



This booklet, *Solidarity with the People of Palestine*, is the second in our *WWMP Solidarity Forever* series, following the one produced previously that promotes solidarity with the people from Swaziland and

Zimbabwe. The information contained in the booklet focuses on the history of colonial occupation and oppression of the historic land and people of Palestine. It exposes several historical myths that have been perpetuated by the Israeli rulers and their supporters, primarily the governments of “the West” in the form of the US, Britain and several European countries.

The booklet goes further and provides a contemporary analysis of the current political economy of the Middle East, with a neo-liberal capitalist programme being entrenched there and forced on Palestine. It highlights the consequences of this development on the working class of the Middle-East and the role of Israel and several ruling Arab elites in promoting their own capitalist interests and that of their imperialist masters of the West. This book’s call for solidarity is based on struggles that we have in common with the Palestinians and makes a clear link between neo-liberal economics and politics, and the continued colonial oppression of the Palestinian people.

The booklet includes discussion questions and guidelines for study-circles and workshops, a detailed resolution promoting solidarity and an optional documentary film.

**“WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS!”**



A POPULAR BOOKLET TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY



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# SOLIDARITY

## With the People of Palestine



# **SOLIDARITY** **with the People of** **Palestine**

**A POPULAR BOOKLET TO  
PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY**



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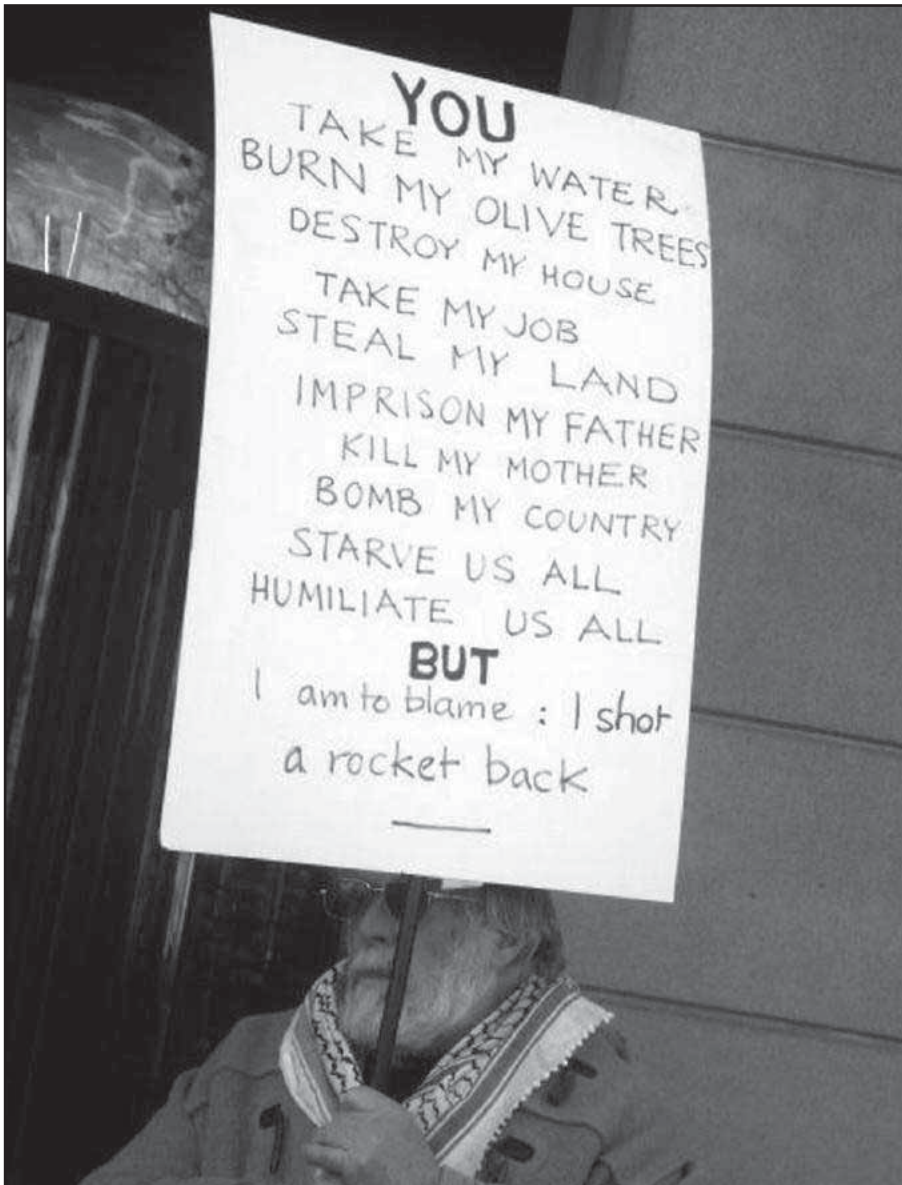
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## **Aims of this booklet:**

- To inform readers about the struggle of Palestinians and their supporters against Israeli colonial domination and oppression.
- To understand the history of Palestine and Israel.
- To learn about the living and working conditions of Palestinians.
- To encourage solidarity with the liberation struggle of Palestinians.
- To raise debate on issues of democracy and solidarity.
- To strengthen the organisations and struggles of the working class.

## **Structure of this booklet**

**This booklet has four parts:**

**Part One** – *How Palestine was ‘Dropped from the Map of the World’* looks at the history of Palestine and the formation of Israel.

**Part Two** – *The Palestinian Struggle against Apartheid and Colonialism* looks at the liberation struggle of Palestinians as part of an international struggle against imperialism.

**Part Three** - *Where to with the Liberation of Palestine?* Examines the current situation of Palestine and its political status in the international community. These are linked to economic plans being imposed by rulers and foreign interests. It concludes with a discussion on the possible political solution for the liberation of Palestine.

**Part Four** – *Israel, Apartheid South Africa and Solidarity* looks at the history of co-operation between Apartheid South Africa, Israel and imperialist powers. It also examines the nature of international solidarity and looks at practical acts of solidarity with Palestinians as a way forward. It contains discussion questions for study-circles and workshops.



## INTRODUCTION

*“...if it was right for the world to boycott apartheid South Africa, then it is also right to boycott Israel.”*



In July 2005, the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), and over 170 other Palestinian organisations, called for a worldwide campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel. This marked the beginning of the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement, the Palestine solidarity (BDS) movement.

The BDS movement starts with the idea that if it was right for the world to boycott apartheid South Africa, then it is also right to boycott Israel.

There are some differences between Israel and apartheid South Africa.



South Africa	Israel
Apartheid came from inside the country	Israel brought 'bantustan' apartheid-like arrangements to Palestinians inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), which are not part of Israel.
White South Africans were relatively a much smaller minority	Although a section of Palestinians living in Israel suffer similar forms of oppression to those of apartheid, they are Israeli citizens and can vote in elections.

But despite these differences, there are strong similarities. Like the old South Africa, Israel has its own racist system of ethnic classification, segregation and oppression, and it tries to justify this legalised racism with religious and racial myths. Also, Israel has illegally occupied Palestinian land for over 60 years. Co-incidentally the state of Israel was established during the same year (1948) that the Nationalist Party came into power in South Africa.

### Israel is an Apartheid State

More and more people now agree that Israel is an 'apartheid state'. *Peace not Apartheid*, written by former US president Jimmy Carter, became a best-seller. Arch-Bishop Desmond Tutu said that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) was actually worse than apartheid. Many others have said the same thing, including Ronnie Kasrils, a former South African Intelligence Minister and leading member of the African National Congress (ANC). He is of Jewish descent.

Although Western politicians and the media don't usually describe Israel as an 'apartheid' state, civil society organisations the world over use this term. Just as different groups were separated under apartheid, Palestinians are separated in the OPT. Israel has also given

so-called 'independence' to the Palestinian political elites it favours, while still controlling the economy, the resources, the movement of Palestinians and the borders. In this, the Israeli state acts as the South African apartheid regime did which gave black groups 'independent homelands', within a white-supremacist state.

In July 2004, an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ or World Court) found the 'separation wall' Israel was building in the OPT to be illegal under international law. Israel has ignored international law and continues building the wall while expanding Jewish colonies in the territories. This wall is called the 'apartheid wall' by the BDS movement.



*Israeli soldier preventing bridal party from crossing a barrier to Bethlehem 2008.*

Israel also continues to violate human rights in the OPT. Richard Falk, barred by Israel from entering the OPT as delegate for the UNHRC, compared Israel's treatment of Palestinians to the Nazi's treatment of Jews in Europe during World War II, in which millions of Jews were ruthlessly murdered.

Every human rights organisation that has investigated the situation in the OPT has condemned Israel. They agree that:

1. On a daily basis, Israel violates human rights on a grand scale.
2. Palestinian human rights violations against Israelis are not nearly as

widespread or brutal.

3. Israeli military and political officials and courts hide the extent of Israel's human rights violations.

Documented Israeli Human Rights Violations include:

- Torture.
- Fatal shootings of civilians by security forces.
- Restriction on movement.
- Theft of land and discrimination in building in East Jerusalem.
- Regular bulldozing of Palestinian homes.
- Detention without trial and settler violence against Palestinians with the support of the Israeli Defence Force (IDF).



*Israel used banned phosphorous bombs against civilian targets.*

On 27 December 2008, Israel launched a full-scale military assault on the 1.5 million inhabitants of the Gaza Strip - who do not have an army. In this bloody campaign, Israel used high-tech weaponry supplied by the United States to commit many war crimes. For example, they used banned phosphorous bombs that burn people

alive. Also the Israeli Army did not allow injured Palestinians to get medical help. During the bombing campaign, more than 1 300 Palestinians were killed, including about 400 children. Thousands were injured, and tens of thousands were made homeless.

**DID YOU KNOW...**

One of the architects of modern Israel, Moshe Dayan, stated in an oration at the funeral of an Israeli farmer killed by a Palestinian Arab in April 1956:



*“. . . Let us not today fling accusation at the murderers. What cause have we to complain about their fierce hatred to us? For eight years now, they sit in their refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we turn into our homestead the land and villages in which they and their forefathers have lived. We should demand his blood not from the [Palestinian] Arabs of Gaza but from ourselves. . . . We are a generation of settlers, and without the steel helmet and gun barrel, we shall not be able to plant a tree or build a house. . . . Let us not be afraid to see the hatred that accompanies and consumes the lives of... [Palestinian] Arabs who sit all around us and wait for the moment when their hands will be able to reach our blood.” ( Iron Wall, p. 101)*

Before the Gaza bombing, Israel blockaded Gaza's borders for more than two years. This imprisoned Palestinians and stopped supplies from entering Gaza. The blockade damaged what is left of Gaza's economy, and much of the population is now so malnourished that they are almost starving. Although the attack on Gaza ended on 18 January 2009, the blockade continues. International law says that this kind of 'siege' is an act of war, and an illegal form of collective punishment.

COSATU supports the Palestinian call for BDS, and has expressed its disgust at the latest Israeli massacres in Gaza. COSATU called these attacks mass murder, and sees them as part of "an ongoing genocidal campaign to crush and destroy the people of Palestine." Several observers, including the president of the UN General Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, have also used the word 'genocidal' in condemning the Israeli assault on Gaza.



*The funeral of Abed Al Argah killed at the age of 22. Abed Al Argah, was shot dead in a raid by Israeli troops on Nablus, on the 7 May, 2002. At least 1,345 Palestinians and 459 Israelis have been killed since the Palestinian uprising began in September 2000. (REUTERS/Ahmed Jadallah)*

**Genocide** *extermination of a race or community by mass murder, or by imposing conditions that make survival impossible.*

*(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English)*

Genocide is a very serious charge, and we need to know what is meant by it. No one is saying that Israel is trying to eliminate the Palestinian people by trying to kill all of them, as happened to Jews during the European holocaust. Rather, it is being said that for a long time Israel has been steadily repressing, terrorising, and killing members of a particular ethnic/national group, Palestinians. Israel's intention is to destroy the existence of the Palestinians as an independent people.



This includes various means, such as has happened to the indigenous people of America, Australia, parts of Asia and the south western and eastern parts of South Africa including the Khoi and San.

### **A note on anti-Semitism.**

People who believe that all Jewish people are evil, inferior, greedy, or power-hungry are anti-Semitic racists. Denying the Nazi holocaust or claiming that 'Jews run the world' is also a form of anti-Semitism. That is not the way to defend the rights of Palestinians.

But it is not anti-Semitism to condemn the injustices of the state of Israel against Palestinians. Criticising Israel or Zionism is not the same as criticising Judaism, just as criticising the policies of the South African government is not a form of racism against black South Africans generally, and criticising the Nazis was not anti-German racism. In fact, some of Israel's harshest critics are Jews.

The longtime suffering of Jews at the hands of Christians in Europe in the past does not justify Israel's current oppression of Palestinians.

From the time of the birth of Israel, it was said that the world must agree to a 'Jewish state' in Palestine because of the European holocaust. Perhaps the 'Jewish state' should have been created in Germany, because the creation of Israel in Palestine involved expelling over 750,000 Palestinians from their land and homes.



*An estimated 6 million Jews of Europe were killed by the Nazis.*

The Western world turned a blind eye to the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians during 1947-1949, partly due to guilt about the Nazi holocaust, which Western countries did little to prevent. After 1948, each time Israel has gone to war against Egypt, or invaded Lebanon, or crushed a Palestinian uprising, critics of Israel were labeled 'anti-Semitic', 'holocaust-deniers' or even 'Nazis'. These patterns of Israeli propaganda continue.

Israel cannot hide the fact that it is the only country in the world, apart from the US in Iraq and Afghanistan, which is keeping up an illegal colonial occupation. Israel also refuses the right of 6 million Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and land or get compensation.

During the recent Israeli attack on Gaza, there were demonstrations against Israel around the world. Even the pro-Israeli US media aired a TV programme that was mildly critical of Israeli settlement-expansion in the OPT. The fact that a former US president has publicly described Israel's policy as a form of apartheid also shows that the US government is now more critical of Israel.

### **The Need for Solidarity with the Palestinians**

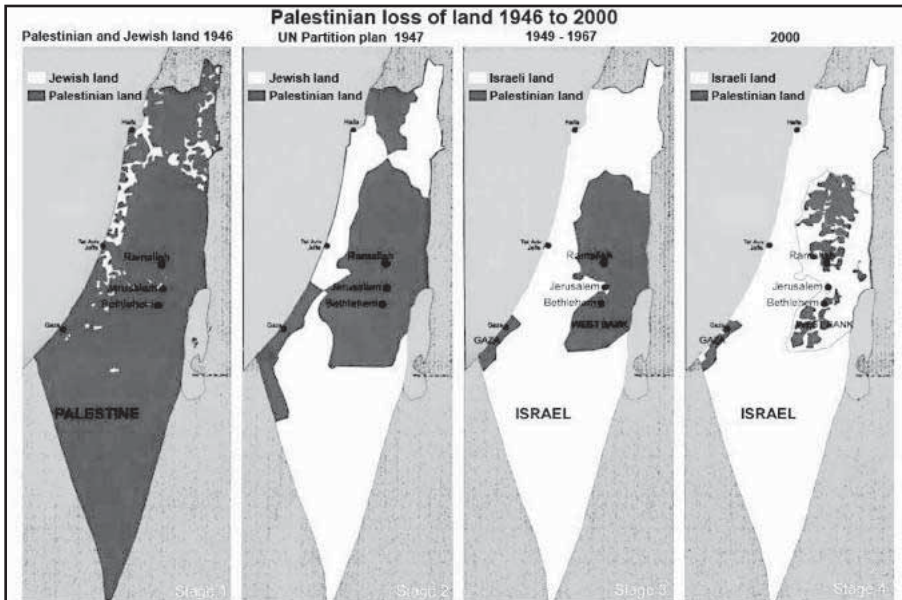
Although the BDS movement is still smaller than the international anti-apartheid movement of the 1980s, unions and civil society organisations in various countries, including South Africa, show solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. Solidarity means not only supporting Palestinians in the OPT in their struggle for a viable state without Israeli domination, but also supporting the right of Palestinian refugees to return to Palestine (including Israel), and the right of Palestinians in Israel to be treated as equal citizens to Israeli Jews.

The world community needs to stand in solidarity with the Palestinians, and help them to free Palestine from Israel's colonial grip.

## PART ONE: ISRAEL'S FRAUDULENT RELIGIOUS LAND CLAIM

*"it is one of the greatest ironies of history that in the middle of the twentieth century - in the golden age of peoples' right to self-determination - Palestine was dropped from the map of the world."*

Edward Said



The traditional story about the Jewish people is that when the Romans expelled the Jews from Palestine, it created a large Jewish Diaspora. In this story, the birth of Israel is a Jewish 'return' to the holy land, the 'land of Zion'. But a recent book by an Israeli historian, argues that this story is wrong.

According to Shlomo Sand, although the Romans killed thousands of Jews, they did not expel most of them, and many who remained later converted to Islam. As a result, there is a good chance that many Palestinian Arabs today are actually descendants of Jewish Arabs from the time of the Romans. Of course, Zionist Jews, who like to think of the Jews as a 'race' distinct from the Palestinians, would not like to

accept this version of history.

Sand also argues that so many Jews were scattered in other parts of the world not because that they were expelled from the 'holy land', but because many chose to leave the Middle East, while many were people who converted to Judaism. That would mean that the Ashkenazi Jews who colonised Palestine cannot trace their roots to the ancient tribes of Judea, and so cannot claim that they have 'returned' to reclaim the holy land.

While not everyone agrees with Sand, it is not necessary to resolve this historical question to find fault in religious arguments on behalf of Jewish claims to Palestine.

The non-Jewish people of Palestine have always rejected these arguments. Why should a Jewish state be granted in modern times on the basis of religious texts written thousands of years ago? What if every religious group began claiming land on that basis? Modern secular ideas of religious tolerance and pluralism, and separation of church and state, clash with ideas of a state established on the basis of religion.

### **Palestinian's right to the Land as Indigenous people**

The main historical claim Palestinian Arabs have to Palestine is simply that they have lived in the area for at least 1,300 years. By the end of the 7th century, mostly non-Jewish Arabs inhabited Palestine, and Islam became the main religion. Soon afterwards, the entire Islamic world knew the boundaries of Palestine, as well as its name – 'Filastin' in Arabic.

In 1516, Palestine became a province of the Ottoman empire. Palestine was known to be a fertile and beautiful land, containing various old civilizations. The first Zionist settlers from Europe arrived at the end of the 19th century. It is simply not true that Palestine was a 'land without a people' lying in wait for 'a people without a land.' At the beginning of the 20th century, there were about 500 000 non-Jewish indigenous Arabs in Palestine, compared to about 60 000 Jews.

## Zionism and Imperialism

The rise of industrial capitalism in the 19th century was marked by sharp economic booms and busts in Europe. With mass poverty in various countries, Jews were treated as scapegoats - just as African refugees and migrants are treated as scapegoats in South Africa today.

Most Jews lived in Russia and Eastern Europe, and these people suffered greatly. In Tsarist Russia, Jews had lost their status as moneylenders and artisans with the decline of the feudal economy. Most Jews lived in undeveloped areas of the Russian empire, like Poland and the Ukraine. They had joined the ranks of the working class under the new capitalist system. Many worked in small shops or were unemployed. Life became even harder for them when there were violent anti-Jewish pogroms - race riots that government officials and local police often encouraged.

It was in this context that political Zionism emerged. Although the Jewish Anti-Defamation League (ADL) defines Zionism as an anti – imperialist ideology of national liberation, this is a distorted view. It is true that political Zionism was a nationalist response to anti-Semitism in Europe, but it was a nationalist movement that only had the support of a very small minority of the world’s Jews until after World War II. Most European Jews fought anti-Semitism by other means. Many were socialists who took part in labour struggles alongside non-Jewish workers. They saw Zionism as a backward, divisive, prejudiced response to anti-Semitism.

As far as anti- imperialism goes, Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, wrote in 1896 that the Jews should establish in Palestine “an outpost of civilisation against barbarism” and that they should “form a sector of the wall of Europe against Asia”. Herzl openly wanted to align with the imperial powers against the colonized non-white peoples of this world.





### **Theodor Herzl (1860-1904)**

The leading Zionists believed that there could only be a 'Jewish state' with the help of the same imperial regimes that were persecuting the Jews in Europe. They tried to convince the European colonial powers that the Jews would have the same interests in Palestine as they did - to rule the indigenous population as a way to profit from the region's resources and to exploit its cheap labour.

#### **DID YOU KNOW...**

From the beginning, Zionists advocated a "Jewish State" not just in Palestine, but also in Jordan, southern Lebanon, and the Golan Heights as well. In 1918 Ben-Gurion described the future "Jewish state's" frontiers in detail as follows:

*"to the north, the Litani river [in southern Lebanon], to the northeast, the Wadi 'Owja, twenty miles south of Damascus; the southern border will be mobile and pushed into Sinai at least up to Wadi al-'Arish; and to the east, the Syrian Desert, including the furthest edge of Transjordan" (Expulsion Of The Palestinians, p. 87)*

### **Labour Zionism and the Histadrut**

The Zionists were not a colonial power like France or Britain. They would be permanent settlers with no home country in the core of the capitalist world. The Zionists did not aim to colonise Palestine in the traditional way by exploiting cheap, indigenous labour (as in South Africa). Mostly, the early Zionists wished to replace the indigenous population as much as possible. They aimed to establish a Jewish state with a Jewish majority, with Jewish farms and industry employing Jewish labour.

The major Jewish-only trade-union federation, the Histadrut, was founded in 1920. The Histadrut is similar to whites-only unions under apartheid. It only began allowing Palestinian Israeli citizens membership in 1960. It still does not allow Palestinian workers from the OPT to be members, although these workers are taxed if they work for Israeli companies.



The major brand of Zionism until 1977 was Labour Zionism. Labour Zionists joined the good name of socialism, which was popular among Jewish working class people, to the less popular chauvinistic project of political Zionism. The Nazis called themselves 'National Socialists' for similar reasons.

This plainly distorted socialist ideals. The traditional socialist slogan 'Workers of the world unite' does not mean 'Workers of Jewish descent unite' or like the South African White mineworkers slogan of 1922, 'Workers of the World unite for a White South Africa'. Capitalism is not a national but international, global system. If workers exclude fellow workers from their unions on grounds of nationality, there could be no better support to the capitalists. Workers who are fighting each other won't succeed in fighting for their rights, let alone for a socialist society, where workers are in power and ruling in the interest of the working class and society as a whole.

Wealthy people in Europe and the US, as well as the British government funded the Histadrut through the international Zionist movement's Jewish Agency. These funders were not interested in socialism or a Jewish socialist state. They were interested in building a capitalist Jewish state in the heart of Palestine and the broader Middle East that was strongly allied to Western imperialism.

The Histadrut was much more than a union. It was an umbrella organisation that was involved in banking, the army and education. Before 1948, the Histadrut boycotted Arab labour, land and produce, forcing Jewish owned factories and orange groves to sack any Arabs they employed, and destroying produce from Arab owned farms. Arabs were barred forever from land sold to the Zionists.

Today, the Histadrut still has the Zionist goal of keeping an ethnic majority of Jewish citizens in Israel. It has always supported the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and it supported the recent attack on Gaza.



*Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006*

It also supported the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 2006, in which nearly 2 000 Lebanese civilians were killed, over 4 400 injured, and over 800 000 displaced.

It would be important for workers and their union federations to stop dealing with the Histadrut in a BDS campaign.

## A 'National Home for the Jewish People' - thanks to Britain



*British occupation in Gaza, 1918*

In 1907, the first president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, helped organise the Palestine Land Development Company to set up Jewish land development projects in Palestine. In 1917, he worked with British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour to create the Balfour Declaration, which called for a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.

In 1922, the League of Nations approved the British Mandate for Palestine. This placed the region, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire, under British control. Britain was to prepare the region for independence.

The Balfour Declaration was signed just days before the October Revolution in Russia. The Zionists agreed with the British about the 'danger' of socialist revolution. Winston Churchill later explained that the British Empire needed to prevent Leon Trotsky's "schemes of a worldwide communistic state under Jewish domination" becoming a reality. To do this, Britain needed to support a capitalist, anti-

communist Jewish state in Palestine. Churchill both supported the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine, and took seriously the anti-Semitic idea that Jews were bent on world domination through communism.

#### **DID YOU KNOW...**

A few months before the peace conference convened at Versailles in 1919 and after WWI ended, Ben-Gurion envisioned future Jewish and Palestinian Arab relations as follows:

*“Everybody sees the problem in the relations between the Jews and the [Palestinian] Arabs. But not everybody sees that there’s no solution to it. There is no solution! . . . The conflict between the interests of the Jews and the interests of the [Palestinian] Arabs in Palestine cannot be resolved by sophisms. I don’t know any Arabs who would agree to Palestine being ours---even if we learn Arabic . . .and I have no need to learn Arabic. On the other hand, I don’t see why ‘Mustafa’ should learn Hebrew. . . . There’s a national question here. We want the country to be ours. The Arabs want the country to be theirs.”*

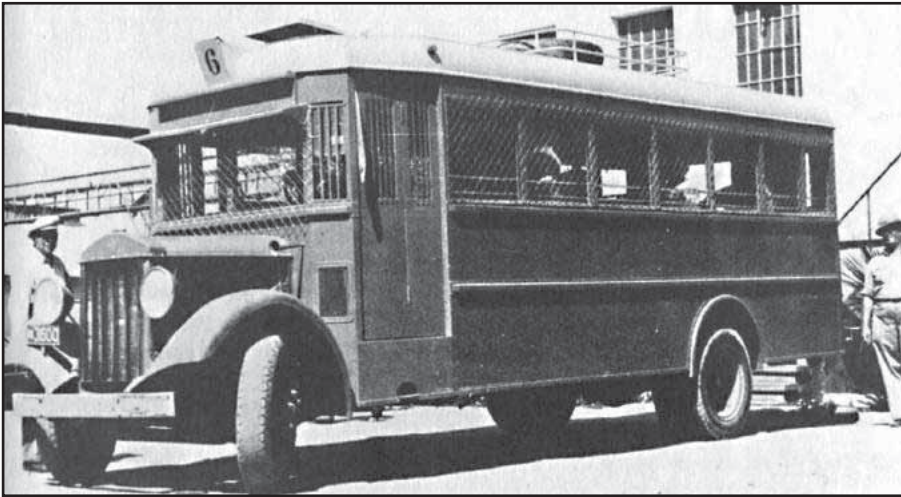
*(One Palestine Complete. p. 116)*

Britain also supported the Zionists in Palestine to further the interests of the British Empire. This was because a Jewish state could serve as a British protectorate in the Middle East. This would help reduce French influence in the region, as well as help to block the rising tide of Arab anti-imperialism. Similar motives continue to this day, with Britain being replaced by the United States (see Part Two).

### **The Arab Revolt (1936-1939)**

Until the 1930s, a Jewish state was just a Zionist dream, because there was little Jewish emigration to Palestine. After Hitler came to power, though, many of the European countries and the United States closed their borders to the Jews fleeing Nazi repression, so they went to Palestine in large numbers. The Zionists encouraged this as it boosted Jewish numbers.





*Bus used by British to transport Arab prisoners in 1936.*

The Zionists carried on buying Palestinian land with British support, and turning peasants into landless labourers. Naturally the Palestinians resisted. In 1936, there was a general Palestinian strike, known as the Arab Revolt, to protest against Zionist and British colonisation. Zionist and British arms finally crushed the strike in 1939. This repression was proof that so-called 'Labour Zionism' had nothing to do with solidarity with workers.

The revolt made the British worry about losing their foothold in the Arab world, which had vast reserves of oil and gas. To avoid alienating Arabs too much, the British drew up the White Paper of 1939. This called for the establishment of an Arab state in Palestine within 10 years, in which the Jews would have limited self- rule. It also called for limiting Jewish immigration to 75,000 over the following five years.

Neither the Arabs nor the Zionists accepted the White Paper. The Arab League thought it still gave too much power to the Jews. The Zionists wanted their own state, and most of the Zionist movement rejected the policy of limiting Jewish immigration to Palestine. This led to violent Zionist attacks on the British. The deadliest of these attacks occurred on 22 July 1946, when the Zionist underground movement, the Irgun, led

by a future Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, bombed the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, killing 91 people. The Irgun was part of the 'right-wing' of the Zionist movement, known as 'Revisionist Zionism'.

The Arab Revolt occurred while the Jewish population in Palestine was growing fast and Zionist colonisation was getting more serious. After the five years the White Paper had spoken about, Jewish emigration to Palestine continued illegally, while the British government placed a blockade on Palestine to stem the tide of further immigration. But in 1946, the US pressured Britain into allowing 1 500 Jewish refugees into Palestine every month.

### **Partition: UN Resolution 181**

After the war, Britain decided to give up its Palestine Mandate. It was then left to the UN to decide on Palestine's fate. On 29 November 1947, the UN passed Resolution 181, dividing Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

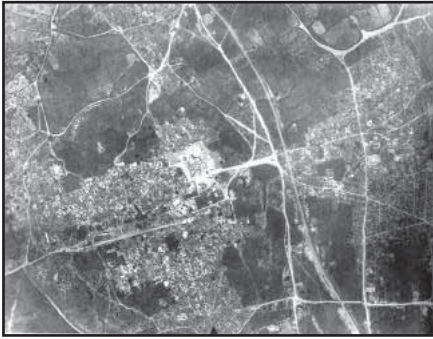
The Zionists were given 56% of Mandate Palestine (not including Jordan) though Jews made up only about one third of its population. Jerusalem was declared an 'international city' open equally to Muslims, Christians and Jews.

While the Zionist leaders accepted the plan in public, they were not satisfied with it. Many of them hoped to expand Jewish territory in the future.

Both the Arab states and the Arab population of Palestine rejected the partition plan. Although Palestinian Arabs outnumbered Jews by almost three to one, and owned 92 - 94 percent of the land, the plan gave most of Palestine to the 'Jewish state'. A large part of Arab-owned land would be inside the new state's borders. It was obvious that the Zionists would steal this land.



## Jewish settlements encroachment on Palestinian land



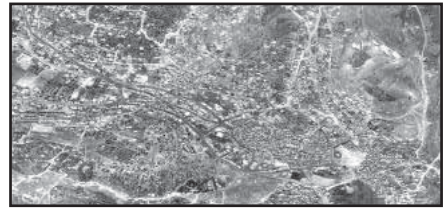
*Gaza 1918*



*Hebron 1918*



*Gaza 1945*



*Hebron 1967*



*Gaza 1993*



*Hebron 1994*

*An aerial view of how Palestinian land was stolen decade by decade with increased encroachment by Jewish settlers.*



## The Birth of Israel: Al Nakba – The Catastrophe



*The Nakba of 1948, mass deportation and massacre of Palestinians – a Palestinian Holocaust.*

Fighting between the Zionists and Palestinian Arabs increased, with killing on both sides. From 1947-1949, 750 000 Palestinians were expelled from what was to become Israel, and the Zionists destroyed over 500 Palestinian Arab villages. This was the start of the Palestinian refugee crisis.

The Zionists directly attacked and massacred Arabs, and then used these attacks as warnings to spread terror. Palestinians then fled from their homes in fear for their lives. Political Zionism aimed to have a Jewish majority in Palestine. Since Jews were a minority, the Zionists embarked on a major ethnic cleansing operation.

Before May 1948, at least 300,000 Palestinians fled from what is now Israel because they feared attack by Zionist militias.

The most famous massacre was from 9 to 11 April 1948, in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin. Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir (another future Israeli PM) led terrorist militias in a brutal massacre of up to 120 Palestinians. After this episode, the Zionists used the threat of 'another Deir Yassin' to frighten Palestinians into fleeing, as happened in the cities of Haifa and Jaffa.

When the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan attacked Israel in May 1948, they were disorganised and had less troops and worse weaponry than the Zionists. Some people even suggest that Jordan actually plotted with Israel to divide up parts of Palestine between them. In the end, Jordan annexed the West Bank while Gaza came under Egyptian control until 1967.

The Zionists declared Israel an independent state on 15 May 1948. The Zionists took even more Palestinian land than the UN allowed them – more than 77 percent of Palestine, including most of the good farming land. Most Palestinian-owned land within Israel was stolen. And with 750,000 Palestinians driven from their homes, it is no wonder that Palestinians refer to these events as 'al Nakba' - 'the catastrophe'.

Although UN Resolution 194 (1948) recognised the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their land and homes, Israel has never allowed them to return.

Since 1948, Israel has uprooted about three-quarters of the Palestinian people from their land, making this the largest and one of the longest standing refugee crises in the world today. Most Palestinian refugees live within 100 miles of their homes and lands, but are denied their right to return.

Solidarity with the Palestinian people must include serious efforts to address the refugee question. International law requires the return of the refugees or a 'just settlement' with adequate compensation. Clearly, Israel is dead set against the return of the refugees, as this would upset the Zionist goal of a Jewish majority state.



## PART TWO: THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE AGAINST COLONIALISM AND APARTHEID

*“Without Western support, Israel would not be able to carve up the West Bank into Bantustan-like ghettos. Nor could Israel turn Gaza into an open-air prison, by sealing its borders, controlling its airspace and patrolling its seashores”.*



### Israel and the West

No matter how determined or ruthless the Zionists were, they could not have succeeded without help from key Western powers like Britain and the USA at crucial times. Similarly, without powerful Western governments on its side, Israel, a small country with a population of only 7.1 million, would not have been the dominant military power in the region since 1948.

Without Western support, Israel would not have been able to invade and occupy Lebanon repeatedly over a period of thirty years. It would also not have been able to kill tens of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinian civilians (mostly refugees) and displace hundreds of thousands of people.

Nor would Israel be able to threaten Iran because of Iran's alleged programme to develop nuclear weapons. While Iran is subjected to international pressure simply because it has nuclear technology, the Western powers allow an oppressive state like Israel to have a stockpile of about 200 nuclear weapons.

Without Western support, Israel would not be able to ignore annual UN resolutions demanding its withdrawal from the Palestinian territories that it conquered in June, 1967. It would not be able to reject the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes or be compensated (UN Resolution 194). It would also not be able to keep on illegally expanding Jewish 'settlements' in the OPT.



Without Western support, Israel would not have been able to build the 'separation wall', which makes valuable parts of the West Bank part of Israel. And it would not be able to have a system of Israeli-only paved roads (with separate dirt roads and paths for Palestinians) and countless military checkpoints, which make it impossible for Palestinians to move freely within their own homeland.

Without Western support, Israel would not be able to carve up the West Bank into Bantustan-like ghettos. Nor could Israel turn Gaza

into an open-air prison, by sealing its borders, controlling its airspace and patrolling its seashores.

Nor would Israel have been able to bomb Gaza into rubble, while imposing a blockade that prevents Gazans from getting medicine, fuels, food, and other supplies.

As long as Western governments do not raise a finger, Israel will have little trouble carrying on distributing the water supply unfairly. Israelis consume 4-5 times per capita more water per day than Palestinians in the occupied territories. The situation is even worse in Gaza, where Palestinians face the health risk of water pollution as well. This is partly because Israeli bombs deliberately destroyed sewage treatment facilities. The blockade of Gaza has also made it difficult to get enough chlorine and equipment for water treatment.

Without Western support, Israel could not refuse to negotiate with Hamas, the democratically elected representatives of the Palestinian people in the OPT since January 2006.

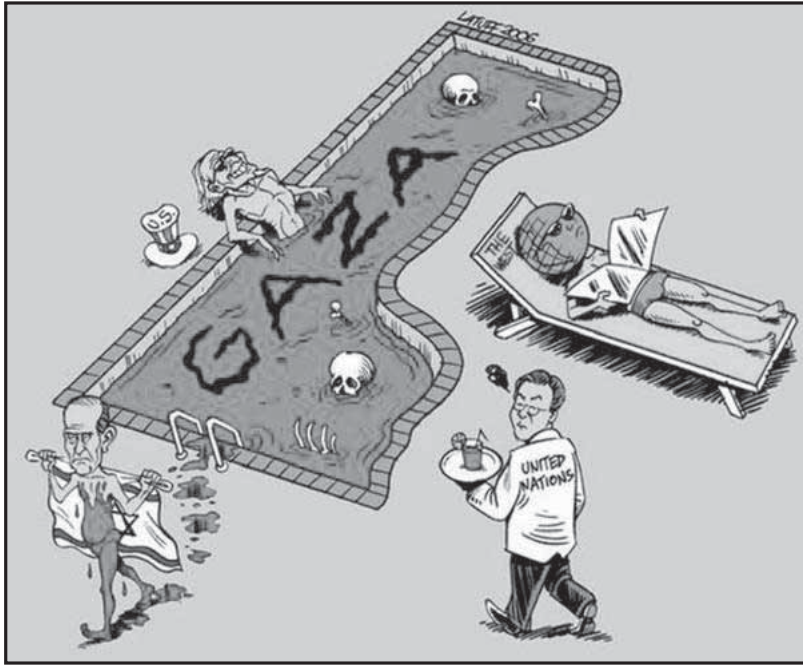
Nor would Israel be able to commit blatant war crimes and violate international humanitarian laws against torture, kidnapping of civilians, arbitrary arrest and detention, assassinations, demolition of houses, restrictions on freedom of movement, bombing of civilian areas, collective punishment of civilians, the use of banned weapons, and even the use of Palestinians as human shields.

Without Western support, Israel would not be able to act as if it is an innocent victim of 'terrorist', 'fundamentalist' Arabs and Muslims. Pro-Israeli media allow Israeli officials to portray Israel as the victim, or even as being equal in power to the Palestinians.

If the Western powers truly wished to, they could have made it impossible for Israel to be the staunch supporter of apartheid South Africa that it was. They could also make it difficult for Israel to be a key player in the arms and diamond trade in African countries like the DRC today, fuelling conflicts that have led to millions of deaths

in recent years. Without US support, Israel could not have supported dictatorships and right-wing paramilitary forces, such as the terrorist Contra army in Nicaragua during the 1970s and 80s.

## Israel – An agent of Imperialism



It is important to understand what role Israel plays for the West, particularly for the US. Remember that Zionism itself was born in the West - and its founder, Theodore Herzl, was openly on the side of the European imperialists against the 'backward' non-European peoples. The thinking hasn't changed much from Herzl's time, though the language is less obvious.

All of this may be familiar to South Africans who remember that Western powers (particularly the US) thought of the ANC and Nelson Mandela as 'terrorists'. In the case of Israel, the Western powers supported Israel because it was a safeguard against 'communism' in

the Middle East until the fall of the Communist regimes around 1990. Since 1990, Western support for Israel has continued, because Israel is seen as important in the fight against what they perceive as Arab-Muslim international terrorism.

The mainstream media and academic institutions sometimes show the Israel-Palestine conflict as the playing out of ancient ethnic hostilities between Jews and Arabs (as though there were no Arab Jews). Usually they don't mention the role played by Western countries or Western imperialism. This is like trying to understand the conflict between the white settlers and the indigenous peoples in South Africa without saying anything about European imperialism. Imperialism does well when the problems it causes can be blamed on its chief victims - in this case, most of the Palestinians.

### **The United States, Neo-Imperialism and the Middle East**

Because World War II weakened the European powers, the US was the strongest economic and military power in the world after 1945.

Western Europe and Japan now became capitalist economies dependent on US investment and tied into the US economy. Europe was to keep its economic dominance in relation to Africa, but in the Middle East, the US aimed to take over the dominant role from Britain and France.

#### **DID YOU KNOW...**

The Middle East was and is important to the US because of its oil.

Control of oil is key to control of the world. Europe and Japan, and now increasingly China, depend on the flow of oil from the Middle East. Oil is central to almost every aspect of production and life in the modern world. For the US to stay the main capitalist power, it has to keep its power in the Middle East because that is where the world's greatest energy reserves are located.

## **Regional Stability and US domination**

Until 1990, the US had to worry about Communism. During the Cold War, there were two global ‘superpowers’, the US and the USSR. The US was determined not to allow the Arab regimes to become part of the Soviet sphere of influence.

The US also did not want these regimes to be truly independent. An independent Arab world would be likely to nationalise their oil industries, so that Western oil companies would no longer be the main economic actors in the region.

So, even after European colonialism officially ended, the US kept the structures of Western economic and military power over previously colonised peoples in place. Instead of direct Western rule, indigenous elites came to power. They were rewarded for keeping most of their populations powerless, so that they couldn’t force their governments to redistribute wealth. This arrangement is often called ‘neo-colonialism’.

Neo-colonialism and US dominance in the Middle East needs certain kinds of regimes in the region. The US calls pro-Western, pro-US Arab regimes ‘moderate’. Regimes that may pose a challenge to US power are called ‘extremist’. It doesn’t matter to US policymakers whether the regimes are democratic or not, as long as they are subordinate to the US. Mostly, they are anti-democratic tyrannies.



### **Nasser, Arab Nationalism, and the Suez Crisis**

The Egyptian President from 1956-70, Gamal Abdel Nasser, inspired anti-imperialist, pan-Arab nationalist revolutions in Libya, Iraq, Yemen, and Algeria. It seemed that Saudi Arabia would follow. Nasser was a threat to US and Western dominance in the region, because he was trying to bring a form of nationalist



capitalism that would weaken the power of US and other Western oil companies. To most people of the region, though, he was a symbol of Third World independence and progress.

Nasser had angered the Western capitalist powers by building friendly relations with Communist regimes, including China. On 26 July 1956, he made them even angrier by nationalising the Suez Canal. Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt on 29 October 1956. From a military standpoint, the operation was a success, as Israel occupied the Egyptian Sinai, followed by British and French forces. But politically, it was a loss for these countries and a (temporary) victory for Arab nationalism.



The invading countries didn't realise that the US did not wish to allow Britain and France to become dominant in the region again. From now on, they were to be junior partners. After the US applied great pressure through the UN, France and Britain withdrew from Egypt within a week. This affair, known as the 'Suez Crisis', showed that Israel could not simply do what it wanted against US wishes.

While Nasser's influence grew and pan-Arab nationalism took hold in the Middle East, the US was fighting a long, costly war in Vietnam, with growing anti-war resistance within the US. In these circumstances, it would have been very difficult for the US to go directly into battle with Nasser. Israel played a crucial role in the Middle East in this period, by crushing the pan-Arab movement when the US had its hands tied in Vietnam.

This marked the beginning of a very dangerous alliance between the US and Israel. After 1967, this relationship became a full-blown love affair. Since then, the industries of Israel are part of the US military and high-tech industries. Israel is now very dependent on the US and is also a kind of off-shore military base for the US in the Middle East.



*Israeli troops in Sinai 1967.*

## The 1967 War

On 5 June 1967, Israel attacked Egypt. Egypt had been building up troops in the Sinai close to Israel's border, but it was not clear whether Nasser was planning to attack Israel or preparing for another possible Israeli attack.

The Israelis claimed that Egypt, Syria and Jordan wanted to attack Israel, and that Israel was defending itself by striking first. The facts don't support this, though. Rather, Israel went to war to show who the 'big man' of the region was.

### **DID YOU KNOW...**

While Menachem Begin was negotiating with Egypt on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, he presented the following reasoning why Israel cannot withdraw from these areas:

*"Israel will not transfer Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza District to any foreign sovereign authority, [because] of the historic right of our nation to this land, [and] the needs of our national security, which demand a capability to defend our State and the lives of our citizens." (Iron Wall, p. 356)*

Israel's aggression was illegal under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which says that a country can only defend itself by going to war when there is the threat of an attack.

With its stronger air force, Israel easily defeated its Arab foes and occupied the Egyptian Sinai, the Golan Heights (Syria), Gaza (then under Egyptian control) and the West Bank including East Jerusalem (then under Jordanian rule). Even if Israel was defending itself, its occupation of these territories was illegal and immoral.

<b>Time-line of Rejection - UN Resolution 242</b>	
22nd November 1967	UN Security Council adopts Resolution 242 (UNSC 242).  Israel expels between 285,000 and 325,000 Palestinians. Apart from Israel, every member of the UN interpreted 242 as meaning that Israel must withdraw from the Palestinian territories, as well as the Golan Heights and the Sinai. Israel has only withdrawn from the Sinai.
Mid 1970s	The UN upholds 242 along with resolutions on the right of Palestinians to their own independent state in the West Bank and Gaza. There is now international agreement on this 'two-state settlement' to the Israel-Palestine conflict.  The problem is that the US and Israel oppose the international consensus in practice, though in front of the cameras they usually say they are in favour of it, and that the Palestinians are the ones rejecting it.
1976 and 1980	The US vetoes Security Council resolutions in favour of the two-state settlement - even though the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as well as Egypt, Jordan and Syria endorsed it.
1981	A Saudi peace plan is drawn up. It calls for Israel to leave all Arab territories seized during the 1967 war and a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital to be created. Israel dismisses this peace plan, and prepares to attack the PLO stationed in Lebanon.

<b>Time-line of Rejection - UN Resolution 242</b>	
1988	The Palestine National Council (PNC), the highest PLO authority approves the two-state settlement.
1989	Israel puts forth its own 'peace initiative' opposing the creation of a Palestinian state. Only in May 1997 does the Israeli Labor Party accept the Palestinian right to national self-determination and a possible Palestinian state.
2004	The World Court upholds UNSC Resolution 242.

Israel has never agreed to withdraw from the OPT. No Israeli leader has ever proposed to bring in the two-state settlement.

Instead, there are now more than 285,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, with another 193,000 in East Jerusalem. The current right-wing governing coalition in Israel has made plans to expand the settlements.

Since the 1970s, Israel and the US have rejected annual UN General Assembly resolutions in favour of the two-state settlement. This again shows how much responsibility the US bears for Israel's colonial policies.

The US would not support Israel if US policymakers believed this would undermine its key client regimes in the Arab world. The US needs these regimes, because most of the oil is in Arab territory, not in Israel.

### **Black September**

After the 1967 war, Israel became the main enforcer of 'regional stability' for the US. In the Cold War period, this meant keeping the Soviet Union from becoming too influential among the Arab states in the region.

After Israel seriously weakened Nasser and the Arab movement in 1967, Palestinian nationalism began to grow. In 1968, the PLO became a truly mass organisation after Palestinian and Jordanian troops defeated an Israeli offensive in Jordan in the 'Battle of al-Karamah'.



*Jordanian troops with a captured Israeli half truck at al-Karamah.*

The PLO was founded in 1964 under the League of Arab States (usually called the Arab League). It called for the liberation of all of historic Palestine through armed struggle, the defeat of Zionist colonialism and Western imperialism in the Middle East, as well as the right of all Palestinian refugees from the time of 'al-Nakba' to return .



*PLO leader Yasser Arafat – painting on the separation wall.*

The US and Israel turned their attention to crushing the PLO. After al-Karamah, they sided with the Jordanian monarchy in its civil war against Palestinian guerillas. This regime was a puppet regime for

US imperialism and in league with Zionist Israel. Many of these Palestinian fighters were also socialist revolutionaries who wanted the Palestinian struggle to become a broader social revolution in every Arab country in the region.

The defeat of the Palestinians in Jordan is now known as ‘Black September’. This episode in Palestinian history shows very clearly that Israel and most Arab states do not really hate each other, despite what they say. When there is a real threat of democratic, progressive change, they have tended to work together to keep the structures of class domination in their own countries, as well as US imperialism in the region in place.

Neither the Iraqis in eastern Jordan nor the Egyptians helped the Palestinians. The Saudis also stood with King Hussein. Thus the Palestinians were defeated by their Arab enemies as well as by Israel and the US.

**Black September showed that many of the Arab elites were more troubled by real democratic social movements in the Arab world than they were by the existence of Israel. Class divisions proved more important than divisions along national, ethnic or religious lines.**

### **US Client Regimes in the Middle East**

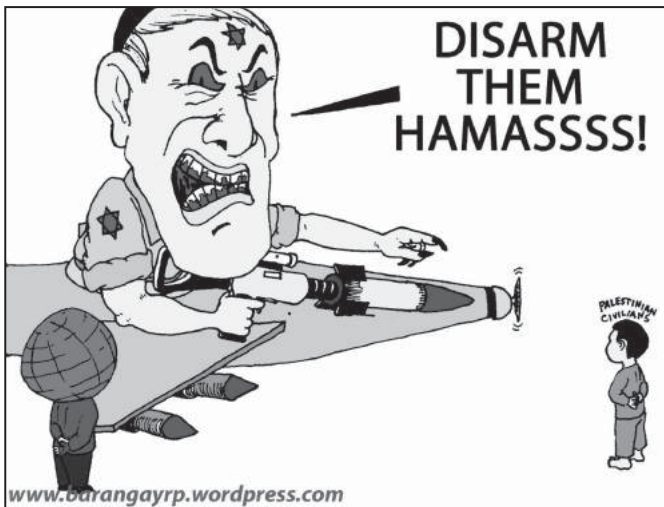
Some critics of Israel argue that the powerful Israeli lobby controls the US government. They say that Israel often pursues policies that upset and alienate Arabs in the Middle East, which is thought to be bad for US oil interests. This is taken to be proof that even US oil companies play second fiddle to the powerful Israeli lobby.

But given the relative economic and military power of the US and Israel, and whilst the Israeli lobby within the US is influential this claim is extreme. It is the US, not Israel that has military bases in over 150 countries, and it is the US, not Israel, that dominates global economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It is Israel that



depends on a constant supply of weapons and money from the US.

The main concern of US policymakers in the Middle East is not ordinary Arab people, but to maintain the power of the undemocratic Arab elites. As long as these ruling elites can control their populations, US policymakers will not care about the populations being upset by Israel's policies. In any case, the pro-US Arab regimes and Israel are not in deep conflict, although they pretend that they are to calm down their own populations.



The US is able to maintain its dominance in the Middle East because it has formed strong alliances with the following regimes:

1. Egypt and Jordan (and now possibly Iraq). These key client regimes are ruled by corrupt, harshly repressive governments and elites. They cooperate with the US on regional security and in the 'war on terror'.
2. The countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) established in 1981: Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The US has over 100,000 military personnel in these countries. Qatar was home to the US Central Command headquarters for the 2003 Gulf War. The oil revenues of Saudi Arabia allow it to buy US weapons and equipment and also to

invest heavily in the US.

3. Israel, which has been the most important pillar of US power in the region since 1967. Aside from rolling back popular movements in the Middle East, Israel cooperates closely with the US in military matters and intelligence.

Both the Arab and Israeli elites have worked towards the same outcomes: dependence on the US, and authoritarian governments in the Middle-East.

So far, the Arab dictatorships in the region have been able to keep their power, but this may not always be so. If popular movements in these countries ever rise up against their own ruling classes, and stand in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against Israel, then the US may begin to loosen its ties with Israel.

### **Egypt's rulers' betrayal of the Palestinians**

After another war with Israel, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Egypt moved closer to the West. This shows the meeting of interests between Israel and the Arab regimes very clearly.

Because Egypt did better in this war than in the 1967 war, the Sinai was returned to Egypt in 1979. Egypt and Israel now became allies, while the Palestinians gained nothing. Egypt also opened its economy to Western investment and became a close ally of the US. The Egyptian military still gets massive aid from the US. Using its police and army, it brutally represses the Egyptian people.

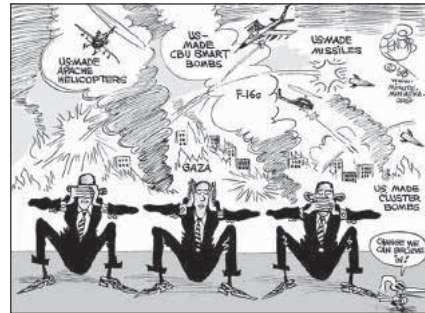
Before the recent Israeli assault on Gaza, Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told Egyptian officials of Israel's plan to attack Gaza. Egypt assured Hamas that an Israeli attack was not going to happen. For two years before the attack, Egypt helped Israel to implement the cruel blockade that has caused so much suffering to the Palestinians. This clearly shows how friendly Egypt and Israel are.

## PART THREE: WHERE TO WITH THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE?

*“This Arab plan shows that there is greater pressure from Arab populations on their governments to defend Palestinian national rights. Even dictatorships cannot totally ignore these pleas from their own people.”*



*Hillary Clinton meets Mahmoud Abbas.*



### **The Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas**

The PA is another Arab elite that has betrayed ordinary Arabs by trying to win the favour of the US and Israel. The PA, under Fatah leadership, is a far cry from what the PLO once was.

The PLO leadership has tried to imitate Anwar Sadat's strategy of gaining American acceptance to defend Palestinian national rights. One problem with this strategy is that Palestine is not Egypt. The Palestinians are weak and poor, and have little to offer the US. While the Palestinian elites in the PA have gained privileges from collaborating with Israel, most Palestinians continue to suffer terribly. And since Israel and the US created the PA, if the PA opposes Israeli policy in the territories, it can easily be taken apart.

So, by pursuing this strategy, Yasser Arafat, the longtime PLO leader, helped to root a form of neo-imperialism in the OPT that poses no threat to US-Israeli domination. Challenging this system of domination

would have required gaining Arab mass support and taking a progressive, radical position in the Arab world.

Hamas is not a revolutionary force either. It is an Islamist organisation that upholds some of the more conservative, reactionary and especially sexist rules of Islam. But it is more representative of Palestinians in the territories than the PA. Unlike the PA, Hamas has not been willing to accept the various Israel 'peace' accords and 'roadmaps' that make a Palestinian state along the lines of the international consensus impossible. Though Hamas has used terrorist methods, it has been willing to stop this during periods of ceasefire with Israel.



### The Saudi Peace Plan (2002)

The Arab states haven't always ignored the Palestinian cause. In 2002, Saudi Arabia came up with a two-state peace plan that included 'normalising' relations with Israel after full Israeli withdrawal from the OPT. The 22 members of the Arab League approved of this peace offer. Israel and the US have not taken the Saudi plan seriously, though recently the Obama administration has said positive things about it - but not about the part calling for a two-state settlement, with Israel withdrawing to the pre-1967 borders.

This Arab plan shows that there is greater pressure from Arab populations on their governments to defend Palestinian national rights. Even dictatorships cannot totally ignore these pleas from their own people.

Still, the offer of 'full normalisation' of relations with Israel actually shows that the Israeli and Arab ruling classes do cooperate. The Arab states have already 'normalised' relations with Israel, without publicly saying so, apart from Jordan. But the goal is to cooperate with Israel to help develop the Middle East as a neo-liberal 'free trade zone'.

### **Neo-liberalism in the 'New Middle East'**

Since the early 1990s, the US has wished to change the Middle East into a neo-liberal 'free trade' zone. To do this, the US must integrate Israel's economy with the economies of the Arab countries. This is called 'normalising' relations with Israel. In 2006, the US Secretary of State, Condoleeza Rice, called this emerging neo-liberal arrangement the 'New Middle East'.

Similar to the South African government's GEAR economic policy, in the 'New Middle East', most governments' policies included privatisation, cutting back on public spending, opening countries to foreign investment, reducing state subsidies, harsher treatment of workers and unions, and free trade agreements. The IMF and World Bank as well as regional organisations such as the Arab Monetary Fund and the Arab Business Council encourage these policies.

Factories, hospitals, electricity and water plants, postal services, banks, airlines and other businesses have been privatised in countries throughout the region. Oil and gas fields have been opened up to foreign capital. Iraq's 37-year policy of nationalisation has been reversed. This is also happening in the Gulf countries.

State subsidies for food, electricity, fuel and rent have been withdrawn, because the World Bank and IMF demand this in exchange for loans and aid.

## The Middle East as a “Free Trade” Zone

Several countries, such as Israel, Egypt, Oman, and Bahrain, have signed bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) with the US. They have agreed to open up to US companies, and remove import restriction policies that might help local industries. The FTAs also make it harder for governments to provide services for the poor, because this is seen as discriminating against foreign companies that can provide these services on the market - to those who can afford them. All the bilateral FTAs say that the Arab countries must promote economic relations with Israel, and must not boycott trade relations with Israel.

In 2003, the US introduced the Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA). The entire region is to become a free trade zone, by treating foreign capital like domestic capital, adopting widespread privatisation programs, allowing foreign ownership, and cutting state spending on social services.



*Informal Palestinian traders*

This neo-liberal vision sees Israel economically and politically integrated into the region. This is what is meant by ‘normalisation’ of



relations with Israel. Most of the popular and leftwing movements in the Middle East reject this 'normalisation.' They do not believe Israel is a 'normal' country as long as it denies Palestinians their right to a state and the right of return to Palestinian refugees.

In Jordan and Egypt, there are now industrial zones that make goods for export to US markets. These industrial zones bring together Israeli and Arab capital, and are integrated with US markets. They show clearly what the US wants to see in the 'New Middle East'.

The goods made in these industrial zones can only be duty-free in the US if some of the inputs are Israeli. Usually there are textile factories in the industrial zones, which are subcontracted to large US companies like Walmart and GAP. The factories mostly employ migrant labourers from South Asia, who work in horrific sweatshop conditions and are not allowed to join unions. They are often paid 2 cents an hour, and sometimes work 72-hour shifts. Workers are regularly beaten and sexually assaulted. They pay for their own travel expenses, and their passports are often confiscated until their contracts end.

Why is this situation relevant to the Palestinian struggle for freedom and national self-determination?

The answer is that the MEFTA provides the broad framework that the US, Israeli, European, and Arab political and economic elites want to put into place in the region – and the PA in the West Bank has been trying to entrench the neo-liberal model in the OPT as well.

### **Neo-liberalism in Palestine**

The 2008 Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PDRP) was developed by the PA with institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the British Department for International Development (DFID). The PDRP will privatise the economy, attract foreign investment, and reduce public spending. These are the main features of a neo-liberal policy, often called 'globalisation'. The PDRP strengthens Israeli economic, political and military domination in the OPT.

The PDRP depends on Israel's policy of turning the OPT into a series of Bantustans policed by the PA, through which regional capitalists can access a pool of cheap Palestinian labour.

With the PDRP, Palestinian elites join in as junior partners in the neo-liberal regime. The plan commits the PA to cutbacks in government spending that are worse than similar measures imposed by the IMF and World Bank on other states in the Middle East.

These cutbacks will happen at a time when the poverty in the OPT is worse than ever before. By 2008, 75% of households in Gaza and well over 50% in the West Bank were living in poverty. The recent attacks on Gaza have made the situation even worse, with about 80% unemployment.

### **Palestinian workers retrenched and unemployed**

To make things worse, Israel has replaced many Palestinian workers in agriculture and construction with migrant workers from Asia and Eastern Europe. Since 1967, Israel has also made it impossible for Palestinian industries to expand and thus employ the increasing numbers of unemployed Palestinian workers. This is part of the way in which Israel makes the Palestinian economy subordinate to its own economy.

The Palestinian population has no control over water, electricity, telephone access and other basic services. These services are supplied by Israeli companies through Palestinian middlemen, with the exception of a small amount of electricity generated in Gaza (though these sources in Gaza have been damaged by recent Israeli attacks). So this means, for example, that Palestinian electricity bills are generally paid to Israeli companies.

The PDRP aims to use cheap Palestinian labour in industrial zones and parks on the edges of the patchwork of Palestinian territories in the West Bank. Israeli, Palestinian and regional capital there will take advantage of very low Palestinian wage costs. While some of this production will involve traditional low value-added sectors such

as textiles, some zones will focus on producing goods for high-tech sectors of the Israeli economy, where a well-educated Palestinian labour force can be paid low wages. The goods produced will be exported to the US, the EU and the Gulf states. The PA will police the several million-strong reserve army of labour locked behind the walls and checkpoints of the Palestinian territories. In return, the PA leadership will wield the trappings of a state, be allowed to travel and move freely and earn some of the profits that flow from the zones.

Nablus soap-making has been at the heart of the Nablus economy since the 1930s. In 2001, the soap accounted for 41.5% of exports from the region. Volume has steadily declined as occupation forces destroyed three soap factories during Operation Defensive Shield. The weakening and ultimate destruction of established economies such as these will make way for a neo-liberal economic agenda.



*Soap Making in Nablus.*

Nearly 20% of jobs in the West Bank will be connected with these industrial zones. Within the zones, Israeli and Palestinian labour laws, wage levels, environmental regulations and other workplace conditions

will not apply. The main Palestinian trade union federation, the PGFTU, will not be allowed to represent workers in the zones. Workers will need to comply with Israeli military orders.

Palestinian workers and grassroots activists disapprove strongly of the neo-liberal programmes of the PA. They are not fooled by the idea that neo-liberalism will bring peace and an end to the occupation.

### **One-State versus Two-State Solution**

The Palestinian struggle is central to any broader anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle in the Middle East. Because the neo-imperial, neo-liberal 'New Middle East' needs to have normalisation with Israel, any movement that challenges imperialism must also challenge Israel's apartheid rule in Palestine. This includes addressing the plight of the Palestinian refugees.



*Palestinian children and youth run to take cover in Khan Younis in southern Gaza Strip during stone throwing clashes near an Israeli army base September 28, 2001.*

The right of the refugees to return and live on their land is often put on the back-burner, because allowing Palestinians to become a majority would conflict with the idea of a 'Jewish state'.

That may be a good reason to reject the very idea of a 'Jewish state'. There is a growing movement favouring one democratic state in all of historic Palestine instead of the two-state solution backed by the UN. This was, in fact, the original PLO position. It only began to shift to the two-state position in the mid-70s.

One democratic state, in which the rights of all groups are equally respected, may well be the best solution to the conflict. The one-state solution would also make it easier for refugees to return.

Since Israel uses an apartheid form of control over Palestinians, the Palestinian struggle is not just an anti-occupation or de-colonisation struggle, but also an anti-apartheid struggle for equal rights and equality within the same territory as the Jewish people.

Many argue that it is impossible to separate Jews and Palestinians, just as it was impossible to separate blacks and whites in South Africa. The population of Israel is already 20% non-Jewish (mostly Palestinian but also Bedouin), and there is a large Jewish population (illegally) settled in the OPT.

However, the Palestinian struggle is also an anti-colonial, anti-occupation struggle. Those who defend a two-state solution say that this already has the backing of the international community in the UN, apart from the US and Israel. There is strong backing in international law for the two-state solution and against colonial occupation.

The one-state solution does not have this kind of agreement, but that is changing. Recently even the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) predicted that eventually there will be a one-state solution in Palestine. There is growing support for a one-state solution in the Arab countries and the OPT as well.





*Under Obama the US favours a two-state solution, while Netanyahu is quoted as saying that a two-state solution is 'unlikely'.*





*The wall that divides the Palestine bantustan from Israel.*

It is up to the Palestinians to decide which course to take. The role of the BDS movement and the Palestine solidarity movement is to support them in their struggle for national self-determination in the ways they would want to be supported.

It does seem, though, that the one-state solution is increasingly preferred by Palestinians in the OPT, according to recent polls. It is not clear what the refugees outside the OPT want. It is likely that they would prefer the solution that would best help them to return. Again, it is the one-state solution that would best do so. Moreover, Israel has now taken over more than 80% of Palestinian land and continues to do so daily with illegal settlements. Israel has also built a massive wall around small pockets of scattered areas where Palestinians live to divide it from Israel. This makes a genuine two-state solution physically impossible under current conditions.

## PART FOUR: ISRAEL, APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA AND SOLIDARITY

*“Israel was a key political, economic and military supporter of the apartheid regime, especially when the international boycott and sanctions were at their height.”*

Israel was a key political, economic and military supporter of South Africa’s apartheid regime, especially when the international boycott and sanctions were at their height. Israel helped to move South African goods to Europe. It also supplied weapons to South Africa, including nuclear technology, and anti-riot vehicles that were used against protestors in the townships.



*A growing global protest movement is beginning to attack Israeli economic interests.*

Israel also helped the South African army in Angola, on the side of US-backed anti-Communist Jonas Savimbi and UNITA against the MPLA, which the Soviet Union, Cuba and Nicaragua supported. Taking part in this conflict led to Israel’s involvement in the diamond trade, which continues to this day.

Perhaps the Zionist leadership in Israel became allies with the apartheid rulers in South Africa because they understood their own histories in a similar way – as ‘civilised’ minorities surrounded by a mass of barbaric people supported by communism. The Zionists and the Afrikaners both also had myths about coming to a barren land which they cultivated, as if there were no people there. Similar myths disrespectful to indigenous peoples were also part of early American and Australian colonial mythologies.

South Africans who were part of the anti-Apartheid struggle recognise other similarities - for example, the way the two racist regimes blame their victims for their own crimes.

### **Resistance and Solidarity**

In Israel’s murderous attack on Gaza, over three weeks during January 2009, more than 1 300 Palestinians were killed. Only 14 Israelis were killed, and most of them were soldiers killed by ‘friendly fire’.

Most governments did nothing to stop the attack until Gaza was almost wiped out. Then the UN Security Council called for a ‘ceasefire’ - as if there were two armies fighting each other. But in reality, one of the most powerful armies in the world was ruthlessly attacking a defenseless civilian population.

Although Israel stopped journalists from entering Gaza during its massacres, human rights groups, doctors, UN workers and media outlets in Gaza made the information public. There were also massive demonstrations about the attack around the world. Yet most of the governments of the world did not condemn Israel, and did nothing to punish Israel for this atrocity.

What is more, while Israel maintains its blockade of Gaza, Western officials and Egypt have agreed to stop the Hamas government of Palestine from getting weapons through the borders between Gaza and Egypt.

Hamas is called a terrorist organisation. Hamas militants fire primitive home-made rockets into Israel civilian centres. It is true that Hamas is engaging in terrorism - defined as violence against civilians for political purposes. But we should remember that the apartheid regime and the US also called the ANC a 'terrorist' organisation when it was struggling against apartheid while Israeli and US state terror is not seen as terrorism.



The problem for Israel is that people do not like to be ruled by foreigners, or by elites collaborating with foreigners. They will always find ways to resist. The resistance may fade, but it will rise up again, as it did in the OPT, first in 1987-1993 (the first Intifada - 'uprising') and then in 2000-2005 (the second Intifada).

Through more than 60 years of violent dispossession, and oppression, the Palestinians have not given up their fight for national self-rule. They

have refused to submit, despite all the destruction, torture, deprivation and humiliation.

More and more, ordinary people around the world can see the Palestinian cause is just, despite all the propaganda used to denounce them and make it seem unworthy. We need to show solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, not only because the Palestinians are an oppressed people living under a racist occupation. It is also important because this is part of a broader struggle in the Middle East, and a yet broader struggle in the 'globalised' capitalist world we live in.



*Palestinian solidarity around the world.*

The struggle for Palestinian national rights and a viable state is also a struggle against 'normalisation' of trade and other relations with Israel. And because the Middle East is crucial for US global dominance, what happens there is actually important for everyone, including South Africa.



## Why Solidarity?



Solidarity is about working class unity. It means: Engagement and mutual support in the struggle against injustice, oppression in the working-class movement. Solidarity is also not limited to single nations or single movements, and crosses over borders and between organisations and struggles.

In various countries, trade unions, student groups, universities, artists, municipalities, churches and grassroots organisations have supported the BDS campaign. After Israel's attack on Gaza, the governments of Venezuela and Bolivia cut off diplomatic ties with Israel.

The South African government does not boycott Israel. The most it does is criticize Israel when Israel blatantly violates Palestinian human rights. But that is better than what most governments do. South Africa can lead an African BDS campaign against Israel.

Unlike our government, South African trade unions have endorsed the 2005 Palestinian call for a BDS campaign. During January 2009, dock workers belonging to the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU), refused to unload a ship with Israeli cargo in Durban.

Ordinary Palestinians have continued to fight despite many years of violent oppression. After the Nakba of 1948, and the occupation of



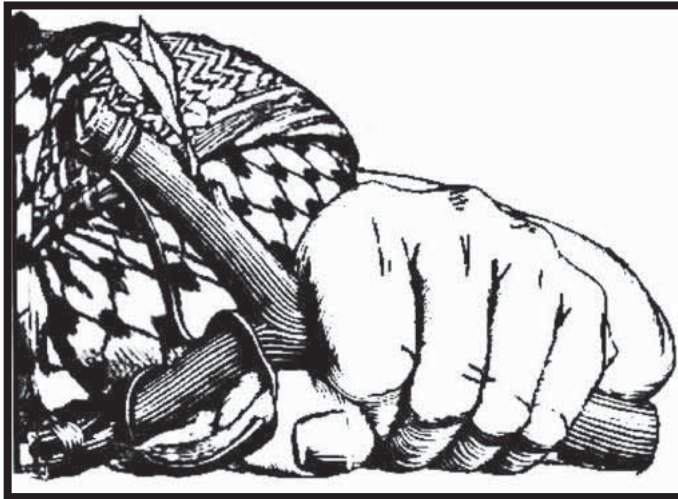
1967, the Palestinians kept fighting. They kept fighting although the PLO leadership has virtually sold out their struggle. They continue to fight today, despite the horrors of the Gaza massacre, unbearable poverty, and the fact that it must seem that half the world is against them while the other half is simply indifferent.

Anyone with a sense of justice would want to stand in solidarity with them. The best way for workers and all people to do this is to support the BDS campaign. Through their unions, workers need to find every way possible to boycott Israel and pressurise their governments to do the same. In South Africa, there is a special reason to do so: Israel is very much an apartheid state.



## WORKSHOP AND STUDY-CIRCLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND GUIDELINES:

1. Does Israel have “a right to exist”? Why?
2. What is Israel’s role in the Middle East and why does it receive the consistent support of the USA and other Western powers?
3. What are the similarities and differences in our struggle history and that of the Palestinians?
4. What are the key political lessons that can be learnt from the experience of the Palestinians’ liberation struggle?
5. International solidarity played a major role in ending Apartheid. What can we do to build meaningful solidarity in our communities, workplaces and trade unions and at an international level with the people of Palestine? – Refer to PSG resolution in Appendix 1.



# APPENDIX 1. RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION IN GAZA,

PSG



PALESTINE SOLIDARITY GROUP

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## Adopted by the mass meeting held on Friday 9th January 2009, Mowbray Town Hall, Mowbray

We South Africans who have lived through the trauma of Apartheid and who have resisted it with the support of our allies in throughout the world meet here tonight in Solidarity with the long suffering Palestinian people and pass the following resolution:

### Noting that

- The Israeli state, supported by its allies, the US, British and several other European governments, has mercilessly bombed and attacked the people of Gaza, causing a humanitarian crisis with immense suffering as part of an ongoing attempt at genocide of Palestinians as a people.
- This latest onslaught is designed to further fragment the Palestinian people, destroy a democratically elected Hamas government and to crush resistance to Israeli occupation.
- For decades Israel and its allies have tried to crush the Palestinian people's liberation resistance against the occupation of their land.
- In defiance of the International Court of Justice, Israel has built an Apartheid wall to confine and Palestinians to small pockets of land leaving a future Palestinian state something less than a Bantustan.
- Israel has violated numerous international and humanitarian laws and defied several United Nations Resolutions. This includes the bombings of ordinary people, assassinations of leaders, depriving

entire populations of access to basic resources, eviction from their land, denying them the freedom of movement, detention without trial of thousands of Palestinians and torture.

## **And;**

### **Further noting that:**

- Progressive forces from all over the world, including several trade unions and academic associations, are demanding that Israel and its allies immediately stop the bombing and killing of the Palestinian people. These progressive forces have also called for sanctions and boycotts to be imposed against Israel.
- The South African government has not acted decisively in support of justice in the Middle East. Instead it wants to pursue a policy of “even-handedness”, thus equating Palestinian resistance with Israeli aggression. Its condemnation of the latest Israeli atrocities is vacuous and ambiguous. As opposed to the principled and consistent solidarity that our struggle received from the Palestinians our government has done nothing substantial to support the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people; continues to recognise Israel and maintains normal diplomatic and other relations with the Israeli state.
- South African companies, including para-statal such as Denel, freely trade with Israel, including the supply of weapons and spare parts for them used against the Palestinian people.

### **We therefore condemn;**

- a) in the strongest terms, the genocidal massacres and war crimes that are currently being perpetrated against the people of Palestine by the Zionist state of Israel with the explicit support of the current US administration and the implicit support of the incoming administration of President-elect, Barack Obama.
- b) the wanton destruction of life-sustaining infra-structure in Palestine

and the deliberate blockading of Gaza has created a serious life threatening humanitarian crisis.

- c) the deliberate impotence of international agencies and either, the silent complicity and / or the active support of most governments in the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and acts of terror by Israel.
- d) the current and ongoing shipment of armaments from the US to Israel.
- e) the ongoing detention of almost 10 000 Palestinian prisoners, including women and children.

We demand that;

- a) Israel immediately ceases its aerial bombardments and military attacks on Palestinians in Gaza.
- b) Israel abides by the provisions of international humanitarian law and human rights law, and refrains from imposing collective punishment on Palestinian civilians.
- c) The international community holds Israel legally accountable for all crimes committed against civilian populations.
- d) The international community implements diplomatic and trade sanctions against Israel with immediate effect.
- e) The EU stops the sanctions imposed by Europe on the Palestinian Authority as a penalty for exercising their democratic right and electing a government of their choice.
- f) The UN implements the opinion of the International Court of Justice on Israel's Apartheid Wall.

## **We therefore resolve:**

**To pledge our solidarity and support to the struggle of the Palestinian people for freedom in the following ways:**

1. Support the call for a strong, determined and sustained boycott and sanctions campaign against Israel until the end of its occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories. This campaign will include sanctions, trade embargoes and boycotts of of Israel.
2. We commit ourselves to building a united front of all organisations and people committed to the liberation of Palestine in opposition to the racist, Zionist Israeli state.
3. Involve ourselves in and join hands with Palestinian solidarity movements' struggles and actions in South Africa and internationally.
4. To call on American, British and European workers to pressurise and force their governments to stop supporting Israel.
5. Our trade unions to implement boycotts and blacking action along the following lines:-
6. Mineworkers not to handle minerals and gemstones destined for Israel
7. Transport workers not to handle goods to and from Israel or facilitate any El Al or other flights to and from Israel.
8. Wholesale and retail workers not to handle any Israeli imports.
9. To protest at the Israeli and Egyptian embassies.
10. To educate and highlight the nature of the international arms industry as one of the main benefactors of war in the Middle East and the massacre of the Palestinian people.
11. To organise and support a local and international boycott of companies that support Israel, e.g. Coca-Cola.



**We demand that our government immediately:**

1. Breaks all diplomatic ties with Israel and immediately recall all diplomatic staff.
2. Cuts all economic and trade ties with Israel.
3. Actively promotes an academic boycott of Israel by ensuring that all academic links with Israel by our tertiary institutions and research organisations are severed immediately.
4. Prosecutes any South African citizen who serves in the Israeli armed forces.
5. Prosecutes organisations and their leaders who publicly support the massacre of the Palestinian people, such as the Jewish Board of Deputies.
6. Prevents any South African from participating in any cultural or sporting event with Israel or its citizens.

**We call for a national day of action by South Africans, as an act of solidarity with the people of Palestine.**



## CONTACT DETAILS OF PALESTINE SOLIDARITY GROUPS

<http://www.palestine.org.za>  
129 Rochester Rd, Observatory, 7925  
Tel: +27-21-4472525; Fax: 0866482193  
E-mail: [info@palestine.org.za](mailto:info@palestine.org.za)

[http://www.palestinecampaign.org/Index5b.asp?m\\_id=1&l1\\_id=3&l2\\_id=21](http://www.palestinecampaign.org/Index5b.asp?m_id=1&l1_id=3&l2_id=21)

<http://palestinesolidarityproject.wordpress.com/category/other-solidarity-groups/>

<http://www.ipsc.ie/>

<http://palsolidarity.org/>

<http://palestinesolidaritycampaign.net/>

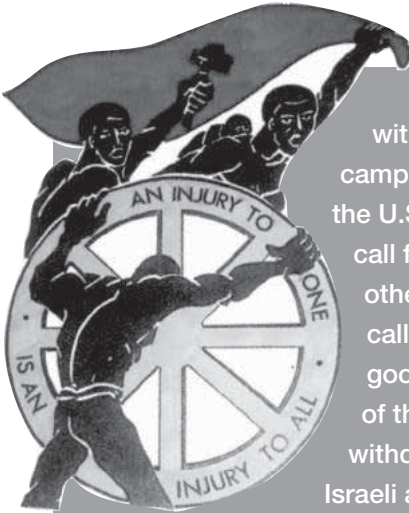
<http://www.stopthewall.org/boycott/second/2.html>

<http://www.ic-creations.com/Israel/Pages/Intifada/pageintifada.html>

<http://www.palestineremembered.com/Acre/Famous-Zionist-Quotes/Story694.html>

<http://palestinesolidarityproject.wordpress.com/category/other-solidarity-groups/>

## APPENDIX 2. COSATU DECLARATION ON PALESTINE (2006)



Congress expresses its solidarity with the peoples the Middle East. We will campaign for an end to the armed aggression of the U.S., Israel and their allies in the region. We call for the release of Palestinians, Iraqis and others held unjustly and without charge. We call on COSATU members to boycott Israeli goods and to demonstrate at the embassies of the U.S. and Israel. Our government should withdraw its ambassador from Israel and the Israeli ambassador to South Africa should be expelled.



# THE INTERNATIONALE

[variant words in square brackets]

Arise ye workers [starvelings] from your slumbers  
Arise ye prisoners of want  
For reason in revolt now thunders  
And at last ends the age of cant.  
Away with all your superstitions  
Servile masses arise, arise  
We'll change henceforth [forthwith] the old tradition [conditions]  
And spurn the dust to win the prize.

So comrades, come rally  
And the last fight let us face  
The Internationale unites the human race.  
So comrades, come rally  
And the last fight let us face  
The Internationale unites the human race.

No more deluded by reaction  
On tyrants only we'll make war  
The soldiers too will take strike action  
They'll break ranks and fight no more  
And if those cannibals keep trying  
To sacrifice us to their pride  
They soon shall hear the bullets flying  
We'll shoot the generals on our own side.

No saviour from on high delivers  
No faith have we in prince or peer  
Our own right hand the chains must shiver  
Chains of hatred, greed and fear  
E'er the thieves will out with their booty [give up their booty]  
And give to all a happier lot.  
Each [those] at the forge must do their duty  
And we'll strike while the iron is hot.