

Ramallah, 29 May, 2024

GLOBAL UNION LEADERS AFFIRM SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN TRADE UNIONS AND THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

This week leaders of eight Global Union Federations (GUFs) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) travelled to Ramallah to convey their solidarity to unions in the West Bank and Gaza. These organisations represent almost every sector of the global economy and have members in more than 150 countries representing over 200 million workers. Working with Palestinian affiliates and others, the GUFs, all members of the Council of Global Unions (CGU), pledged to intensify efforts to help local trade unions navigate these difficult times for workers and fulfil their role as key drivers of change in Palestine.

The delegation, which included the General Secretaries of the ITUC and the GUFs as well as a number of top union leaders from across the world, met with representatives of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) as well as union leaders representing workers in the West Bank and Gaza.

The delegation had the privilege to meet President Abbas. They also met Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Samah Abou Oun, and several government ministers during the mission on 28-30 May 2024. Several global unions are already deeply engaged with their Palestinian colleagues, all committed to supporting and sustaining the struggle of Palestinian workers.

The delegation made clear that “we express our solidarity with Palestinian trade unions and workers in these difficult times. We are deeply concerned by the grave humanitarian crisis faced by the people of Gaza, and we stand with Palestinians, Israelis and people the world over calling for peace, equality and justice.”

Urgent priorities must include an immediate and permanent ceasefire with full respect for international humanitarian law, immediate access to humanitarian assistance, the release of all hostages and others held without due judicial process and enabling the safe return of all workers trapped by the conflict.

The delegation recalled the ITUC and other global unions’ long-standing policy for a two-state solution, and the call for a just and durable peace through the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 to facilitate a real economic future for an independent Palestine. This involves ending the occupation of the West Bank, dismantling all illegal settlements, and recognising the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state.

The delegation urged governments to resume and increase funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). “UNRWA’s role is vital in providing essential services and supporting Palestinians at a time when they are most in need.



“We came here to reinforce the depth of our commitment to Palestinian workers and their unions – we are all part of the same family. Our goal is a democratic and sovereign Palestine, living in just and lasting peace and security, alongside a secure Israel. We know that trade unions are an essential element of any democracy, and that strong and democratic independent unions will be a key building block towards that end in Palestine.”

The delegation reported hearing moving testimony from Palestinians who have paid a terrible price during the current war.

On top of the distressing reality of destruction and loss of life in Gaza, we have heard about settler violence, restrictions on human rights such as freedom of movement and economic hardship in the West Bank. What shines through nevertheless, is the commitment to trade unionism and its potential to help deliver a just settlement in the broader chaos of this conflict.

“Our responsibility as global trade unionists is to nurture that sentiment and we call upon the global labour movement to deliver on its principles of peace, humanity, democracy, and solidarity. This includes continuing to invest in a constructive dialogue with trade unions in both Palestine and Israel which recognises their critical role in their respective societies.

Global unions will neither forget nor forsake our sisters and brothers in Palestine. We will redouble efforts to support your unions and support you. Trade unions have remained a constant – democratically, rooted in their communities, and well equipped to provide concrete support during the reconstruction, which should embed the principles of decent work and quality public services.”

Many of the global unions have already provided significant aid to workers through unions in Gaza and the West Bank. Education International has provided financial assistance for more than 1,000 teachers in Palestine, and shelter for more than 5,000 children in Rafah. The International Federation of Journalists provides direct support for reporters in Gaza and operates a solidarity centre with workspace and equipment in Khan Younis. The International Transport Workers’ Federation and Public Services International have both launched solidarity funds to provide immediate relief and longer-term support for Palestinian transport and public service workers and their families. Building and Wood Workers’ International has provided humanitarian support and shelter for construction workers and their families.

The delegation concluded: “Trade unions are part of the global peace movement. We stand for peace alongside such important values as democracy and humanity. That’s why we are here.”

ENDS



Notes for editors

The Council of Global Unions brings together the leaders of trade union 'internationals', each of which represent many national unions – usually in a specific field of employment. Its current membership includes: Building and Woodworkers International, Education International, the International Federation of Journalists, the International Arts and Entertainments Alliance, IndustriALL Global Union, the International Transport Workers Federation, the International Trades Union Confederation (which represents workers across all sectors), the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers Association, Public Service International, the Trades Union Advisory Committee to the OECD, and UNI Global Union.



The delegation to Palestine comprised:

ITUC

- Luc Triangle General Secretary
- Jordania Urefia Deputy General Secretary

UNI

- Christy Hoffman General Secretary
- Marcio Monzane Regional Secretary UNI Americas
- Ben Richards Senior Policy Advisor

Education International

- David Edwards General Secretary
- Mugwena Maluleke Vice President - Africa
- Dalila EL Barhmi Coordinator for the Arab countries

ITF

- Steve Cotton General Secretary
- Paddy Crumlin President

IndustriAll

- Atle Hoie General Secretary
- Marie Nielsson President

PSI

- Daniel Bertossa General Secretary
- Christina McAnea General Secretary UNISON, the public service union

IFJ

- Tim Dawson Deputy General Secretary

BWI

- Ambet Yuson General Secretary
- Per Olof Sjöo President

IUF

- Sue Longley General Secretary

