

**Q & A: Working toward a just peace for Palestine and Israel
CUPW & Resolution 338/339**

What does the resolution say?

Resolution 338/339 deals with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was passed almost unanimously at the CUPW national convention held April 13-17. The full text of the resolution is enclosed.

The resolution states CUPW will:

- Call for and actively work towards an end to the suicide bombings, military assaults and other acts of violence that take the lives of innocent people and demand that the Israeli-West Bank barrier be immediately torn down in accordance with United Nations (UN) resolutions;
- Demand that the Israeli government immediately withdraw from the occupied territories in accordance with UN resolution 242;
- Call on the Canadian government to increase humanitarian aid to Palestinians;
- Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel recognizes the right of Palestinian people to self-determination and complies with international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes as stipulated in UN resolution 194;
- Work with Palestinian solidarity and human rights organizations in developing an education campaign about the apartheid nature of the state of Israel and Canada's support for these practices;
- Research the Canadian involvement in the occupation of Palestine;
- Call on other Canadian unions to lobby against the apartheid like practices of the Israeli state and call for the immediate dismantling of the Israeli-West Bank wall.

What is the objective of this policy for CUPW?

The union's ultimate objective with this resolution is to help create a lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians. With this policy, we hope to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinian people. We want to pressure the Israeli government to respect international law in order to create a lasting and just peace. This resolution builds on CUPW's previous policies and action around this conflict.

Why is CUPW involved in this issue?

Over 170 Palestinian organizations - including the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions - issued a call in July 2005 for a global campaign of boycott and divestment against Israel. These organizations are proposing a non-violent tactic similar to that used by the African National Congress in their struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

CUPW has a strong history of calling for peace in conflict situations and acting in solidarity with workers around the world. CUPW protested the Vietnam War, supported the disarmament movement, opposed South Africa's apartheid regime and opposed the bombing of Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan.

The importance of international solidarity is recognized in the union's national policy B-14: "The union recognizes in particular the need to support workers' struggles in other countries. CUPW fully endorses the perspective that "we win when they win" and will encourage its locals to participate as much as possible in international working class solidarity activities."

In conflict situations, such as in Israel and Palestine, the majority of victims of violence and war are working people. CUPW passed a resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the 2002 convention. New resolutions on this conflict, which included support for the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign, were presented for this national convention.

What was the process to pass this resolution?

CUPW locals, regional conferences, the National Executive Board (NEB) and the National Board of Trustees can submit resolutions to convention. At either the local, regional or national level, the resolutions must receive a majority vote in order to be submitted.

A committee consisting of representatives elected by their respective regions reviews and prioritizes resolutions on policy issues. When resolutions hit the floor at convention, members can speak in support or opposition. The resolution is then voted on by voting delegates.

Resolutions on the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign were submitted by locals and were adopted at regional conferences. The NEB also submitted a resolution.

What does a boycott, divestment and sanctions mean?

A boycott, divestment and sanctions are non-violent ways of pressuring the Israeli government to change its policies to conform with human rights laws and international laws that protect civilians.

Boycott: Refusal to buy products from a particular country or group of countries usually to express disapproval or to force acceptance of certain conditions.

Divestment: Force businesses and institutions into withdrawing funds from Israeli businesses that support occupation and apartheid.

Sanctions: An economic measure usually adopted by several nations to force another nation, in this case Israel, to respect international law and human rights standards.

Having passed this resolution, CUPW will:

- Look at all its investments to ensure none are in Israeli companies,
- Implement a policy to ensure no products purchased by CUPW are made by Israeli companies, and
- Provide information to CUPW regions, locals and members on boycott, divestment and sanctions in order to encourage all levels of the union to engage in this campaign.

Is a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions from Israel anti-Semitic?

Absolutely not. Anti-Semitism goes against the very foundation of what we fight for: justice, equality, human rights and peace for all peoples. In fact, many Jewish and Israeli voices support the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

It is important to separate the policies of the Israeli government from the Jewish people in Israel and abroad. Boycott and divestment campaigns target Israeli, not Jewish, products.

Will postal workers still process mail being sent to Israel?

As of now, no work floor actions are planned to block the processing of mail destined for Israel. It is the decision of the NEB about whether to escalate this campaign in the future.

Are any other organizations participating in this campaign?

Yes, a growing number of organizations in Canada, Quebec and internationally have responded to the call of Palestinian civil society to join the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign.

Unions and organizations that have signed onto the campaign include:

- Les Artistes pour la Paix
- Canadian Muslim Forum
- Church of England's general synod
- CUPE Ontario Division
- Fédération des femmes du Québec
- Green Party of the United States
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)
- Jewish Alliance against Occupation
- National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, Britain
- Norwegian Civil Service Union
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Unison – British Public Sector Union
- World Council of Churches

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