



Palestine Solidarity Alliance
United Against Apartheid Israel



Palestine Solidarity Alliance
South Africa

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Address to the Communist Party of Swaziland's session on Working Class Internationalism

To the esteemed comrades of the Communist Party of Swaziland, committed internationalists, and veteran fighters in the struggle against tyranny; for freedom, democracy, economic emancipation, and socialist revolution: I greet you in the name of peace and justice, Sanibonani.

It is a great honour for me to be given this platform at this session on working-class internationalism, and I hope that the seeds planted here will bear ripe fruit, as we build a garden that is not unjustly enclosed by colonial borders, class antagonisms, and apartheid walls.

My name is Mahfouz Raffee, and I address you as a member of the Palestine Solidarity Alliance. I am also a member of the Workers and Socialist Party of South Africa, affiliated to the International Socialist Alternative. We share a common understanding that the struggle for Palestinian liberation is deeply rooted in the global imperialist system. To quote the martyred hero, Ghassan Kanafani, *"The Palestinian cause is not a cause for Palestinians only, but a cause for every revolutionary... as a cause of the exploited and oppressed masses in our era... Imperialism has laid its body over the world, the head in Eastern Asia, the heart in the Middle East, its arteries reaching Africa and Latin America. Wherever you strike it, you damage it, and you serve the world revolution."*

Firstly, we salute your party, the Communist Party of Swaziland, in the role you continue to play in the fight against imperialism, both at home and internationally. We take courage from your efforts in resisting the violent, autocratic, monarchist Mswati regime. We mourn the lives of the mostly young people, who were brutally gunned down last year during the brave uprisings against Mswati's repressive regime. It is no surprise that the tools of repression - assault rifles, and machine guns - were sourced from Israel. The state of Israel is a renowned exporter of military equipment to violent, dictatorial, states, after having tried and tested their weapons on thousands of innocent Palestinians.

We know that these violent regimes only exist because they are enabled by the capitalist system to do so. The interests of the ruling classes are directly opposed to those of the working classes, and more especially against the working classes of those who toil in colonial and neocolonial territories.

Not only is Israel backed by the largest military in the world - the United States - who every year provide \$3.8 billion to Israel in military aid. Israel is also backed by the largest companies in the world. Just last year, Amazon Web Services and Google Cloud executives signed a \$1.22 billion



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contract to provide cloud technology to the Israeli government and military. They signed this contract in May, when Israel launched an all out attack on Palestinians, from the river to the sea.

As you know, thousands of people were threatened to be dispossessed from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan, and other areas of occupied East Jerusalem. At the same time, the Israeli military bombed homes, clinics, and schools in Gaza - killing 238 people, including 54 children and 38 women. This extraordinary violence did not stop Google and Amazon from signing the deal with the Israeli state precisely because these companies profit from the ongoing military occupation of Palestinians.

Google and Amazon's cloud services support data collection for the Israel Land Authority (ILA). The ILA uses discriminatory policies to expand segregated Jewish settlements, and trap Palestinians in ghettos. These tech conglomerates also have their technology used in the illegal military checkpoints, Israeli surveillance systems, and many other weapons of oppression.

As Palestinian solidarity activists, we see the effects of these tools on a near-daily basis. Every other day, there are stories of how Israeli occupation is ruining lives - tearing families apart, entrenching migrant labour systems, segregating economic markets, and creating a system of underdevelopment, hardship, and fear for the Palestinian people.

But through this, there are also stories of resistance. We take great courage from the fighters from The Lions' Den, the young armed resisters in Nablus, with networks across political factions separated territories, and ideological affiliations. Young people from Jerusalem to Ramallah, to the Gaza Strip, and beyond have grown fed-up with the ongoing state of occupation and apartheid. They've grown fed-up with the unattainable two-state solution, and the corrupt, collaborationist practices of the Palestinian Authority. They want freedom and they want it now. As do we.

Even mainstream discourse around Palestine is changing rapidly. International NGOs who are notorious for towing the Western line, are finally taking more bold steps when it comes to Palestine. B'tselem is an Israeli human rights organisation who have boldly, and in great detail, shown how Israel's systematic dispossession, segregation, domination, and occupation constitute apartheid. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have done the same thing. So even the most liberal, depoliticised, western NGOs have realised that they can no longer ignore the atrocities going on in Palestine, and they have decided to take a stand and label the Israeli state as the pariah that it is.

This is a major victory for the Palestinian people, but it is only the beginning. We know liberal organisations are what they are, and there are several limitations involved therein. Nonetheless, we can use these reports as weapons in the international arena, where we can mobilise material forces to win freedom for the Palestinian people.



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We know from the South African experience, that the struggle against political apartheid involved a multipronged approach, where internationalist movements played no small role. Boycotts, divestments, and sanctions were an instrumental tool among others, that brought the apartheid regime to its knees. In Palestine, we are on our way there as well.

While eswatini has been conspicuously absent from a number of votes at the United Nations involving Israel, the country by and large votes with SADC as a block. We need to make sure that this continues to be the case, and so any underground channels that you may have to the state bureaucracy must be weaponised. Palestinian civil society organisations are lobbying for Israel to be officially recognised as an apartheid state, which would allow the UN to impose sanctions upon it, until its human rights atrocities and violations of international law are rectified.

There are of course, other channels which are important for international solidarity activists to pursue. The direct action of thousands of workers in various labour movements has been crucial in getting their companies to divest from operations in Israel and the Occupied territories, or cutting government contracts with complicit companies. We know that capitalism relies on the exploitation of the working class to function. If organised labour can effectively wield the power of the working class to operate in its own interests, we can rest assured that all ties with Israel will be severed.

Our task is no easy one. And reactionaries will complain - how can we fight for the rights of Palestinians when there are bread and butter issues to be fought here where we are. But scientific socialism is key to understanding the interconnectedness of these struggles. We are fighting for bread and butter precisely because capitalist forces are propping up a settler-colonial Zionist regime in Palestine.

Lenin speaks about this in Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. As resources and territory dries up in the industrialised centres, capitalist countries will develop capitalist markets in the colonies, to extract wealth, labour, and resources from us. Capitalists, through their respective states, will go to war to secure domination over these markets. The fruits of our labour here in the global South are being extracted and redeployed for geopolitical wars over oil markets in the middle east.

And I think that is the key message of socialist internationalism. We can never imagine that another worker's exploitation is disconnected from our own. And so the only solution we have is each other. Please, if you are interested in furthering your efforts in solidarity with the Palestinian people, there is a lot to be done. Last year, we established the Pan African Palestine Solidarity Network, where we have representation from about 25 African countries. You are more than welcome to add your efforts here and on other fora, such as the Gaza Virtual Freedom Flotilla, the NoTechForApartheid campaign, and many others. Please just contact me for more details.



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To quote the Palestinian revolutionary, George Habash, who drew on Marx - "Revolt, for you have nothing to lose but your chains and your tents!"

So even though I am affiliated to a Trotskyist International, I do not think that should preclude us from cooperating on joint programmes where our analyses converge. There is more that unites us than divides us, and we need to step up our solidarity efforts if we are to take our generational mission quite seriously. I wish you all the best, and I look forward to engaging deeper with you, comrades. Amandla!

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