

LABOR

After Gaza Cease-fire, the Labor Movement Isn't Done Fighting for Palestinian Freedom

Networks of U.S. union organizers are calling for an end to a system of apartheid in Israel and cessation of all armed conflict in the region.

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Children wave Palestinian flags after the announcement of ceasefire and hostage-prisoner swap deal between Hamas and Israel on January 19, 2025 in Rafah, Gaza.

(PHOTO BY ABED RAHIM KHATIB/ANADOLU VIA GETTY IMAGES)

fragile cease-fire is finally in place in Gaza after Israel carried out a 15-month, U.S.-backed genocide that killed at least 47,107 Palestinians (though the true number is likely far higher) and reduced much of the coastal enclave to rubble.

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In the days following the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023, anti-Palestinian hysteria swept the U.S. political and media establishments. As Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) encouraged Israel to “level” Gaza, then-Biden White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said that calls for a cease-fire were “repugnant” and “disgraceful,” while top officials at the State Department instructed staffers not to publicly use terms like “de-escalation” and “cease-fire.”

Amid this genocidal fervor, some in the U.S. labor movement courageously spoke out to urge an end to the U.S.-sponsored slaughter.

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE) became the first national union to call for a cease-fire and a U.S. arms embargo against Israel, with UE general secretary treasurer Andrew Dinkelaker telling *In These Times* on October 13 that “U.S. military aid going in is pouring gasoline onto a fire.” The following week, UE and United Food and Commercial Workers Local 3000 launched a labor movement petition for a cease-fire that was quickly circulated among unions and labor bodies at the local, state and national level.

As the genocide unfolded with Washington’s full diplomatic and military support, around 200 U.S. labor bodies alongside the AFL-CIO joined UE in calling for end to the killing. Last summer, seven major unions—including the National Education Association, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and United Auto Workers (UAW)—also joined UE in demanding the Biden administration impose an arms embargo on Israel.

“It’s good that there’s a cease-fire, but it took way too long to get there, and that is largely the fault of U.S. government policy,” UE general president Carl Rosen tells *In These Times*.

Rosen says it was “a healthy development for the labor movement” that so many unions “spoke out about the need for a cease-fire even while there was a Democratic administration in the White House that was not taking the steps that it could have to force one.”

“UE has long advocated that labor needs to have its own independent position on foreign policy,” he adds. “We know that too often the U.S. government’s foreign policy is what’s best suited to American corporate interests rather than the interests of working people in either the U.S. or other countries.”

Pointing to the continuation of settler violence and Israeli military attacks in the West Bank in the days since the Gaza cease-fire began, along with Israel’s “bellicose approach” to neighboring countries like Syria and Lebanon, Rosen says, “there’s a lot of work to do to bring peace to that area and U.S. labor continues to have an interest in making sure that happens.” In particular, he said that the National Labor Network for Ceasefire—a coalition of nine national unions formed last February to advocate and educate within union circles on the need for a cease-fire—will “continue to speak out for not only

humanitarian aid [in Gaza], but rebuilding aid, and to reduce any continued armed conflict in that region.”

In addition to calling for a cease-fire, many U.S. unionists have also been pushing the labor movement to take concrete action in support of Palestinian liberation, especially activists affiliated with the [Labor for Palestine National Network](#) (L4PNN). First launched in 2004, L4PNN urges unions to join the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, which seeks to put international economic pressure on Israel to force it to end its apartheid policies and illegal military occupation of Arab lands. Over the past 15 months, L4PNN has grown to include approximately 50 [member organizations](#), including rank-and-file caucuses within several major unions like the [UAW](#), [SEIU](#) and [AFSCME](#).

Michael Letwin, co-convenor of Labor for Palestine and former president of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (UAW Local 2325), tells *In These Times* via email that L4PNN considers the recent cease-fire agreement “a testament to steadfast Palestinian resistance against more than a century of Zionist settler colonialism and genocide, to popular resistance throughout the region, and to solidarity throughout the world.”

Among [other activities](#), over the past year, many pro-Palestine rank-and-file groups have been organizing to get their unions to [divest](#) their own pension funds from Israel and companies it does business with. Last October, for example, Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD)—the reform caucus within the UAW that helped bring new leadership to the union in 2023—[passed a resolution](#) submitted by members of UAW Labor for Palestine calling on the union’s International Executive Board to divest the more than [\\$400,000](#) it holds in Israeli bonds.

With the Gaza cease-fire in place, these unionists aim to continue organizing in solidarity with Palestinians.

“Now, more than ever,” Letwin says, “it is essential for rank-and-file workers and our labor bodies to walk the Palestinian trade union picket line by supporting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, ending bipartisan U.S. military aid for Israel, and organizing mass action in unions and workplaces for a free Palestine, from the river to the sea.”

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