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STATEMENTS

Palestinian trade union movement applauds the Scottish Congress of Trade Unions (STUC) for heeding the Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS and calls on the STUC to sever links with the Histadrut

Thursday 21 April 2011, by [Trade Unions \(Palestine\)](#) (Date first published: 15 April 2011).

Occupied Palestine, April 15th, 2011 - The Palestinian trade union movement, as a key component of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC), salutes the Scottish Congress of Trade Unions for their principled and historic decision in April 2009 to heed the Palestinian civil society call for BDS. We also deeply appreciate the STUC decision of 2010 to review relations with Israel's racist and colonial trade union entity, Histadrut, and hope that this year's congress will decide to sever links with the Histadrut as a logical implementation of your principled adoption of BDS.

The Histadrut, as the definitive record shows, is a Zionist organization that has always played a key role in perpetuating Israel's occupation, colonization and system of racial discrimination. Since its initiation, the Histadrut has been an active supporter of the dispossession of Palestinians and denial of their basic rights. On January 13th 2009, during Israel's 22-day war of aggression on Gaza, the Histadrut issued a statement[1] justifying the Israeli attack on Gaza. Israel was later found to have committed war crimes and possible crimes against humanity. A later statement by the Histadrut justified Israel's massacre of humanitarian relief workers and activists aboard the Freedom Flotilla on 31 May 2010.[2]

Furthermore, the Histadrut owes over NIS 8.3 billion (approximately £1.47bn) to Palestinian workers from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.[3] This money was deducted from Palestinian workers' salaries for social and other trade union benefits that they never received. Palestinian workers from the occupied Palestinian territory pay for but do not receive the vast majority of social rights for which they are legally mandated to pay. This can only be seen as part of the ongoing theft of Palestinian workers' rights by the Histadrut.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza cannot be members of the Histadrut. Inside Israel, the union refuses to assist Palestinian citizens of Israel fight racial discrimination in the workplace. In one notorious example, the Histadrut did nothing when, in 2004, the helmets of Palestinian workers at a building site in the Knesset grounds were marked with a red X, to facilitate assassination in case of emergency.[4]

The Histadrut played a key role during the Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948, when at least 750,000 indigenous Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes and homeland. It was a key player in the construction of settlements[5] and continues to support the colonisation of Palestinian land.

The Histadrut maintains active commercial interests in Israel's illegal settlement enterprise. For example, the Histadrut owns 25% of Yashav Bank, which has a branch in Occupied East Jerusalem,[6] and allows Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank to join the organization.[7] In these ways and other ways, the Histadrut is directly involved in Israel's violations of the IV Geneva Convention, which prohibits the transfer of its own civilian population into the occupied territory. Recent news reports reveal the Histadrut's pivotal role in propping up the Netanyahu government, a government responsible for the continuation of settlement expansion and the construction of Israel's apartheid wall, intense violence against Palestinians and the attack on the Freedom Flotilla and numerous other attacks on human rights and international law.[8]

Given the Histadrut's blatant support for Israeli war crimes, theft of Palestinian workers' dues, racial discrimination and its direct involvement in maintaining the Israel's occupation and colonial settlement enterprise, there is no reason for trade unions to make an exception for the Histadrut when implementing their BDS policies.

It is evident that a policy of "constructive engagement," as some international trade unionists have advocated, will provide further legitimacy and impunity for the Histadrut's complicity in Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian rights. Engagement of any kind with an organisation that is ideologically committed to Israel's racist and colonial oppression of the Palestinian people amounts to normalization and the emboldening of Israel's colonial project. The Histadrut cannot be 'constructively engaged' any more effectively than other key Zionist institutions. Furthermore, its active support for racial discrimination and failure to respect human rights and international law are inconsistent with the minimum requirements for trade unions to promote equality, international justice, and workers solidarity.

The global trade union movement has always been a key player and an inspiration in its courage and commitment to human rights by adopting concrete, ground-breaking labor-led sanctions against oppressive regimes in a show of effective solidarity with oppressed peoples around the world. Inspired by the courage of international trade unions that boycotted South Africa during the anti-apartheid struggle, STUC, TUC, COSATU, ICTU, CUT (Brazil) and other major union federations and dozens of individual unions are once again adopting the time-honored tactic of boycott and divestment as the most effective form of solidarity with a people under colonial and racist oppression. Trade unions today are taking the lead in defending the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, freedom, the respect of the right of return of our refugees, and an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid. We cannot forget STUC's pioneering role in advocating for BDS in the UK.

It is with this in mind that in addition to the STUC, the ICTU and COSATU have also taken steps to sever ties with the Histadrut. The University and College Union (UCU) has implemented a full boycott[9] and UNISON voted, in the wake of the attack on the Freedom Flotilla, to suspend ties.[10]

As the struggle against apartheid in South Africa has shown, effective and consistent international solidarity with an oppressed people is best expressed in forms that the oppressed themselves call for. Since 2005, Palestinian civil society, including its trade union federations and all the trade union political blocs, has been united in calling on people of conscience and institutions around the world, particularly trade unions, to endorse BDS against Israel and to implement the boycott in diverse ways.

In light of all of the above, we, the Palestinian trade union movement, including almost the entirety of the blocks that make up the PGFTU, reiterate the BNC's call of 2009[11] for severing links with the Histadrut, as our best hope to end Israel's grave violations against our workers and people, until we attain our inalienable, UN-sanctioned rights, especially our right to self-determination.

Signed by the following PGFTU members, who make up almost the entirety of the PGFTU executive:

Central Office for the Workers Movement (Fatah)
Workers Unity block
Progressive Labor Union Front
Workers Struggle Block
Workers Liberation Front
Progressive Workers Block
Workers Solidarity Organization

And the following additional unions and organisations:

General Union of Palestinian Workers
Federation of Independent Trade Unions (IFU)
Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUPE)
General Union of Palestinian Peasants and Co-op Groups
Union of Palestinian Farmers
The Union of Public Employees in Palestine- Civil Sector
The Union of UNRWA Employees in Palestine
General Union of Palestinian Writers
General Union of Palestinian Teachers
Palestinian Professionals Association**

**Includes the national syndicates of engineers, agricultural engineers, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, lawyers and veterinarians.

[1] http://www.labourstart.org/israel/Histadrut_on_Gaza.pdf

[2] http://www.histadrut.org.il/index.php?page_id=1801

[3] <http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/topics/news/2422-israel-owes-over-nis-83-billion-to-palestinian-workers-from-the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

[4] <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10379.shtml>

[5] <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10379.shtml>

[6] <http://www.whoprofits.org/Company%20Info.php?id=889>

[7] <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article10379.shtml>

[8] <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/haaretz-wikileaks-exclusive-union-chief-was-key-power-broker-in-netanyahu-government-1.354693>

[9] <http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1247>

[10] <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/files/UNISONConf2010.pdf>

[11] <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/594>

P.S.

* <http://www.bdsmovement.net/2011/tu-movement-stuc-6535>