

Press Statement - Trade Union Friends of Palestine

Northern Ireland's biggest trade union unanimously supports Boycott and Divestment against Israel

Northern Ireland's biggest trade union, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, unanimously passed all five motions on Palestinian solidarity discussed at the 2007 annual delegate conference.

These motions contained

- Severe condemnation of Israel,
- A commitment to boycott and divestment and
- Support for Trade Union Friends of Palestine and the *Enough* campaign against Israeli Occupation.

NIPSA has been at the forefront of the campaign within the trade union movement in Northern Ireland to raise awareness of the Palestinian cause. The motions were proposed by the union's own leadership as well as by three other union branches. All five motions were passed unanimously without a single opposing speaker. The lack of opposition, amendments or even statements of qualification shows that a major shift of consciousness has taken place and that public sympathy in Northern Ireland is now overwhelmingly on the side of the Palestinian people.

Motions included praise of NIPSA's position of supporting the establishment of Trade Union Friends of Palestine (TUFPP), an organisation that has been formed by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to promote the ICTU policy of "campaigning in solidarity with the Palestinian people."

Conference called upon all NIPSA branches to work closely with TUFPP. Conference also pledged active NIPSA support for the establishment in Northern Ireland of a broad-based *Enough* solidarity campaign involving a coalition of all those opposed to Israeli injustice, including trade unions, churches, political parties, human rights organisations and other NGOs.

The NIPSA conference condemned the collective punishment and blackmail of the Palestinian people by both the USA and the European Union in cutting off financial aid to the Palestinian Authority following the election victory of Hamas. It also condemned Israel for illegally withholding Palestinian tax revenues and for their "*horrendous military assaults*".

Conference agreed that it was "*outrageous that the Palestinian people should be forced to recognise as legitimate*" an Israeli state that had defied numerous UN resolutions. This detailed resolution went on to claim that the policies of the Israeli government were akin to those of Apartheid South Africa. It therefore called for the same type of response from the trade union movement - a boycott of Israeli goods. The motion finally called for an

investigation of union investments to ensure that they did not contribute to the oppression of the Palestinian people.

Motion no.64 expressed outrage at the human rights abuses and atrocities carried out by the Israeli state, including:

- Continued occupation and destruction of Palestinian lands
- Continuing mass arrests, torture and extra-judicial killings
- The horrific assaults on the population of Gaza
- The illegal destruction of civilian infrastructure
- The building of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem

Conference agreed to instruct its governing body, NIPSA General Council, to support divestment from Israeli companies and a boycott of Israeli goods and services. It instructed General Council to lobby the British and Irish governments to challenge the activities of the Israeli government towards the Palestinian people. It furthermore instructed the General Council to continue to support TUFPA and the ICTU policy of Palestinian solidarity.

Speaking after the conference, Eamonn Mc Mahon, Trade Union Friends of Palestine referring to the broad based representative nature of NIPSA highlighted the significance of the motions passed

‘Given that it is such a broad-based trade union, representative of all sections of the working population, the passing of these five motions is of great significance and indicates the strength of public opinion here in support of the rights of the people of Palestine.’

ENDSI

Note to editor:

- NIPSA is a public sector union representing workers from low-paid to senior management grades throughout all public services in Northern Ireland, i.e., health services, social services, the civil service, education and housing. It represents workers from all sections of the community, in terms of religion, gender and politics.
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