

The Bronx Defenders Union - UAW Local 2325 Statement in Support of Palestinians

October 20, 2023

We, The Bronx Defenders Union – UAW Local 2325 are the Union representing the workers of The Bronx Defenders. As people of conscience, we heed the urgent call by Palestinian trade unions for organized workers worldwide “to end all forms of complicity with Israel’s crimes”.¹

We vehemently oppose the decades long Israeli occupation and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. In the last 13 days Israel has made its genocidal intent in Gaza unequivocally clear. In announcing Israel’s “complete siege of Gaza”, Israel’s Defense Minister stated: “There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed. We are fighting human animals and we are acting accordingly.”² Israel’s Prime Minister further clarified that for Israel, “[t]his is a struggle between the children of light and the children of darkness, between humanity and the law of the jungle”.³ **Israel’s genocidal rhetoric is only outmatched by its genocidal actions.** Beyond cutting off electricity, food, and water to 2.5 million Palestinians confined and heavily surveilled in an open-air prison⁴, Israel has relentlessly attacked Gaza with over 6,000 airstrikes in 13 days⁵, including the October 17 Israeli airstrike of the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital that killed over 500 Palestinian hospital workers and civilians.⁶ In the past 13 days alone Israel is responsible for killing over 3,000 Palestinians and injuring over 12,500 Palestinian civilians.⁷

We refuse to decontextualize these atrocities committed by Israel and we condemn any attempts to create false equivalencies between the oppressed and the oppressor. As Toni Morrison and others wrote: “Each provocation and counter-provocation is contested and preached over. But the subsequent arguments, accusations and vows, all serve as a distraction in order to divert world attention from a long-term military, economic and geographic practice whose political aim is nothing less than the liquidation of the Palestinian nation.”⁸ We recognize that 75 years of Israeli occupation and its apartheid laws⁹ are the root cause of the violence unfolding in Palestine.

We understand that even acknowledging the suffering of the Palestinian people at our workplace can come with consequences.¹⁰ Recently, BxD staff were subjected to a settlement agreement, approved by the Board of Directors and without consent of the Union, that forced all-staff participation with the Louis D. Brandeis Center, an organization that is proudly Zionist and that describes “anti-Israelism on university campuses” as the “leading civil and human rights challenge.”¹¹ And yet despite these attempts at silencing support for Palestinians, we will not be intimidated. We recognize that our duty to speak out and defend Palestinians is deeply rooted in our commitment as public defenders and unionized workers.

As public defenders defending the most demonized and oppressed communities in the United States - poor, criminalized, immigrant, Black, and Indigenous people - we are familiar with how the U.S. political establishment legitimizes state violence against our communities through courts, prisons, police, deportations, and the media. We recognize these same tactics at work in Israel’s 75-year occupation and its apartheid laws enforced by Israel’s military and increasingly fascist court system.¹² We are also familiar with how the U.S. political establishment attempts to

manufacture public consent and support for Israel's violence against Palestinians by repeating unverified reports¹³, lies¹⁴, and misinformation¹⁵.

Let this public statement reflect: we do not consent to Israel's genocidal rhetoric and actions against the Palestinian people and we do not consent to U.S. political support for this genocide. We urge all people of good conscience who claim to be committed to the abolition of the prison industrial complex, to migrant rights, to housing justice for all, to ending the family-regulation system, to join us in publicly condemning the atrocities of Israel and defending the Palestinian people from ethnic cleansing and genocide. Your silence puts Palestinian people at risk of total annihilation and weakens our collective power in our shared movements. As Angela Davis stated: "With our oppressors uniting, it is becoming increasingly clear that all of our struggles for freedom are interconnected, and that no one will be free until we are all free."¹⁶

The Bronx Defenders Union - UAW Local 2325 supports Palestinian liberation and resistance under occupation.

¹ Workers in Palestine, *An Urgent Call from Palestinian Trade Unions* (Oct. 16, 2023), <https://progressive.international/wire/2023-10-16-an-urgent-call-from-palestinian-trade-unions-end-all-complicity-stop-arming-israel/en>.

² Emanuel Fabian, *Defense minister announces 'complete siege' of Gaza: No power, food or fuel*, Times of Israel (Oct. 9, 2023), https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/defense-minister-announces-complete-siege-of-gaza-no-power-food-or-fuel/.

³ Sonam Sheth, *Netanyahu deleted a post on X about a struggle against 'children of darkness' around the time of a tragic hospital explosion in Gaza*, Business Insider (Oct. 17, 2023), <https://www.businessinsider.com/netanyahu-deleted-children-of-darkness-post-gaza-hospital-attack-2023-10>.

⁴ Press Release by the United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), *Dismantle Israel's carceral regime and "open-air" imprisonment of Palestinians: UN expert*, OHCHR (July 10, 2023), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/07/dismantle-israels-carceral-regime-and-open-air-imprisonment-palestinians-un>.

⁵ *Israel says 6,000 bombs dropped on Gaza as war with Hamas nears a week*, Al Jazeera (Oct. 12, 2023), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/12/israel-says-6000-bombs-dropped-on-gaza-as-war-with-hamas-nears-a-week>.

⁶ Nidal Al-Mughrabi, *In deadly day for Gaza, hospital strike kills hundreds*, Reuters (Oct. 18, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/least-500-victims-israeli-air-strike-hospital-gaza-health-ministry-2023-10-17/>.

⁷ Abeer Salam, *At least 3,000 killed in Gaza strip, Palestinian Health Ministry Says*, CNN (Oct. 17, 2023), https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-news-hamas-war-10-17-23/h_03783b2e3d701d37bfcceb1d7226070c.

⁸ *A Letter from 18 Writers*, The Nation (Aug. 18, 2006), <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/letter-18-writers/tnamp/>.

⁹ *Israel's apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel system of domination and crime against humanity*, Amnesty International (Feb. 1, 2022), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/5141/2022/en/>.

¹⁰ Carl Campanile, *NYC legal aid group forced to apologize, pay \$170K over anti-Semitism claim*, NY Post (March 8, 2023), <https://nypost.com/2023/03/08/bronx-defenders-apologize-settle-antisemitism-claim/>.

¹¹ *Mission and Values*, Brandeis Center (last accessed Oct. 18, 2023), <https://brandeiscenter.com/about/mission-and-values/>.

¹² Ohad Zwigenberg, *Protests against Israel's judicial overhaul kick off at Supreme Court a day before crucial hearing*, AP News (Sept. 11, 2023), <https://apnews.com/article/israel-politics-justice-minister-judicial-overhaul-netanyahu-b93481650524a63c4e85199c0ea3fb4d>.

¹³ Kat Tenborge and Melissa Chan, *Unverified reports of '40 babies beheaded' in Israel-Hamas war inflame social media*, NBC News (Oct. 12, 2023), <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/internet/unverified-allegations-beheaded-babies-israel-hamas-war-inflame-social-rcna119902>.

¹⁴ Steve Holland and Nidal Al-Mughrabi, *Biden says Gaza militants appear to be behind hospital blast as anti-Israel protests spread*, Reuters (Oct. 18, 2023), <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-heads-middle-east-inflamed-by-gaza-hospital-blast-2023-10-18/>.

¹⁵ Josh Fiallo and Alex Nguyen, *Israel Denies Role in Gaza Hospital Blast That Killed Hundreds*, Daily Beast (Oct. 17, 2023), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/at-least-500-killed-in-gaza-city-hospital-blast-health-ministry-says>.

¹⁶ *Angela Davis calls to unite anti-racist struggles for Israeli Apartheid Week 2020*, BDS (March 16, 2020), <https://bdsmovement.net/news/angela-davis-calls-unite-anti-racist-struggles-for-israeli-apartheid-week-2020>.