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Movement against Palestinian genocide gains labor solidarity



By ERNIE GOTTA

The genocide in Gaza, conducted by Israel and funded and politically supported by the U.S. government, has produced a growing opposition among union members in the United States. Major unions like United Auto Workers, American Postal Workers Union (APWU), and United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) have to varying

degrees demanded an end to the genocide. *The Los Angeles Times* writes, “The governing body of the L.A. teachers union has weighed in on the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, voting Wednesday to support a congressional effort to block the sale of more than \$20 billion in U.S. weaponry to Israel on the grounds that American-supplied arms were being used against civilians.”

It is the rank-and-file-led Labor for Palestine initiative that has pushed the labor movement to take a position on the genocide in Gaza. Union members who are organizing in their unions and communities across the U.S. are cohering around the Labor for Palestine National Network (L4PNN).

Labor for Palestine’s website says that they were “launched in April 2004 by New York City Labor Against the War and Al-Awda NY: The Palestine Right to Return Coalition to reclaim the legacy of working class solidarity with Palestine in the United States, as reflected in groundbreaking statements by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in 1969, and wildcat strikes against the United Auto Workers (UAW) leadership’s support for Israel in 1973.”

Although Labor for Palestine has a 20-year history, momentum is again building with the current generation of union members. There are city and statewide groups like NYC Labor for Palestine, Bay Area Labor for Palestine, Connecticut Committee for Labor for Palestine, or Maine Labor for Palestine. There are also groups in specific unions on the national and local level. UAW for Labor in Palestine, New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA) for Palestine, IATSE Members for Palestine, United SteelWorkers for Palestine, and Portworkers for Palestine are just a few examples of how the Palestine solidarity movement is growing among organized labor since the start of the genocide.

These groups are finding ways to express their solidarity by organizing to demand that their unions take stronger and more concrete steps to oppose the genocide.

While these groups don't yet necessarily represent the views and ideas of every worker in their union, they are also building the broader solidarity movement that has mobilized hundreds of thousands for mass actions in the streets.

Whether it's during the final months of the Democratic Biden/Harris administration or the Republican Trump/Vance administration, the Palestine solidarity movement will have to play a vigilant role in defending civil liberties and demanding an end to U.S. weapons and aid. This article will highlight several examples of how union members are playing an unprecedented and dynamic role in the Palestine solidarity movement.

NYC Labor for Palestine has organized to get the Teachers Retirement System in New York City to divest From Israeli securities. They marched on election night with the "No votes for genocide" campaign, and supported union activist efforts to bring Palestine solidarity into the labor movement. For example, NYSNA for Palestine successfully passed a pro-Palestine resolution at their convention.

NYCL4P posted on their [Instagram](#), "UPDATE: the resolution points 1,2,3 & 5 passed October 30, 2024 at the NYSNA convention. Resolution 4 regarding political endorsements was struck out by the chair. We look forward to the implementation of the other four resolves and continuing to fight with our union siblings. An overview of our resolution. 1. Raise awareness: Making a statement endorsing a ceasefire and arms embargo. 2. Divestment: Guide our pensions towards ethical and socially responsible investments. 3. Protection: protect all workers engaging in political speech. 4. Endorsements: Only candidates that adhere to our principles should receive our support. 5. Education: Encourage informed dialogue that respects diverse perspectives while advocating for peace and justice.

Sultana Hossain, co-chair of NYC Labor for Palestine and the recording secretary of the Amazon Labor Union-IBT Local 1, said in a speech at a Palestine solidarity rally on election night, “Labor has always played a critical role in struggles for justice, and today, we are called to stand with the Palestinian people. We are called to end the siege in Gaza, to end the occupation, and to free Palestine. As union workers, we have a distinct ability to act—not just in words but in material action. We have the power to refuse to allow our labor to be exploited in ways that fuel and finance the violence and genocide in Gaza. We have the ability to shut down production, to halt distribution, and to stop the flow of capital to the Zionist war machine.”

The Connecticut Committee for Labor for Palestine (CTL4P) is organizing an official chapter of the L4PNN. Part of that process has included mass leafleting and holding a forum on Oct. 24 titled, “Gaza, Genocide, the War Industries, Unions, and a Just Transition.” This forum was a joint effort between CTL4P and activist group CT Dissenters as an attempt to reach union members, specifically in the war industries who ultimately have the power to shut down war production.

Evan F., a Teamster and member of CTL4P, was one of the featured speakers on the panel, which also included Jocelyn P. from CT Dissenters, and Ahmad H. from the Palestinian organization We Will Return. Evan stated, “We wanted to let union workers know that this movement doesn’t want to just shutter factories that produce weapons and destroy the way they earn a living. No, this movement has a vision for a future with sustainable, green, and peaceful production that benefits humanity.”

He continued, “Workers in the war industries have a huge role to play in building an anti-genocide, anti-imperialist, and ecologically conscious mass movement.”

UAW Labor for Palestine (UAWL4P) is a nationwide group of rank-and-file UAW members working to end Israel's genocide in Gaza. Their diverse and multiracial coalition includes workers from industries ranging from automobile manufacturing to higher education and legal aid. Currently, they are working on a campaign in their union demanding that the UAW International Executive Board divest the union from Israel bonds.

The UAWL4P fact sheet says, "Today, the UAW IEB maintains somewhere between \$400,000 and \$1,000,000 in investments in Israel Bonds, which directly fund the ongoing and spreading genocide in occupied Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, and beyond. The company's own website highlights 'the crucial role of Israel Bonds during this time of conflict and war.' Echoing demands by Arab, Black, and other UAW members in 1973, UAW members today are demanding to know why the IEB is investing their dues money to support an expanding U.S.-backed genocide. Below are some Frequently Asked Questions to help fellow rank-and-file workers understand the significance of this campaign and demand to divest from Israel Bonds."

Shahinaz Geneid, a member of the HAW-UAW and UAW Labor for Palestine, says, "UAW Labor for Palestine is a nationwide group of rank-and-file UAW members and part of the Labor for Palestine national network embodying the labor movement's values that an injury to one is an injury to all, standing in solidarity with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and all Palestinian workers, and working actively to end Israel's ongoing genocide in Palestine. Our work to date has helped to politically educate and organize our fellow workers across the UAW, in industries from auto manufacturing to higher education to legal services, and organize them to push our union to issue ceasefire and arms embargo resolutions.

“However, we know our work is not done—our current campaign, UAW Divest Now!, aims to pass a BDS resolution and divest the UAW from Israel bonds, and even once we have divested we know there will be more work for us to do as part of the people’s arms embargo working to stop UAW worksites from sending arms to Israel and to strategize for a just transition that redirects our comrades’ jobs away from the war machine, as we have seen UAW organize for in redirecting our jobs away from the fossil fuel industry with great success to date.”

Following the election results, the UAW has also launched a solidarity initiative for, “Building a United Working Class against Billionaire Rule.” While it’s unclear what exactly this campaign will entail, hopefully the union will work to mobilize the working class against any and all threats by the current and incoming administration. Regional meetings that brought together union workers, non-union workers, students, and community activists could be a powerful force against mass deportations, attacks on LGBTQIA+ people, abortion rights, labor rights, Black lives, and all oppressed communities.

Bay Area Labor for Palestine participated in many campaigns over the past year and has been recognized nationally in March in an article by Bahaar Tadjbakhsh of Labor Notes. Since then, one of the most important fights waged by BAL4P is its organizing against state repression through forums, teach-ins and protests. Jose Montenegro, a member of United Teachers of San Francisco, says, “Bay Area Labor for Palestine is supporting antiwar activists arrested for protesting the war in Gaza in addition to campaigning for educators, students, and Palestinian/Arab organizers repressed by workplace and university authorities.”

Union nurses, tech workers, and student workers are all facing repression on the job for expressing solidarity with Palestinians. The Biden administration has arrested thousands of peaceful protesters over the past year. This staggering

figure doesn't account for the thousands of disciplinary actions taken in workplaces across the U.S. for speaking out. In November, BAL4P participated in the Bay Area Popular Convention for Palestine—a mass meeting that looked to analyze the roots and effects of state repression against the pro-Palestine movement, in addition to a collective strategy to defend and build our struggle.

Workers' Voice encourages all union members to get active in the Palestine solidarity movement. We need many Labor for Palestines to put pressure on the union leadership, the government, and to defend our movement from repression. Reach out to us if you want to get involved in the Labor for Palestine movement today.

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