



Will the CLC Finally Break from its Support for Israel and its Histadrut Federation?

LABOUR • May 11, 2026 • [Kevin Skerrett](#)

This coming week, the delegates to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) triennial Convention in Winnipeg will have a vital opportunity to establish a new relationship of fulsome solidarity with the workers and the labour movement in Palestine. Following many months of work by the rank-and-file activists and supporters of [Labour for Palestine \(L4P\)](#), a carefully prepared resolution has been submitted by 12 different CLC affiliated bodies including locals, labour councils, provincial federations, and even two national unions. Resolution GEN-061 (or “General Resolution 61”) calls on the CLC to declare that under the present circumstances, all trade, services, and relationships with Israel are “hot cargo” and that they will “cut ties” with Israel’s Histadrut “labour federation.”

This resolution is both timely and urgent. As elsewhere, popular support for the struggle for liberation in Palestine is rising in Canada. The United States and Israel’s disastrous war on Iran has demonstrated, once again, the extent to which western capitalist control of oil wealth remains a central engine of events in that region. Israeli attacks on Lebanon, and the West Bank, compound the continuing horrors of genocide in Gaza. The need for international working class solidarity that can challenge the mythologies and violence of empire, and of settler-colonialism, has never been greater.

Yet, there are signs that the CLC leadership has been working to block General Resolution 61 by advancing an alternative, weak, resolution (“Resolution GEN-134”) that simply restates existing CLC positions.

Many delegates will see through such maneuvering and recognize that it is driven by a conservative section of the CLC leadership that does not yet realize how much the ongoing genocide in Gaza has changed the equation. That section of leadership is attempting to maintain the decades-long

tradition of CLC support for Israel and for the Histadrut – and to oppose L4P’s effort to bring about a historic reckoning with that tradition. A chance to make a definitive break with that history is available this week – if the delegates choose to seize the moment.

The ‘Hot Cargo’ component of General Resolution 61 has been outlined very effectively on the [L4P website](#) and in [media coverage](#) of the campaign. But the Resolution’s call to “cut ties” with Israel’s Histadrut has generated more controversy and merits a closer examination. The text that follows is drawn in part from a December 2025 L4P [backgrounder](#), *The Histadrut and Israel’s Settler-Colonial Project in Palestine*. It provides a brief outline of the Histadrut and its central role in Israel’s history of dispossession and ethnic cleansing. It also reports on the CLC’s continuing engagement with Histadrut and the implications of that engagement. It then concludes with a comment on the opportunity presented by General Resolution 61, arguing that its passage this week would be a major breakthrough for international solidarity from Canada’s labour movement.

THE HISTADRUT AND ISRAEL’S SETTLER COLONIAL PROJECT IN PALESTINE



Principles of the International Labour Movement

Trade unions that practice racial discrimination against their own members, workers who are potential members, or any other population they relate to, do not deserve the honour of full membership rights in the international federations and institutions of the global labour movement.

Trade unions that are implicated in war crimes, genocide, or other crimes against humanity are especially undeserving of a seat inside the international house of labour. The Constitution of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), a global union federation that represents 191 million workers in 169 countries and territories and has 340 national affiliates, loudly proclaims its

rejection of – among other social ills – colonialism, militarism, and racism. Similar fundamental principles are included in the founding documents of essentially all international union bodies.

The genocide in Gaza has rightfully provoked worldwide revulsion and outrage across all sectors of society. For trade unionists, it has exposed how both these basic standards have clearly been breached by one supposed “trade union”: the Histadrut.

The Histadrut is referred to as Israel’s General Federation of Labour. It was founded in 1920 during British colonial rule and was known at the time as the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel. Although presented internationally as an Israeli “trade union,” the Histadrut has, since its founding, been an agent and organization of Zionism, tasked with settling and supporting Jewish workers (exclusively) and laying the foundation for the Zionist colonization of Palestine.

Today, with roughly 800,000 members and deep links to the Israeli state and military, it continues to serve as an active participant in the mass dispossession of Palestinians and in Israel’s apartheid regime of systematic discrimination against Palestinian workers, communities, and people. Recent events have laid bare the Histadrut’s complicity in Israel’s genocide.

For example, during an official tour of a weapons factory operated by Israel’s infamous Elbit Systems Ltd. in November 2023, Arnon Bar-David, the most senior elected chair of the Histadrut, stopped for a horrifying photo opportunity. The shell that Bar-David showed to reporters was described as destined for Gaza, and his handwritten text was reported to read as follows:



“Greetings from the Histadrut and the workers of Israel.”

Even in his carefully formulated public statements, Histadrut Chair Arnon Bar-David has made the Histadrut’s active support for what is called Israel’s “war effort” very clear.

“Every shekel for the war effort is important ... Unnecessary offices need to be abolished, and the money directed to the war effort.” (December 1, 2023)

“I am constantly working with senior security and economic officials to find the golden path that will allow us to ensure the strength of the state and rebuild it anew.”
([April 7, 2024](#))

“It is our duty to build military strength. The State of Israel needs fighters now.”
([June 26, 2024](#))

Such calls for expanded funding for the “war effort” are effectively calls to continue the commission of war crimes and the genocide that is now widely recognized across the international human rights landscape and the community of genocide scholars. There appears to be no record of the Histadrut being critical of Israeli atrocities – even those that the Israeli government and its military have admitted to having committed.

The combination of these statements and the haunting image of the Histadrut’s Arnon Bar-David publicly glorifying the weapons used to carry out a campaign of genocide against Palestinian civilians should raise very serious questions for trade unionists in Canada. Such actions openly flout the ITUC constitution and the most basic principles of international trade unionism. Yet, to date, the CLC has remained silent about them.

In fact, just days after Bar-David’s press conference, CLC president Bea Bruske met directly with unnamed Histadrut representatives. In a December 13, 2023 [social media post](#), President Bruske suggested that she had met with “Israeli trade unionists who support a lasting peace.” This was published at a moment when the gravity and scale of Israel’s genocide in Gaza was becoming very widely recognized and condemned. South Africa’s complaint to the International Court of Justice condemning Israel’s actions as a breach of the Genocide Convention was being drafted in this same period.

Histadrut leaders and staff rely on the meetings and expressions of support from federations like the CLC to maintain Histadrut’s claims of legitimacy within the House of Labour. They use such meetings with Canadian and other unions around the world to protect Israel from legitimate criticism and to whitewash its ongoing crimes. It has even been [documented](#) that Israel’s notorious Ministry of Strategic Affairs provided funding to the Histadrut to fight against the BDS campaign within the international labour movement. This makes the Histadrut a paid agent of the Israeli government – not an independent movement of workers.

The direct involvement of the Histadrut in Israel’s crimes has been, at times, even more brazen. It has come to light that one of the leading spokespersons for the so-called Israel Defence Force (IDF), Lieutenant Peter Lerner, has had a dual role through the course of the genocide in Gaza. He has appeared regularly on CNN, the BBC, and other mainstream media outlets to provide the

Israeli government and military's propaganda messaging during the time of its mass bombing and starvation campaigns against the population of Gaza.



Lt Col Peter Lerner, IDF spokesperson on CNN, May 2024. [Facebook photo]

Yet, Lt Col Peter Lerner's second identity as a leading spokesperson for the Histadrut can also be found online. For example, as this image shows, he presented to the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva in June 2025, listed simply as Israel's "Worker" representative.



Lt Col Peter Lerner speaking to the ILO Governing Body as Israel's "Worker" representative.

It seems likely that one of the Israeli "trade unionists" who has met with President Bruske and other CLC leaders was Peter Lerner himself. Such deep integration of the Histadrut's most senior international official – he is listed as the "Director General of International Relations" – inside the IDF, and by extension the Israeli government, is not only deeply disturbing. It is de-legitimizing. In fact, it violates basic constitutional principles of the ITUC that require substantive independence of its affiliates from their respective governments.

International Recognition of Israel's Most Recent Crimes

International legal bodies and essentially all credible international human rights groups and organizations enforcing international humanitarian law have formally recognized the gravity of the humanitarian catastrophe in Palestine, and particularly in Gaza. It is worth highlighting some of their recent conclusions:

- On December 29, 2023, South Africa [filed](#) a case against Israel's violation of the Genocide Convention through its acts against Palestinians.
- On January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued [an order](#) that determined that allegations that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza are "plausible." This order imposed a set of provisional measures on Israel, requiring it to take immediate preventative action. The court agreed with the Government of South Africa that "the conditions required by its Statute to indicate provisional measures are met." This ICJ decision set in motion a more comprehensive investigation into the allegations and clarified a set of binding legal obligations on all states that are party to the Genocide Convention – including Canada.
- In November 2024, the International Criminal Court [issued warrants](#) for the arrest of the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, and then Minister of Defence, Yoav Gallant, after finding reasonable grounds to believe that both Israeli leaders "...bear criminal responsibility for the following crimes as co-perpetrators for committing the acts jointly with others: the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts."
- On December 5, 2024, Amnesty International [concluded](#) that Israel is committing acts that are prohibited by the Genocide Convention, stating that, "Amnesty International has found sufficient basis to conclude that Israel committed, between 7 October 2023 and July 2024, prohibited acts under the Genocide Convention, namely killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting on Palestinians in Gaza conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction in whole or in part."
- On July 17, 2025, the International Court of Justice issued an [advisory opinion](#) on the legality of Israel's policies and practices in what the UN labels the Occupied Palestinian Territories

(OPT), concluding that Israel's occupation and annexation of the Palestinian territories are unlawful, and its discriminatory laws and policies against Palestinians violate the prohibition on racial segregation and apartheid.

It should surprise no one that Israel's Histadrut has consistently ignored these terrible crimes – just as it has done in relation to previous Israeli crimes throughout its history. In fact, the Histadrut has consistently refused to condemn the criminal, and now openly genocidal, acts by the State of Israel, its military, or its leaders. In its public statements since October 7, 2023, Histadrut leadership has demonstrated essentially unlimited political support for the Israeli government and its genocidal military force.

“Cut Ties with the Histadrut” in Canada

In this context, Labour for Palestine has re-affirmed its support for the original [2007 call](#) from the trade unions and worker organizations of Palestine for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) on Israeli institutions. The call to Cut Ties with the Histadrut is part of the broader L4P Hot Cargo Kills Campaign. In building this campaign, we recall the appeal from Palestinian trade union organizations that have explicitly [asked](#) that the Histadrut be included in the call to boycott:

“It is imperative to recognize that, since its inception, the Histadrut has supported the Occupation and enacted racist policies against our workers, denying them their rights. It has kept silent in front of Israel's crimes against our people throughout the decades of occupation. We are thus asking the international trade unions to boycott the Histadrut to pressure it to guarantee rights for our workers and to pressure the government to end the occupation and to recognize the full rights of the Palestinian people.”

The call from 2007 was reiterated and expanded in May 2011 following a conference organized by an even larger Palestinian Trade Union Coalition for BDS (PTUC-BDS). They issued the following [statement](#):

“The Conference decisively **condemned the Histadrut and called on international trade unions to sever all links with it** due to its historic and current complicity in Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian rights. The Histadrut has always played a key role in perpetuating Israel's occupation, colonization, and system of racial discrimination.”

The importance of these calls from virtually all the organized unions of Palestine is even clearer today. This current catastrophic situation must prompt a complete re-examination of the

relationships that unions in Canada and Québec have with the Histadrut by association and affiliation with the ITUC, other Global Union Federations and international labour bodies, and the CLC.

Whether this is formally called a “boycott”, a “suspension of relations,” or something else, the point is that the Palestinian labour movement – like the labour and working-class movement of Black South Africa at the height of its brutal apartheid system – is appealing to us all to act and to do so urgently.

For unions in Canada to officially suspend relations with the Histadrut would be a substantial, peaceful means of sanctioning Israel and the wider institutional apparatus it uses to maintain an apartheid labour regime and to enable the ongoing settler colonization and genocide. **The Histadrut should no longer be welcome within the ITUC or any other international labour bodies.** It should face the same fate at the ITUC that the racist, pro-apartheid and colour-barred TUCSA of South Africa faced in the 1960s at the ILO, the ICFTU, and many other international bodies: an official suspension of all relations.

Conclusion

This point brings us back to the CLC Convention this week and the proposed Resolution 61, calling for a ‘Hot Cargo’ declaration that includes cutting ties with the Histadrut. Opponents of this Resolution have apparently suggested that declaring a cutting of ties with the Israeli Histadrut would automatically require that the CLC withdraw from the ITUC itself. This claim is entirely false. In fact, the labour centrals of both South Africa (COSATU) and Brazil (CUT) have already declared an end to all relations with Histadrut.

Further, a number of major international ITUC-affiliated unions have already broken off all ties. This list includes the UK unions UNISON and Unite, as well as the large university sector union, UCU. Unions in many other countries – including Belgium, Norway, Scotland, and Ireland – have also ended all contact. Yet all of these unions continue normal relations with the ITUC and other international bodies. (For a more complete list of these unions, see the Appendix (page 23) at the end of the [L4P backgrounder](#)).

In this context, Labour for Palestine activists and their supporters have created a vital window of opportunity for the CLC Convention delegates this week. They can first, work to ensure that



Resolution 61 is brought to the Convention floor for full debate; and second, make sure that it is approved with a majority of delegates voting in favour. If that were to happen, a new era of Canadian labour movement support for justice in Palestine will be opened. •

The above text contains excerpts from the Labour for Palestine Canada 25-page Backgrounder, *The Histadrut and Israel's Settler-Colonial Project in Palestine*. It is available, along with other materials, and commentary on the broader Hot Cargo campaign, from the [L4P website](#).

Kevin Skerrett is an Adjunct Research Professor at Carleton University's Institute of Political Economy and Director of their [Financialization Research Lab](#). He was a co-editor of the Cornell University Press volume [The Contradictions of Pension Fund Capitalism](#) (2018). He has worked for 30 years as a pension researcher with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).