

U.S. Unions Call for Ceasefire in Gaza

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While many union members and other workers are worried and horrified at the mounting war in Israel and occupied Palestine, U.S. unions so far have mostly remained silent.

But workers are speaking up and organizing with their co-workers to push their unions on the side of peace and justice. United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 3000 and United Electrical Workers (UE) have sponsored a [petition](#) calling for a ceasefire.

“Union members come from diverse backgrounds, including Jews, Muslims, and Middle Eastern communities,” says the petition. “The rising escalation of war and arms sales doesn’t serve the interests of workers anywhere.”

Since Hamas killed 1,300 Israelis on October 7, Israel has cut off electricity, food, and water to the Gaza Strip, forcibly displacing 1.1 million Palestinians, and is conducting airstrikes that have already [killed](#) 3,478 Palestinians. One thousand of them are children.

Human rights groups warn that Israel’s actions violate international law, and that we could be witnessing the beginning of a genocide.



Activists from groups including Jewish Voice for Peace and IfNotNow blockaded entrances to the White House on October 16 to demand the U.S. push Israel to declare a ceasefire in Gaza. Photo: IfNotNow

‘MILITARY SOLUTIONS WILL GET MORE PEOPLE KILLED’

Even before the attacks and the war, UE at its September convention had passed a resolution demanding that the U.S. government end all military aid to Israel for its apartheid rule over Palestinians. That has included the confiscation of Palestinian homes and land by the right-wing government to expand Israeli settlements; cutting farmers off from fields and water supplies; and “treating Gaza as the world’s largest open-air prison, with its residents trapped in abysmal economic and social conditions.”

“We certainly don’t support any killing, whether it’s in the form of bombs, guns, starving people

through blockades, or through apartheid, from any side,” UE Secretary-Treasurer Andrew Dinkelaker [told In These Times](#). “U.S. military aid going in is pouring gasoline onto a fire. It encourages that there be military solutions, and military solutions will get more people killed.”

After the war began, the National Writers Union was among the first to take a stand, highlighting the killings of Palestinian journalists in particular. It condemned the actions of the Israeli military “and its specific assault on the press,” and [urged the North American media](#) to “cover this war in a factual, unbiased way, and with proper historical context.”

NWU organized an emergency video call on Monday night for unionists to discuss how U.S. unions could amplify calls for a ceasefire. A second call, this time hosted by U.S. Labor Against War and Racism, is planned on Thursday, October 19; register here.

VOICES ABROAD

The labor voices abroad are a bit louder. France’s largest labor federation, the CGT, has condemned Israel’s attacks and [called for an immediate ceasefire](#), writing (in French), “The CGT demands that France, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, immediately mobilize the resources of its diplomacy to obtain an immediate ceasefire and so that the announced annihilation of northern Gaza, by a large-scale land, sea and air offensive, does not happen.”

The union also called for France to offer the same generosity and temporary protections to Palestinian war refugees that it has to Ukrainian refugees.

In Britain, the [National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers](#) (RMT) called on its members to join a London march last weekend against the violence and apartheid. The union is also promoting fundraising for emergency medical aid, and calling for the U.K. to stop selling arms to Israel.

The [Public and Commercial Services Union](#) (PCS) also supported the London march, and called Israel’s actions “horrific and a form of collective punishment which is against international law.”

A coalition of Palestinian unions, including the main union federation, has [called on U.S. workers to pressure our government](#), and on workers worldwide to refuse to build and transport weapons to Israel.

“Beyond diplomatic support, Western states are supplying Israel with armament, sanctioning the operation of Israeli weapons companies within their borders,” they wrote. “The time for action is now—Palestinian lives hang in the balance.”

As the world’s biggest arms dealer, and the main financial and political backer of the Israeli military, the U.S. is the only country that could effectively push Israel to change course and de-escalate. Instead, President Biden is pledging to send even more weapons.

But pressure is growing for the U.S. government to push for a ceasefire. Supporters of groups like Palestinian Youth Movement, U.S. Palestinian Community Network, Jewish Voice for Peace, and IfNotNow have taken to the streets in the tens of thousands to demand an end to the siege of Gaza.

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P.S.

- Labor Notes. October 19, 2023:
<https://labornotes.org/blogs/2023/10/us-unions-call-ceasefire-gaza>

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