

**Palestinian Trade Union Movement Calls on International Dockworkers Unions to**

## **Block Loading/Offloading Israeli Ships**

**Until Israel Complies Fully with International Law and Ends its Illegal Siege of Gaza**

<http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/712>

June 7, 2010- The **Palestinian trade union movement**, as a key constituent member of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC) calls on dockworkers' unions worldwide to block Israeli maritime trade in response to Israel's massacre of humanitarian relief workers and activists aboard the Freedom Flotilla, until Israel complies with international law and ends its illegal blockade of Gaza. Drunk with power and impunity, Israel has ignored recent appeals by the UN Secretary General as well as a near consensus among world governments to end its siege, putting the onus on international civil society to shoulder the moral responsibility of holding Israel accountable to international law and ending its criminal impunity. Dockworkers around the world have historically contributed to the struggle against injustice, most notably against the apartheid regime in South Africa, when port workers unions refused to load/offload cargo on/from South African ships as a most effective way of protesting the apartheid regime.

Today, we ask you to join the **South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU)**, who resolved [1] not to offload Israeli ships in Durban in February 2009 in protest of Israel's war of aggression on Gaza, and the **Swedish Dockworkers Union** [2] who resolved to blockade all Israeli ships and cargo to and from Israel in protest of Israel's attack against the Freedom Flotilla and the ongoing deadly Israeli siege of the occupied Gaza Strip.

Israel's ongoing blockade of essential food, health, educational and construction supplies is not only immoral; it is a severe form of collective punishment, a war crime that is strictly prohibited under Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, that is inducing mass poverty, water contamination, environmental collapse, chronic diseases, economic devastation and hundreds of deaths. This three-year old medieval siege against 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza, has been squarely condemned by leading legal experts, including UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Prof. Richard Falk, who described it as constituting "slow genocide."

Israel's deplorable attacks on the unarmed ships are a violation of both **international maritime law** and the **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea**, which states that "**the high seas should be reserved for peaceful purposes.**" Under article 3 of the Rome Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation of 1988, it is an international crime for any person to seize or exercise control over a ship by force, and also a crime to injure or kill any person in the process. As prominent international law scholars have recently confirmed, there is absolutely no legal justification for Israel's act of aggression against international civilian ships carrying humanitarian and developmental aid to civilians suffering under occupation and a patently illegal blockade, which has created a man-made and deliberately sustained humanitarian catastrophe. Our response must be commensurate with this crisis.

Gaza today has become the test of our universal morality and our common humanity. During the South African anti-apartheid struggle, the world was inspired by the brave and principled actions of dockworkers unions who refused to handle South African cargo, contributing significantly to the ultimate fall of

apartheid. Today, we call on you, dockworkers unions of the world, to do the same against Israel's occupation and apartheid. This is the most effective form of solidarity to end injustice and uphold universal human rights.

Signed:

- **Palestinian** General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU)
- **General** Union of Palestinian Workers (GUPW)
- **Federation** of Independent Trade Unions (IFU)
- **Palestinian** Professionals Association\*\*
- **Youth** Workers Movement (Fatah)
- **Central** Office for the Workers Movement (Fatah)
- **Progressive** Workers Block
- **Workers** Unity Block
- **Workers** Struggle Block
- **Palestinian** Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUPE) –part of IFU
- **Workers** Liberation Front
- **Labor** Front Block
- **Workers** Solidarity Organization
- **Workers** Struggle Organization

\*\*Includes the national syndicates of engineers, agricultural engineers, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, lawyers and veterinarians.

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[1] <http://groups.google.com/group/cosatu-press/msg/a2ff0baff48201c4?pli=1>

[2] <http://ibnkafkasobiterdicta.wordpress.com/2010/06/03/the-swedish-dockers-union-decides-on-a-blockade-against-israeli-ships-and-goods/>