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Shifting the Narrative toward Liberation



ACTIVISM

UAW becomes the first major U.S. union to vote to divest from Israel Bonds

UAW delegates voted to divest the union's reported \$400,000 in Israel Bonds, making it the first major U.S. union to do so. Organizers say it's a victory for international solidarity and a sign of the working class's growing rejection of Israel.

BY [MICHAEL ARRIA](#) - JULY 7, 2026 - 6



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UAWD CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION 2026 (UAW)

Last month, the United Auto Workers (UAW) became the first major U.S. union to vote in favor of divesting from Israel Bonds.

The vote occurred at the union's annual Constitutional Convention in Detroit. The UAW reportedly holds at least \$400,000 in Israel Bonds.

The push was organized by the Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD), a caucus within the union, and UAW Labor for Palestine, which is part of [Labor for Palestine](#), a group that has been pushing the union to endorse the BDS movement for over 20 years.



The vote was praised by the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions–Gaza.

“While expressing our sincere gratitude and appreciation for this bold step, we affirm that it reflects the living conscience of the working class, which refuses to allow its membership dues to serve as a means of financing genocide and injustice,” said the federation in a statement. “Your decision places you on the right moral path and underscores the power of cross-border labor solidarity.”

The leadership of the union had initially removed the divestment amendment from the Convention’s agenda, but New York legal services worker Olga Karounos, made a motion to move the amendment out of committee, which succeeded. The amendment was approved by a vote of 321 to 287.

“This is going to send a message to – not just the billionaire class – but to politicians and any single person who is not afraid to stand up to genocide, to Netanyahu, to the United States government, and will put the UAW again on the map for standing up for international solidarity,” declared Karounos.

Israel Bonds is commonly used as a name for the Development Corporation for Israel (DCI). The organization solicits loans from the Israeli treasury to help maintain the country’s economy, an idea devised by Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. In 2023, the human rights group Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) called on Israel Bonds to register as a foreign agent.

“Israel Bonds is a sophisticated operation to enlist American public support for Israel’s political projects while dodging the minimal transparency and scrutiny our laws require,” said DAWN’s Director of Advocacy for Israel/Palestine, Adam Shapiro, in a [statement](#) at the time. “Americans need to know that foreign government agents are lobbying to change U.S. laws and to solicit their political and financial support for Israel’s occupation, apartheid policies, and human rights abuses.”

Over the past few years, Israel Bonds have been targeted by activists looking to disentangle their local governments from apartheid, occupation, and genocide. The UAW vote is just one recent win amid a flurry of similar victories. Last year, for example, Michigan’s retirement system divested all state pension investments in Israel Bonds.

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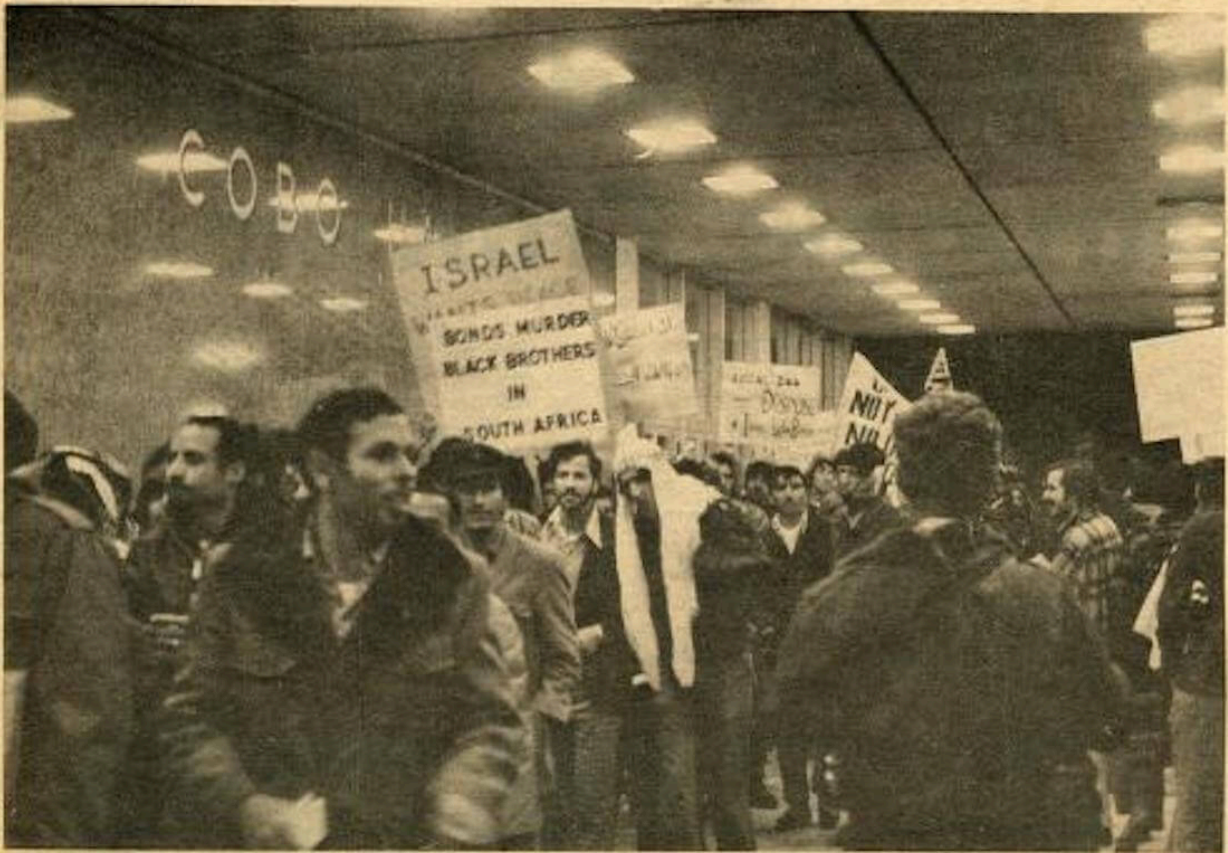
A 2024 UAW Executive Board vote on Israel divestment failed, but Shelly Pires, a legal services worker in New York City and a member of UAW Local 2325, told *Mondoweiss* that organizers pushed for the vote once they had established significant support among the union’s base.

“When I speak to people outside of my sector, at this moment in time, Israel’s actions are extremely unpopular,” said Pires. “People across the working class spectrum, for many different reasons, do not support what Israel is doing. They’re sick of seeing children being killed and oppressed. They are learning more about this apartheid state, and they don’t want to support it.”

There’s a long history of support for Palestine among the UAW rank-and-file.

January 1974

REVOLUTION



Arab auto workers and supporters in Detroit protest UAW's purchase of \$1 million of Israeli bonds. Demo of nearly 2000 on ~~Dec 8~~ was held outside pro-Zionist dinner at which UAW head Woodcock was "honored."

"PHOTO DATED 28 NOVEMBER 1973 OF ARAB AUTO WORKERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS IN DETROIT PROTEST, PUBLISHED IN REVOLUTION, JANUARY 1974." (PHOTO VIA THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LIBRARY DIGITAL COLLECTIONS)

In [1973](#), Arab-American auto workers in Detroit walked off the job to protest the union's purchase of \$300,000 in Israel Bonds. In [2014](#), UAW Local 2865, which represents student workers at the University of California, became the first major U.S. labor union to endorse the BDS movement via a vote (although it was undemocratically overruled by union officials), and in [2023](#), the UAW became the largest U.S. union to back a ceasefire.

However, despite these campaigns, the UAW's leadership, like most major unions, has remained economically connected to Israel and supportive of the state.

Labor historian Jeff Schuhrke, author of [*No Neutrals There: U.S. Labor, Zionism, and the Struggle for Palestine*](#), says that's what makes the recent vote so impressive, as fact that the UAW's constitution will potentially prohibit the purchase of Israel Bonds symbolizes a definitive change.

“The passage of this resolution confirms that a majority of union rank-and-filers in the US stand in solidarity with Palestinians and want to break from the long history of labor’s die-hard support for Zionism,” Schuhrke.

However, he also notes that it’s unclear how the union’s international executive board will react to the vote and whether or not the union’s leadership is getting the message.

“There is also still much more that can be done by the UAW and other U.S. unions,” pointed out Schuhrke. “Not only divesting from Israel Bonds, but divesting from companies targeted by the BDS movement and organizing union members and allies to boycott those companies. There is historical precedent for this kind of union boycott and divestment organizing from the 1980s, when U.S. labor backed the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa.”

“Also, the UAW represents workers at Caterpillar and some of the Pentagon contractors that are deeply complicit in Israel’s crimes, so making the deliberate choice to educate and organize those workers around Palestine so that they may become willing and able to take collective action to physically impede the ongoing genocide is another critical step the union could take,” he added. “And the same goes for other unions representing workers at complicit companies.”

At the convention, Mike Davis, a parts manufacturing worker from Ohio, made a motion to call a stronger pro-Palestine amendment to the floor. In addition to the Israel Bonds divestment, the amendment would have established support for UAW workers who refuse to send weapons to Israel, set anti-imperialist endorsement criteria for politicians, and cut ties with Israel’s largest labor union, Histadrut. 69 delegates supported the amendment, short of the 128 needed to advance.

“While I’m disappointed the broader measure didn’t pass, I believe it was important to bring it to the membership so we could start the conversation,” Davis told *Mondoweiss*. “A lot of the kickback we received was relating to whether or not it was legal to hold a work stoppage or strike over this, but I personally feel that if American soldiers can be

conscientious objectors, then there's no reason a factory worker shouldn't be able to withhold their labor for similar reasons, especially during an ongoing genocide."

"Hopefully moving forward, we can get more of this language added, but for right now, we just need to keep the conversation going," he added.

Michael Arria

Michael Arria is Mondoweiss' U.S. correspondent. He is the author of *Medium Blue: The Politics of MSNBC*. Follow him on x at [@michaelarria](https://twitter.com/michaelarria).

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bcg ●

🕒 July 7, 2026 12:47 pm

Not to mention **Jews** growing rejection of Israel.

Rahm Emanuel**, the former mayor of my hometown Chicago, is Jewish. His father was born in Jerusalem and was a member of Irgun. (So Emanuel is the son of a terrorist!)

Rahm Emanuel is in Israel this week to deliver a speech designed to be a thunderclap. The combination of message and messenger should produce a loud echo....The message is that the war in Gaza and shifts in American and world opinion have converged with seismic consequences. Decades in which U.S. policymakers would often fret about Israeli choices and behavior but regard

support for its government as absolute and unshakable are at an end....**Going forward, Emanuel plans to say, Israelis should regard U.S. support as expressly contingent: On reviving a serious commitment to Palestinian sovereignty; On rejecting dreams of asserting dominion beyond official borders in pursuit of "Greater Israel"; On abandoning a security strategy that emphasizes brutally effective military force with scant attention to diplomacy or credible what-next plans in Gaza and Iran.** U.S. administrations of both parties have spent too long "averting our eyes" from Israeli misjudgments and strategic misadventures, Emanuel's speech reads. The country, once lauded as being a prosperous, high-tech democracy, is now more commonly viewed as a "pariah."

[What Rahm Emanuel's upcoming Israel speech reveals about Democrats](#)

★ ★

[Rahm Emanuel – Wikipedia](#)

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SPS1946 ●

🕒 July 7, 2026 2:38 pm

Adam Shapiro is a very fine man that my father met soon after the Rachel Corrie assassination. It is good to see him in such an important position.

👍 1 0 🗨️

brent ●

🕒 July 7, 2026 1:20 pm

"Hopefully moving forward, we can get more of this language added, but for right now, we just need to keep the conversation going....."

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