise that Israel was apartheid South Africa’s closest ally.

## U.S. Sponsorship

Israel’s war on Palestine depends completely on U.S. money, weapons and approval. In the past ten years alone, U.S. military aid was \$17 billion; over the next decade, it will be \$30 billion.

This “special friendship” means that, as in Afghanistan and Iraq, it is U.S. aircraft, cluster bombs and bullets that kill and maim on behalf of the occupiers. Just one of many targets was the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions headquarters in Gaza City, destroyed by F-16s on February 28.

Such support bolsters Israel’s longstanding role as watchdog and junior partner in U.S. wars of conquest in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Together, these wars and occupations have killed, maimed and displaced millions of people, thereby creating the world’s largest humanitarian crisis. Now, Israel is the cutting edge of threats against Syria and Iran.



***“As someone who lived in apartheid South Africa and who has visited Palestine I say with confidence that Israel is an apartheid state. In fact, I believe that some of Israel’s actions make the actions of South Africa’s apartheid regime appear pale by comparison. -- Willie Madisha, President, Congress of South African Trade Unions, June 6, 2006***

## U.S. Labor Leaders’ Support for Israeli Apartheid

In Palestine, South Africa, Britain, Canada and other countries, labor has condemned Israeli Apartheid.

Workers in the United States pay a staggering human and financial price, including deepening economic crisis, for U.S.-Israeli war and occupation throughout the Middle East.

But through a combination of intent, ignorance and/or expediency, much of labor officialdom in this country — often without the knowledge or consent of union members — is an accomplice of Israeli Apartheid.

Some 1,500 labor bodies have plowed at least \$5 billion of union pension funds and retirement plans into State of Israel Bonds.

In April 2002, while Israel butchered Palestinian refugees at Jenin in the West Bank, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney was a featured speaker at a belligerent “National Solidarity Rally for Israel.” In 2006, leadership of the American Federation of Teachers embraced Israel’s war on Lebanon.

These same leaders collaborate with attempts by the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) to silence Apartheid Israel’s opponents — many of whom are Jewish.

In July 2007, top officials of the AFL-CIO and Change to Win signed a JLC statement that condemned British unions for even considering the nonviolent campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel.

Earlier this year, the JLC and the leadership of UNITE-HERE bullied a community organization in Boston into revoking space for a conference on Zionism and the Repression of Anti-Colonial Movements.

Labor leaders’ complicity parallels infamous “AFL-CIA” support for U.S. war and dictatorship in Vietnam, Latin America, Gulf War I, Afghanistan and elsewhere. It strengthens the U.S.-Israel war machine and labor’s corporate enemies, reinforces racism and Islamophobia, and makes a mockery of international solidarity.

In 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. denounced the Vietnam War, pointing out that “silence is betrayal,” that “the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today . . . [is] my own government,” and that most basic principle of labor solidarity: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

These principles are no less relevant today.

Yes, the Israel lobby seeks to silence opponents of Israeli Apartheid. All the more reason why trade unionists — many of them Jewish anti-Zionists — have broken that silence by speaking out against Israeli military occupation, for the right of Palestinian refugees to return, and for the elimination of apartheid throughout historic Palestine.

Therefore, we reaffirm our support for an immediate and total:

1. End to U.S. military and economic support for Israel.
2. Divestment of business and labor investments in Israel.
3. Withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces from the Middle East.

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