

# Read the historic United Electrical Workers Union resolution endorsing BDS

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Logo of the United Electrical Workers union (UE).

The following press release was sent out by the United Electrical Workers union (UE):

## UE Becomes First National Union in U.S. to Endorse BDS

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At its national convention in Baltimore August 16-20, the United Electrical Workers union (UE) adopted a resolution endorsing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) to pressure Israel to end the occupation and grant Palestinians their freedom. UE is now the first national U.S. union to endorse BDS. The full resolution is below.

The global BDS movement arose from a 2005 call by Palestinian trade unions and human rights groups. UE's resolution also calls for a cutoff of U.S. aid to Israel and for U.S. support for a peace settlement on the basis of self-determination for Palestinians and the right to return. With its resolution UE joins COSATU of South Africa, Unite the Union in Britain and many other labor unions in supporting BDS as a step toward justice and peace in Palestine and Israel.

"We reached a breaking point when Israel launched the war on Gaza in 2014, killing over 2,000 people including 500 children. Because Israel has been unwilling to engage in real negotiations to bring about a just resolution to the occupation, this is a necessary step for labor to take in order to bring about a peaceful end to the conflicts there" said Carl Rosen, president of UE's Western Region and a member of the national executive board.

UE represents 30,000 workers across the country in the private and public sectors. At its five-day convention member delegates acted on 37 resolutions on collective bargaining, organizing, and political issues. UE's BDS statement upholds the union's long tradition of courageous stands on foreign policy issues, such as being the first union to oppose the Vietnam War.

The Palestinian Postal Workers Union has written to UE in response to its resolution. "...We would like to express our deepest appreciation for the courageous resolution on "Justice and Peace for the Peoples of Palestine and Israel"... in support of our right as Palestinians to live in peace and dignity as equals on our lands.... We commend you for calling on your government to change its one-sided foreign policy that disregards human rights and harms any efforts at reaching a just peace, and for fully endorsing our call for boycott, divestment & sanctions (BDS) launched a decade ago. We sincerely hope that other national unions in the US and many other countries will follow in your footsteps. Your active solidarity warms our hearts and gives us hope that one day the working class all over will mobilize as one to help us end this brutal colonial occupation, and bring down the blockade, walls and checkpoints."

UE General President Bruce Klipple says, "The widespread abuse of workers under the occupation is a concern for the global labor movement. We support our brothers and sisters in the labor movement who call for this peaceful protest to bring about a just peace in Israel and Palestine."

***The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, UE is an independent, member-run union representing both private and public sector workers.***

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### **JUSTICE AND PEACE FOR THE PEOPLES OF PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**

In 1988, delegates to the UE 53rd Convention adopted the resolution "Time for a Just Settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." In it they said, "The occupation by Israel of the West Bank and other Arab lands since 1967 has blocked the exercise of Palestinian national rights and resulted in ongoing violations of human, social, political, economic and particularly trade union rights of Palestinians..." The resolution said the U.S. government had "contributed to the continued conflict by its one-sided support for Israel and its failure to take into account the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people," and it called for the U.S. government to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization and for the creation of a Palestinian state.

For more than 25 years the U.S. has engaged in a so-called "peace process" with Israeli and Palestinian representatives. But the U.S. role has remained extremely one-sided. The U.S. provides Israel \$3 billion a year in aid and repeatedly uses its UN veto to shield Israel from criticism of its human rights abuses. The Palestinians are worse off. In the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel continues to confiscate homes and land to expand Israeli settlements which violate international law. Since 1967 Israel has settled more than 500,000 of its citizens in the West Bank, and has been building a wall that separates neighboring towns and cuts off farmers from their fields. Many prominent human rights activists including former President Jimmy Carter and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu have called the system of Israeli rule over Palestinian people "apartheid."

In Gaza, 1.8 million Palestinians are crowded into a tiny enclave under continuous military and economic blockade. In the summer of 2014 Israel waged a merciless war on the impoverished population of Gaza. More than 2,000 Palestinians were killed. The vast majority were civilians, including more than 500 children; and the physical destruction was overwhelming. UE's officers issued a statement expressing our union's alarm and over 300

Holocaust survivors and descendants signed a full-page newspaper ad that condemned the Israeli attack as genocide and declared, “never again must mean never again for anyone.” Yet incredibly, the U.S. Senate voted unanimously at the time to endorse Israel’s actions.

The source of the conflict goes back to the origins of the State of Israel. The population was overwhelmingly Palestinian Arab (Muslim and Christian) before 1947-48, when well-armed Zionist militias seized most of the territory of Palestine and expelled 750,000 people from their cities, villages and farms. They executed much of the Palestinian leadership and declared the founding of the State of Israel. As a result millions of Palestinians are refugees both in the occupied territories and in other countries. Israel prohibits their return to their homes.

In recent years racism and extremism in Israel has grown more severe. One-fifth of Israeli citizens are Palestinians who survived ethnic cleansing. Some members of parliament, including cabinet members in Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu’s government, call for stripping their citizenship and expelling them. Some also call for expelling all Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza and annexing them to Israel. The “peace process”, supposedly aimed at negotiating the terms of Palestinian statehood in those territories, has been dead at least since March when Netanyahu, in his reelection campaign, declared he would never accept a Palestinian state.

In July 2005 Palestinian trade unions and hundreds of Palestinian civil society organizations called for a worldwide campaign of boycotts to pressure Israel to end its apartheid over the Palestinians. This has developed into a global movement called Boycott, Disinvestment, Sanctions. BDS was modeled after the 1980s international solidarity campaign that put economic pressure on South Africa’s government which helped end apartheid.

The summer 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza increased worldwide support for BDS. UE Local 150 endorsed BDS. The largest union in Britain, UNITE, endorsed BDS in July 2014. UAW Local 2865, which represents 13,000 graduate employees of the University of California, also endorsed BDS last year. COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions that helped defeat apartheid in that country, is a strong backer of BDS. Many progressive Jewish organizations and individuals, in the U.S., Israel and elsewhere actively support BDS as a way to bring about peace and justice for the people of Israel and Palestine.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THIS 74th UE CONVENTION:**

1. Calls on Congress and the Administration to end all U.S. military aid to Israel; and to pressure Israel to end the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the siege of Gaza and negotiate a peace agreement on the basis of equality, democracy, and human rights for the Palestinian and Israeli people, including Palestinian self determination and the right of return for refugees.
2. Endorses the BDS movement and urges the union at all levels to become engaged in BDS and the movement for peace, justice and equality between the Palestinians and Israelis.

***See more at: <http://mondoweiss.net/2015/09/electrical-resolution-endorsing#sthash.wfXr46FN.dpuf>***