

## AFSCME members and staff demand leadership call for an end to genocide and occupation in Palestine

 **PRESIDENT LEE SAUNDERS, SECRETARY-TREASURER ELISSA MCBRIDE, AND AFSCME INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD**

Join fellow AFSCME rank-and-file members and staff across the US to demand that AFSCME end its complicity in long-standing U.S.- Israeli imperialism in Palestine and in the current genocide of Gazans. We stand in solidarity with Palestinian workers, and refuse to allow our labor power or our union leadership to serve imperialism, apartheid, and genocide in Palestine.

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**To: President Lee Saunders, Secretary-Treasurer  
Elissa McBride, and AFSCME International Executive**

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### SIGN THIS PETITION

Will you stand with your fellow members and coworkers by adding your name to the growing call for AFSCME to help end the genocide and occupation in Palestine? \*

- Yes - add my name and local number
- Yes - add my first name and last initial with my local number only
- Yes, but keep me anonymous

First Name \*

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## Board

**From: [Your Name]**

Dear President Lee Saunders, Secretary-Treasurer Elissa McBride, and AFSCME International Executive Board:

We are proud AFSCME rank-and-file members and staff writing to demand that you join our siblings across the US and global labor movement in calling not only for a permanent and immediate ceasefire in Gaza, but also for conditions of true justice and peace. Our union must call for an end to the US government's complicity in Israel's genocide in Gaza, its apartheid rule, and its decades-long occupation of Palestine.

Last week, the International Executive Board (IEB) approved a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, which acknowledged some of the insurmountable harm done to Palestinians by the Israeli military, and declared that "the conflict in the Middle East can not be resolved with ceaseless violence and wars." While aspects of this resolution are well-intentioned, the resolution as a whole fails to engage substantively with the enormity of the situation. As of March 2024, Israel has been perpetrating a genocidal military assault for over five months. Israel is imposing forced starvation, in addition to slaughtering and maiming tens of thousands of Palestinians in Gaza, and accelerating violence in the West Bank. The US has enabled Israel's actions at every step: diplomatically, rhetorically, and materially. AFSCME IEB's resolution is inadequate to the historical moment, as it evades the main action that we as a union can and must take against this genocide: compelling President Joe Biden, whose candidacy AFSCME endorsed in 2020 and 2024, to end

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his support for the genocide of Palestine. While we reject the resolution's repetition of Zionist talking points and its a-historical perspective, of most concern to us is the IEB's failure to recognize the US government's full complicity in the ongoing Israeli atrocities, including actions Israel undertook continuously in the decades of occupation prior to October 7th. AFSCME possesses sizable power to exercise pressure upon US elected officials, yet our IEB has manifestly decided to squander that power.

If AFSCME's IEB needs a reminder of how and why to exercise our power against the forces of oppression, racism, and dehumanization, you need only look to our union's own courageous history. In 1968 the Memphis Sanitation Workers, AFSCME Local 1733, struck bravely alongside civil rights giants such as Martin Luther King, Jr., to assert the rights and human dignity of Black workers in the face of systemic disenfranchisement. This was far from an isolated incident. AFSCME history comprises a rich tradition of taking bold actions for racial justice, empowered by an understanding of the inextricable connections between workers domestically and internationally. AFSCME's own Constitution states an one objective of our Federation "to work with workers in other lands towards the improvement of the conditions of life and work in all countries, towards the diminution of international tensions and a reduction in the use of armed force to resolve disputes, and towards genuine fraternity of all workers." (Article II, Section G). As AFSCME members, we are proud that our union understood not only why we had to struggle for racial and economic justice at home, but also why the fight against apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s was OUR fight, why "an injury to

one” was truly “an injury to all.” In the past few years, multiple human rights organizations have finally reported on the apartheid conditions that Israel has long imposed on Palestine. AFSCME members recognize that this instance of apartheid, too, must be our fight in the US labor movement.

This shared history demands that, as AFSCME members and staff, we stand now in solidarity with the Palestinians, who have endured decades of colonization, ethnic cleansing, occupation, and systemic racism enacted under legal apartheid—all with active US government support and subsidization. In order to meet the demands of history and live up to our union's legacy, AFSCME must support a free Palestine as the necessary and minimal condition for any lasting justice and peace in the region. Not only that—we must support a free Palestine as crucial to our survival and well-being as US public service workers. Every dollar of the \$3.8 billion that the US government sends annually to Israel is a dollar that could help keep our public libraries' doors open, that could help a paraeducator make a living wage, or that could staff our cities' public health and sanitation services. We are public service workers, and every day we witness the fundamental connection between our government funding war and oppression overseas while disinvesting in public services and working peoples' common good in the US and its territories.

We believe in a labor movement and a US government that invests in peace, universal public services, and human dignity, rather than in genocide, occupation, and imperialism. We believe that, as public service workers and as union staff supporting those workers, we have a unique history, a unique role, and a unique

responsibility to demand a better, more just world from our union's and our nation's leaders.

To that end, today we are speaking up proudly, as AFSCME members and staff, to make the following demands.

We call on the AFSCME International Executive Board to:

1. Demand that President Biden, AFSCME's endorsed presidential candidate, immediately order the necessary direct intervention and delivery BY LAND (the only feasible route given the urgency of the situation) of fully adequate amounts of food, water, fuel, and medical supplies to end the forced starvation, illness, and potential death of the 2.3 million Palestinian people currently at risk; and that President Biden fully restore US funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).
2. Demand that President Biden immediately end all arms sales, military funding, and assistance to Israel.
3. Demand that President Biden and US leaders immediately call for Israel to end its genocide in Gaza, and permanently end the siege on Gaza, and its occupation of Gaza and the West Bank.
4. Demand that US leaders exert every power of influence available, including sanctions, to pressure Israel to end its illegal settlements, its apartheid system of governance, its systemic violation of Palestinians' human rights, and to recognize Palestinians' right of

return and ownership of the lands taken from them during the 1948 Nakba and subsequently.

5. Commit to divestment of all of AFSCME's pension funds from Israeli investments. Publicly declare commitment to implement measures called for by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement initiated by Palestinian trade unions in their statement from October of 2023.

6. Declare publicly that no retaliation against AFSCME staff or represented workers for support of Palestinian liberation will be instated or tolerated. Protect all AFSCME workers from retaliation for expressing and acting on their commitment, aligned with AFSCME values, to lead the way to a more just and equitable world by calling for an end to Israel's colonial occupation and apartheid system.



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