

CUPE ONTARIO'S RESOLUTION 50:

Towards peace and justice in the Middle East



CUPE Ontario International Solidarity Committee

Our stand against Israeli treatment of Palestinians has won us enormous respect worldwide

Delegates to the 2006 CUPE Ontario convention voted almost unanimously to support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until that state recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination. CUPE Ontario's stance on this issue has won us enormous respect around the world.

Among letters of international support, the Congress of South African Trade Unions — an organization representing millions of South African workers that was the backbone of the anti-apartheid struggle — wrote to CUPE expressing their support and admiration for our resolution.

Resolution 50: What it says

1. With Palestinian solidarity and human rights organizations, develop an educational campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and the political and economic support of Canada for these practices.
2. Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian People's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.
3. Call on CUPE National to commit to research into Canadian involvement in the occupation and call on the CLC to join us in lobbying against the apartheid-like practices of the Israeli state and call for the immediate dismantling of the wall.

Apartheid means a set of laws and practices that discriminate against particular groups of people because of their race, ethnicity or nationality.

CUPE has a proud history of solidarity and in fact, the national constitution of CUPE mandates us to do international solidarity work. Our International Solidarity Committee campaigns on many issues to support struggles for justice and workers' rights around the world in places like Venezuela, Colombia, Egypt and Afghanistan.

CUPE members have identified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a priority, particularly as Israel has violated more UN resolutions than any other country. Its policies are devastating Palestinian livelihoods and jobs in the same sectors that we, as CUPE members, defend here in Canada: education, health and social, community and municipal services.

While Resolution 50 is part of a campaign to change the Israeli state's treatment of Palestinian people, CUPE Ontario supports the right of Israel to exist in a viable two-state solution. This is inherent in a 2003 policy of CUPE National that states that it will "help develop a peace process based on equality between Israelis and Palestinians and based on the implementation of United Nations resolutions and international law".

"We salute the courage and vision of CUPE Ontario's leadership and members... Your unwavering resolve inspires us, we who lived through decades of apartheid oppression, as it will undoubtedly inspire and endear you to millions of Palestinian and other freedom loving people throughout the world."

Willie Madisha,
President, Congress of South African Trade Unions

World Leaders draw parallels to South Africa

Increasingly, respected leaders including Archbishop **Desmond Tutu**, former U.S. President **Jimmy Carter** and **Willie Madisha**, President of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, have drawn parallels between the state of Israel's treatment of Palestinians and the former apartheid regime in South Africa.

Over 170 civil society organizations, including the Palestinian trade union movement, have called on the world to adopt a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel, similar to that used against South Africa.

CUPE played an important role in ending South African apartheid and we can do the same in this instance.



Photo courtesy of the San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center (www.indybay.org)

Palestinian conditions in West Bank and Gaza

For the majority of Palestinians, the occupation means no work, few medical services and a complete cessation of normal life.

- Since 2004, 1,496 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces; 178 Israelis have been killed in Palestinian attacks.¹
- As of October 2006, an estimated 10,000 Palestinians, including 400 children, were being held in Israeli prisons and detention centres; over 1000 are being held without trial or charge.² Israel's use of torture has been widely condemned by UN bodies and international human rights organizations.³
- Since 1967, over 12,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished by the Israeli military, leaving 70,000 homeless. This is a punitive measure, and also a means of removing Palestinians from particular areas.⁴
- Israel controls all movement and goods into and out of these areas. Unemployment averages 24% in the West Bank and 38.5% in the Gaza Strip; with some areas reaching 70% unemployment.⁵
- Palestinian personal income per capita fell by roughly 50% in real terms between late 2000 and mid-2006.⁶



Photo credit: Jos Koster (www.stophthewall.org)

The Wall

While Gaza is surrounded by an electronic fence, Israel is constructing a 703 km wall in the West Bank, which it says is to protect Israeli citizens from attack. John Dugard, a South African Professor of International Law, and the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, characterized the wall's construction as a form of "creeping annexation". The wall directly affects the lives of 497,820 Palestinians by severing farmers from their agricultural lands, students from their schools and patients from medical care they require. It annexes some 11.9% of the West Bank to Israel, including 76% of the settler population.⁷

In 2004, the International Court of Justice declared that the wall built on Palestinian land is illegal.⁸ Since 2003, it has been Canadian policy to oppose the building of the wall and to support international law regarding the rights of the Palestinian people.⁹



Photo credit: ©Adam Nieman (www.adamnieman.co.uk/wall)

Comparing Israeli state policies with the former South Africa¹⁰

FORMER SOUTH AFRICA'S TREATMENT OF BLACKS

Laws

- Race laws systematically excluded the black majority from the political process, and touched every aspect of social life.

Documentation

- The 1950 *Population Registration Act* required that all South Africans be racially classified into one of three categories: white, black (African), or coloured (of mixed descent).
- All blacks were required to carry “pass books” containing fingerprints, photo and information on access to non-black areas.

Land

- 87% of the land was reserved for whites. Non-whites were permitted access to only 13% of the land.
- The *South Africa Natives Land Act, No. 27 of 1913* and the *Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923* made it illegal for blacks to purchase or lease land from whites except in reserves.

Human Rights

- The 1953 *Public Safety Act* and the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* empowered the government to declare stringent states of emergency and increased penalties for protesting against or supporting the repeal of a law. The penalties included fines, imprisonment and whippings.
- Penalties imposed on political protest, even non-violent protest, were severe. During states of emergency that continued intermittently until 1989, anyone could be detained without a hearing for up to six months. Thousands died in custody, frequently after gruesome acts of torture. Those who were tried were sentenced to death, banished, or imprisoned for life, like Nelson Mandela.

ISRAELI STATE TREATMENT OF PALESTINIANS

- In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law. They are frequently arrested for violating these laws and brought before military courts often described as “Kangaroo Courts”.

- Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip must carry different coloured ID Cards. Entry and exit from Palestinian ghettos within the West Bank is impossible without these cards and permission to travel from the military occupation authorities.
- Palestinian citizens of Israel must carry ID cards that identify them as non-Jewish through an ID number and the way birth dates are recorded.

- Israel has reserved 93% of the land in Israel for Jewish development through state ownership, the Jewish National Fund and the Israeli Lands Authority.
- Israel has declared most of the lands in the West Bank as “state land.” Another 12% will be annexed to Israel by the new Wall.

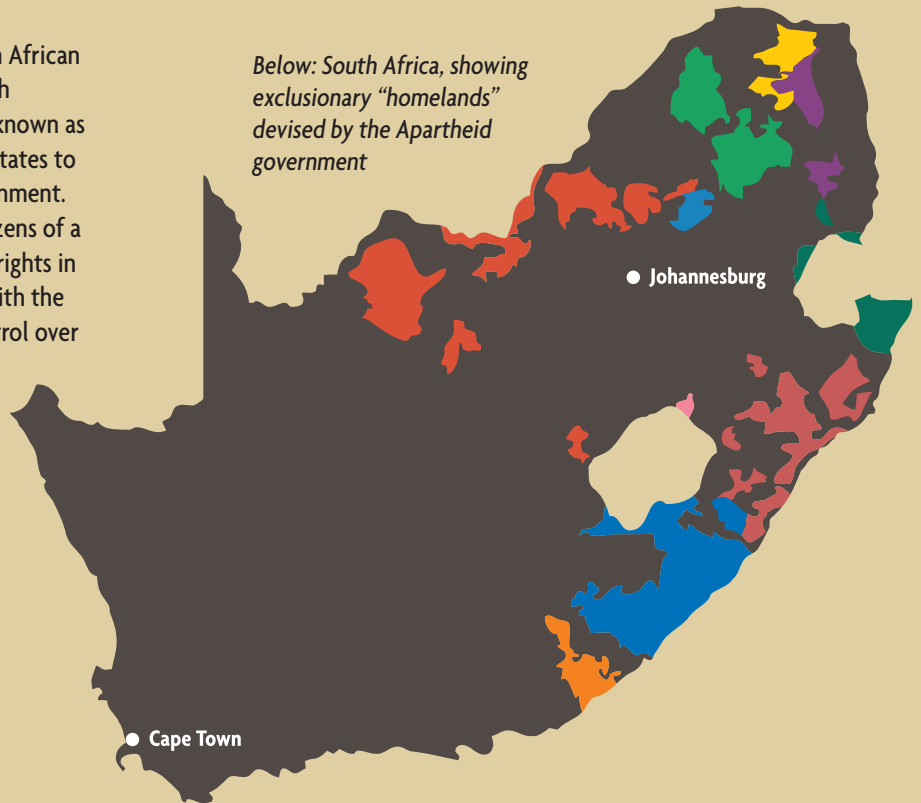
- 10,000 Palestinians and 400 children are being held as political prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention centers. In violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip are transferred out of the occupied territory into prisons in Israel proper.
- Israel regularly practices torture against prisoners and has been condemned by UN bodies and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International.
- Over 1,000 Palestinians are held as ‘administrative detainees,’ without charge or trial. These orders can be renewed indefinitely.

Isolating territories and people

As the map on the right illustrates, in 1951 the South African government passed the Bantu Authorities Act, which established ethnic government in African reserves, known as “homelands.” These homelands were independent states to which each black African was assigned by the government. Through this artificial mechanism, they became citizens of a “homeland” that many had never seen, losing their rights in South Africa including any means of involvement with the South African Parliament which held complete control over the homelands.

From 1976 to 1981, four of these homelands were created, denationalizing nine million South Africans. Africans living in the homelands needed passports to enter South Africa, making them aliens in their own country.

Below: South Africa, showing exclusionary “homelands” devised by the Apartheid government



As the illustration on the right shows, since 1967 Israel has pursued a policy of ‘bantustanization’ in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinians have been herded into isolated areas divided from one another by Jewish-only settlements and highways, military checkpoints, and most recently, the Wall. Israel controls all movement into these areas as well as exports and imports, electricity, water, telephone lines and the Internet.

- Travel between the West Bank and Gaza Strip Bantustans is forbidden for Palestinians. In the West Bank, travel between the Bantustans is regulated by the Israeli military and requires ID cards and travel permission.
- All Palestinian “passports” must be approved by the Israeli military and permission to leave the country is required from the Israeli government. All border crossings are controlled by the Israeli military.
- In 2006, Israel adopted a policy of denying entry to the country of any person



Above: The changing shape of Palestine under Israeli occupation

A: Palestine prior to 1948

B: Occupied West Bank and Gaza, 1967

C: Shrinking Palestinian areas after the Wall, 2005

West Bank and Gaza: A life of restrictions and controls

Over time the lives of Palestinians, particularly those living in the West Bank and Gaza, have become increasingly restricted because of the Israeli occupation.

Their movements, access to services like housing and health, and access to jobs are all severely affected, making daily life extremely difficult.

Jobs

- Palestinian livelihoods are being devastated by unemployment rates that are reaching 70% in some areas.
- Israeli companies and businesses are forbidden from hiring Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip except for a small number who are granted permits.
- Palestinian citizens of Israel are prevented from working in specific jobs through conditions that cite 'military service' as a prerequisite. Only Jewish citizens serve in the military. Only 5 % of Israeli civil servants are Palestinian. The foreign and finance ministries, with a combined staff of more than 1,700 Jews, employ fewer than a dozen Palestinian citizens.

Services

- In 1965, Israel declared the lands and homes of 100,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel as "unrecognized." They still exist, but are denied electricity, water, sewage and other basic services. They do not appear on maps.
- In 2002, Israel's housing ministry spent about \$30 per person in Palestinian communities inside Israel compared with up to \$3,250 per person in Jewish ones.
- In 2002, the health ministry allocated 1.6m shekels (\$433,700) to Palestinian communities of its 277m-shekel (\$76 million) budget to develop healthcare facilities.

Movement

- In 1948, about 750,000 Palestinians fled, or were expelled, from Israel. They and their descendants are forbidden from returning to their homes and lands. Yet any person of Jewish background from any country is able to automatically gain Israeli citizenship.
- Palestinians are forced to use different coloured license plates that identify their place of origin. There are many roads in the West Bank that Palestinians are not permitted to travel on because they have been declared, "Israeli-only."
- While Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza face severe restrictions, Palestinian citizens of Israel can also have their movement and entry to specific areas restricted through the ID cards they must carry.

The Divestment/Boycott Campaign

The goal of this campaign is to dismantle the apartheid-like Israeli practices under which Palestinians live:

- End Israeli occupation of Arab land;
- Bring full equality for all Israeli citizens regardless of their religion or ethnicity;
- Implement international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands.

The divestment/boycott campaign will build a peaceful, international, grassroots movement that will pressure companies to withdraw their investments from Israel.

This, along with a consumer boycott of Israeli products, will eventually isolate Israel economically and diplomatically, pressuring Israel to live up to its obligations under international law.

Organizations Supporting Divestment, Sanctions

Here are just some of the organizations that have heeded or are supporting the Israeli boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign in addition to CUPE Ontario's 2006 resolution.

2006

Church of England's general synod, including the Archbishop of Canterbury
Green Party of the United States
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, Britain
Edinburgh Film Festival
Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Irish Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs
Dutch ASN Bank
Norwegian Civil Service Union

2005

World Council of Churches
UN International Conference of Civil Society for Peace in the Middle East
Anglican Consultative Council, Nottingham, England
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Arbizu City Council, Basque country
Socialist Left Party,
Norwegian Government member
Regional Council of the Sør-Trøndelag, Norway

What you can do

This issue will continue to evolve. We encourage you to check our website for updates and links at:

www.cupe.on.ca

For more information on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions to end Israel's apartheid practices, visit:

Palestine BDS Campaign (official website):
www.bds-palestine.net

Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (Palestine):
www.stopthewall.org

Boycott Israeli Goods (BIG) Campaign:
www.bigcampaign.org.uk

Palestine Solidarity Committee (South Africa): **www.psc.za.org**

Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (Canada): **www.caiaweb.org**

Palestine Solidarity Campaign (UK):
www.palestinecampaign.org

Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign:
www.scottishpsc.org.uk

Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign:
www.ipsc.ie

Joint Advocacy Initiative (YMCA-Palestine and YMCA-East Jerusalem) have a site on divestment initiatives: **jai-pal.org/content.php?page=264**.

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b) 400 children detained: Report to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Defense for Children International, September 2006. See <http://dci-pa.org>.
c) 1,000 held without trial or charge: B'Tselem website: UN Commission on Human Rights "Report of the Special Rapporteur, Manfred Nowak", March 21, 2006.
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