



Statement in Support of Palestinians, on behalf of 150 Individual Rank-and-File Members of the Brooklyn Defender Services Union – UAW Local 2325.

January 18, 2024

We, 150 Individual Rank-and-File Members of the Brooklyn Defender Services Union – UAW Local 2325, stand in solidarity with the global movement for Palestinian liberation and in support for the boycott, divestment, sanctions movement. We call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine which is rooted in violence¹, apartheid², racism³, dispossession⁴, displacement⁵ and ethnic cleansing.⁶ We call upon our leadership—those in our organization and our government—to heed the urgent plea from Palestinian trade unions⁷ to “end all forms of complicity with Israel’s crimes” against the Palestinian people at the federal, state, and local levels.

In calling for an end to apartheid and ethnic cleansing, we are required to tell you that our individual views do not reflect those of our employer. **This statement is unapologetically written by anti-Zionist public defense workers fighting on behalf of the most marginalized communities in New York City against mass incarceration, the family regulation system, immigrant detention, and the myriad of collateral indignities of poverty and systemic racism.** It is the duty of our profession to speak out against oppression *everywhere*.

We cannot claim to serve communities targeted by state violence while also staying silent about the over 24,000 Palestinians killed⁸ by the U.S-backed Israeli regime’s genocide in Gaza. More than 8,000 people are still trapped beneath the rubble⁹. Entire generations of Palestinian families have been wiped out of Gaza’s civil registry¹⁰ – people with dignity, stories, hopes, and dreams for the future. Already suffocating under an illegal 17-year blockade,¹¹ **Israel is now starving over 2.2 million Gazans¹²** by methodically cutting off food, water, fuel, and medicine as collective punishment. For over 100 days, we have watched **over 1.9 million Gazans forcibly displaced** in what the UN Special Rapporteur stated “the only logical conclusion” is an intention to expel the civilian population of Gaza.¹³ Over 100 journalists have been deliberately murdered and silenced for exposing these horrors.¹⁴

Simultaneously, over 300 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed¹⁵ by Israeli forces since October 7th, accompanied by a surge in kidnappings, torture¹⁶, arbitrary arrest and detention¹⁷, censorship¹⁸, and settler violence¹⁹. **This unrelenting violence and the dehumanization of Palestinians as “human animals”²⁰ is a culmination of 75 years of illegal Israeli occupation**—all enabled by the United States’ unwavering political allegiance and financial support. It is with our U.S. dollars and labor that Israel has indiscriminately dropped the equivalent of more than three nuclear bombs on Gaza²¹—reducing homes²²,

hospitals²³, schools²⁴, refugee camps²⁵, and places of worship²⁶ to rubble. While our government is expected to invest another \$14 billion²⁷ to fund genocide, the communities we serve in New York City lack basic access to housing, food security, education, and healthcare.

We must invest in our communities and divest from the war machine. This is why our fellow public defense workers across New York City are bravely speaking out despite increasing hostility and repression from leaders of our purportedly anti-racist public defender organizations. The leaders of our organizations have cynically accused us and our colleagues of anti-Semitism, even though we are compelled by the core values of liberation and justice that brought us to this work. **As public defense workers from diverse faith, gender, and racial backgrounds, we want to set the record straight: solidarity with Palestinians is not anti-Semitic.** The attempts of public defender organizations to conflate our anti-Zionist views with anti-Semitism is a well-documented and dangerous tactic²⁸ ²⁹ that is now being deployed to silence the rank-and-file staff who fight for the dignity and liberation of New Yorkers and *all people* every day. We stand with our union siblings in the knowledge that our fate is collective—that repression anywhere is repression everywhere.

Palestinians teach us life. It is from their courage that we find ours in making this statement. We will not be intimidated. Speaking up for justice has no cost when compared to the mass forced displacement and loss of Palestinian life in the ongoing *Nakba*. We join the millions who have taken to the streets globally to call for a comprehensive ceasefire and to demand an end to Israel's settler colonial occupation. The land must be returned to the indigenous Palestinian people. They must live to tell their stories³⁰.

When Palestine is free, we are all free.

In solidarity,

150 Individual Rank-and-File Members of the Brooklyn Defender Services Union – UAW Local 2325

¹ Ayyash, M. Muhanad. "Israeli Violence Is the Problem." *Al Jazeera*, October 4, 2023.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/4/10/israeli-violence-is-the-problem>.

² Zhou, Li. "The Argument That Israel Practices Apartheid, Explained." *Vox*, October 20, 2023.

<https://www.vox.com/23924319/israel-palestine-apartheid-meaning-history-debate>.

³ White, Ben. "In Israel, Racism Is the Law." *Al Jazeera*, February 25, 2016. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2016/2/25/in-israel-racism-is-the-law>.

⁴ "Israel's Occupation: 50 Years of Dispossession." Amnesty International, June 7, 2017.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/06/israel-occupation-50-years-of-dispossession/>.

⁵ Al-Mughrabi, Nidal, and Nidal Al-Mughrabi. "Palestinians Leaving Besieged Gaza City Fear New Nakba." *Reuters*, November 9, 2023, sec. Middle East. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/palestinians-leaving-besieged-gaza-city-fear-new-nakba-2023-11-09/>.

⁶ *Al Jazeera*. "The Nakba Did Not Start or End in 1948." May 23, 2017. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/5/23/the-nakba-did-not-start-or-end-in-1948>.

⁷ "An Urgent Call from Palestinian Trade Unions: End All Complicity, Stop Arming Israel." Progressive International, October 16, 2023. <https://progressive.international/wire/2023-10-16-an-urgent-call-from-palestinian-trade-unions-end-all-complicity-stop-arming-israel/en>.

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- ⁸ “Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel - Reported Impact, Day 101 | OCHA.” UN Office for Coordination of Human Affairs, January 16, 2024. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-reported-impact-day-101> .
- ⁹ Sullivan, Becky. “The Catastrophe in Gaza after 100 Days of Israel-Hamas War, by the Numbers.” *NPR*, January 14, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/14/1224673502/gaza-numbers-100-days-israel-hamas>.
- ¹⁰ Rajvanshi, Astha. “Israeli Airstrikes Have ‘Wiped Out Entire Families.’” *TIME*, October 31, 2023. <https://time.com/6330210/israel-hamas-gaza-families-amnesty-international/>.
- ¹¹ “Suffocation and Isolation-17 Years of Israeli Blockade on Gaza.” Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, n.d. <https://euromedmonitor.org/en/gaza>.
- ¹² *Al Jazeera*. “Israel: Starvation Used as Weapon of War in Gaza | Human Rights Watch.” December 18, 2023. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/18/israel-starvation-used-weapon-war-gaza>.
- ¹³ Gaviria Betancur, Paula. “Israel Working to Expel Civilian Population of Gaza, UN Expert Warns.” UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 22, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/12/israel-working-expel-civilian-population-gaza-un-expert-warns>.
- ¹⁴ “Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel.” Flash Update #78. UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, December 27, 2023. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-78>.
- ¹⁵ “Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel.” Flash Update #85. UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, January 5, 2024. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-85>.
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