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UNITED STATES

Temple University Rank and Filers Release Palestine Solidarity Statement

Rank and filers at Temple University in Philly are demanding their union local and national fight to end all support for Israel and join the cause of Palestinian workers.

Jason Koslowski | August 3, 2021



Photo: NBC Philadelphia

In Philadelphia, the Rank and File Temple (RAFT) Caucus is the latest to **add its voice** to unions and union members condemning Israel's occupation of Palestine and its brutal slaughter of

Palestinians. RAFT is local 4531 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), representing teachers and other education workers at Temple University.

In May, Israel once again **attacked Palestine**, bombing the Gaza Strip. Gaza is one of the most densely populated regions on the globe, where millions of Palestinians have been forced to live due to the Israeli occupation. The attacks were Israel's response to Palestinians' protests against the Israeli occupation and to Israel's eviction of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem. Even in the midst of the attack, Democrat Joe Biden's administration was pushing through **hundreds of millions of dollars in aid** to Israel.

In organized labor, standing at chokepoints of the world economy, we have a **key role to play** in fighting back. Palestinian workers helped show the way. They launched a **general strike** after the attacks, making a powerful statement against Israel and its reliance on Palestinian workers even as it continues stealing Palestinian land and bombing those who live in Gaza. And internationally, unions and union federations like the **International Trade Union Confederation** have spoken out against the latest aggression by the Israeli state.

In the United States, AFL-CIO, the largest trade union federation and led by Richard Trumka, has refused to budge in its support for Israel. The AFT, representing teachers nationally, has in the past made some weak and general statements against Israeli violence — even while investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in Israeli State Bonds.

But some union locals have spoken out. Graduate students inside the AFL-CIO have rejected Israeli colonialism. Roofers local 36 in Los Angeles condemned Israel's attacks. And the United Electrical Workers have criticized Biden's support for Israel.

Now, the RAFT Caucus has joined this chorus of voices — one that still must become much larger and stronger.

The caucus calls out its national leadership in the AFT for investing union dues in the State of Israel, and it demands total divestment. It demands the end of *all* U.S. aid and support for Israel, aid that serves only to further the imperialist interest of the U.S. ruling class in the Middle East at the expense of Palestinian lives. The caucus also calls on the AFT to condemn the United States' aid to Israel, and it demands that its own union local, TAUP at Temple University, push its national union leaders to take up the cause of the Palestinian people.

Much remains to be done. But organized labor in the U.S. has a major role to play in supporting the struggle of Palestinians against their oppressor, the State of Israel.

It's crucial for union locals and nationals not *only* to speak up against Israel's occupation of Palestine and the Democrats' and Republicans' support for it. We also have to organize from the bottom up to *act* on our demands to disrupt our workplaces in solidarity with workers around the globe.

RAFT Statement of Solidarity With Palestinians

July 28, 2021

The members of the Rank-and-File Temple Caucus (RAFT) unequivocally support the cause of Palestinian liberation from Israeli occupation, settler colonialism, and apartheid.

RAFT supports the workers and oppressed people of Palestine, who are targeted by the colonial violence of the state of Israel. We support Palestinian-led movements such as **BDS** and its academia and culture focused subdivision **PACBI**.

We call on President Biden to immediately cease all military aid and financial support for the state of Israel, which we know exists only to further the imperialist aims of the U.S. government in the Middle East and beyond. The U.S. government must stop sending **American police units to Israel for training**; and the President, Departments of State, Defense, and Treasury, and Congress must take the recommendations of Human Rights Watch in their **recent report** as a serious starting point for putting pressure on Israel to cease committing these crimes and hold those responsible accountable.

We call on the AFT to completely divest from the State of Israel, including the liquidation of its **\$200,000 worth of State of Israel bonds**; to condemn the Israeli authorities' crimes of **apartheid and persecution**; and to join us in demanding that the U.S. end all support for the Israeli state. RAFT supports the efforts of other rank-and-file members of the AFT and we call on every TAUP member, as members of AFT 4531, to sign the **Statement of Solidarity with the Palestinian People** published by rank-and-file members of the AFT.

We call on both the membership and the leadership of TAUP to join the growing tide of **union locals who are speaking out** in support of Palestinians. We also call on TAUP leadership to make the above demands of AFT: that it divest in Israeli State Bonds and demand an end to U.S. support for Israel, and that TAUP constituent representatives propose those demands as resolutions that can be debated and passed by the Executive Committee.

We would like to make it clear that we recognize the crime of the Holocaust and the current scourge of anti-Semitism around the world, especially in Europe and the United States. However, we also understand that the solution to these realities cannot be the theft of another people's land and the expulsion of those people from their land. We believe that the support of a Zionist settler colonial state, in fact, allows Europe and the U.S. to evade accountability for their failure to deal with anti-Semitism in their own countries, past and present. A history of anti-Semitic violence and genocide in Europe and the U.S. does not justify the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

Anti-Semitism, Nazism, colonialism, racism, imperialism, and exploitation are linked by the foundational forces of neoliberal capitalism and white supremacy. As rank-and-file workers, we recognize that these are the weapons that the ruling class uses to divide, exploit, and brutalize

workers and the oppressed across the globe. It is therefore the duty of every rank-and-file caucus and every union to stand with the Palestinian people against their oppressors.

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