Israel Bonds Divestment Is Important! Why?

Martha Grevatt, Michael Letwin | July 22, 2026

For the US labor movement, the UAW's divestment from Israel bonds, decided by members at the union's 39th Constitutional Convention, in June

2026, after decades of rank-and-file organizing, marks a significant step toward making international solidarity a reality—but there's still a long way to go.

ur union, the United Auto Workers, has finally divested from Israel bonds. The struggle to withdraw union funds from the genocidal, apartheid, settler-colonial state, which began over half a century ago, at long last succeeded at the UAW's 39th Constitutional Convention, in June 2026. After decades of outright opposition—and more recently foot-dragging by the union's International Executive Board (IEB), which in 2024 voted down a divestment resolution—just a few days after the Convention concluded members were told that divestment had been implemented.[1]

Progressive media from the *Real News Network* to *Labor Notes* to *Jacobin* to *Democracy Now!* covered the story, as did the *Detroit News*, the *Detroit Free Press*, and other mainstream media, as well as the World Federation of Trade Unions. While not all reportage gave credit where credit was due, the record shows that this victory did not come from above, but from rank-and-file, class-struggle organizing. In particular, the winning vote was due to the hard work, both on and off the Convention floor and in the years since October 7, 2023, by Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD), UAW Labor for Palestine (UAWL4P), and Engineers Against Apartheid.

UAWD submitted an amendment to the UAW Constitution, which was endorsed, in whole or in part, by Locals 869, 1115, 2320, 2325, and 7902, which span both manufacturing and white collar sectors. What actually passed at the convention was a narrower amendment committing the UAW to divesting union funds from Israel bonds, which on the floor won the support of delegates from other locals as well, including manufacturing Locals 2021 and 600.

These locals continued the work of Labor for Palestine, which was founded in 2004 to reclaim and reaffirm the groundbreaking legacy of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which famously embraced Palestinian liberation in 1969, and of the Arab Workers Caucus, whose campaign for UAW divestment included a wildcat strike in 1973 and a proposed resolution at the 1974 UAW Convention.

This grassroots campaign was specifically acknowledged by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions-Gaza, whose statement on UAW's divestment said: "We also extend special recognition and appreciation to the pivotal and extraordinary role played by the 'Unite All Workers for Democracy' (UAWD) movement and the 'Labor for Palestine' (L4P) organization." The PGFTU statement also recognized the "strikes across most major Detroit factories" in the mid-1970s.

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The UAW convention vote took place in the context of the broad Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement that has drawn in entire cities and counties, state pension funds, and more. On scores of college campuses the chant has been "Disclose! Divest! We will not stop, we will not rest!" Respecting the BDS picket line should be a universal practice, a no-brainer for any union. But unfortunately that's still not the case in the US. Even at the UAW convention, the vote was relatively narrow: 321 to 287, or 53% in favor, with 200 or more delegates not casting a vote. Most unions haven't even taken up divestment, even though multiple polls have shown that a majority of people—and one can assume that includes a majority of union workers—oppose Israel's genocide in Gaza, the US-Israel war against Iran—and Israel itself.

Before the 2026 Convention, the UAW's investments included a reported $400,000 sunk into Israel Bonds. Needless to say, divesting this amount will not make or break the Zionist state. Israel receives close to $4 billion in "Baseline Military Assistance" annually from the U.S. and billions more in "emergency" weaponry.

The importance of the UAW divestment vote lies in the political impact of the example that it sets. If every major labor union in this country followed the UAW's example by divesting—either directly or indirectly—from Israel bonds, what would that say? It would say that building global working-class solidarity is paramount. It would materialize the saying that "solidarity is a verb," not just a phrase that union leaders mouth when it seems convenient without doing anything to make it a reality.

Divesting from Israel bonds is a concrete act that communicates that we, as a union, will not invest in genocide, that our members' dues will not go to propping up an apartheid state—not in South Africa, where apartheid was overthrown, not in Palestine (and all "Israel" is occupied Palestine), not anywhere! And it is a major step toward forging a shared commitment of workers worldwide to resist colonial domination, military occupation, and genocide.

For sure, much more needs to be done. In line with the the original UAWD resolution, PGFTU-Gaza's statement explained: "While commending this principled stance, we call upon you to persist in this path of struggle and look forward to further courageous steps that reinforce this direction—including severing all ties with the complicit Israeli trade union, the Histadrut, rejecting any role in arming the occupation, and continuing to press for an end to any complicity in the crime of genocide."

Nevertheless, the hard-won vote for divestment by UAW convention delegates was a historic step in the right direction.

Featured Image Credit: Allie Stanton

1. At the time of writing, the International Executive Board has yet to affirm that it has given the union's fund managers clear direction on how to avoid investing in the future in any portfolio that contains Israel bonds. ↩

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#Israel Bond Divestment #Palestine #UAW Constitutional Convention #Working Class Solidarity