**General Council statement on Gaza**

Congress deplores the fact that since 7 July, over two thousand Palestinians have been killed, two thirds of them civilians and including many people going about their daily work, as well as nearly 500 children, and 69 Israelis, four of whom were civilians. Tens of thousands of residents of Gaza have fled their homes or seen them damaged or destroyed, and have nowhere to go.

Congress welcomes the ceasefire negotiated between the Palestinian Authority, Hamas and the Israeli Government, as called for in the General Council statement in July, and recognises the partial relaxation of the blockade of Gaza, but recognises that it will not be sufficient unless the blockade of Gaza and occupation of the West Bank are resolved in line with UN resolutions. Congress deplores the announcement by the Israel Defence Forces' Civil Administration on 31 August of further annexations of land for settlement construction in the West Bank, allegedly as a response to the kidnapping and killing of three Jewish teens by Hamas militants in the area in June. This is a shocking provocation that will redraw the map of the West Bank and can only stoke up further resentment.

Congress particularly deplores attacks on UN facilities, including the attacks on seven UNWRA schools between 21 July and 3 August which killed more than 50 people and injured over 300, and notes the UNOCHA’s regular reports of the terrible damage done to properties, infrastructure and people.

Congress believes that international law against the targeting of civilians must be enforced, and that those responsible for breaches of such law should be dealt with in the International Criminal Court. We welcome the UN Human Rights Council’s announcement of an independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate purported violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and particularly in the Gaza Strip since the conflict began. We reiterate our condemnation of the collective punishment of the residents of Gaza.

Congress welcomes the creation of a unity government for the Palestinian Authority, which necessarily involves both Fatah and Hamas, and urges the UK government and the European Union to support this development, in the context of the TUC’s longstanding support for a two-state solution based on security for both Israel and Palestine and justice for the Palestinian people. Congress resolves to step up the campaign for a free Palestine, and welcomes the ITUC Day of Action for Gaza held on 7 August and the demonstrations for peace organised across the UK by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and others.

We deplore racism, discrimination and hate crimes of any form, including anti-semitism such as attacks on synagogues.

Congress considers the response of the UK government, the EU and the UN to Israel’s attack on Gaza has been unacceptable. We join with Amnesty International, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and others in calling on the UK government and the EU to end immediately arms trading with Israel including all military-industrial collaboration. The TUC should, working with the relevant unions, press those companies involved in supporting Israel’s military to cease to do so.

Congress reiterates its call for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement until the rights of the Palestinians are established, and calls on the Israeli state to pay for humanitarian assistance and rebuilding Gaza. We encourage unions and their members to give generously to international trade union humanitarian aid funds aimed at providing assistance to the people of Gaza and urge Global Union Federations to seek affiliation from Palestinian unions, as many already have.

Congress commits to raise the pressure on corporations complicit in arms trading, the settlements, occupation and the wall by organising a seminar for affiliated unions to consider strategies – such as worker capital strategies including pension funds - to put pressure on complicit corporations to cease to do so and withdraw from the Occupied Territories. Congress agrees to work with the international trade union movement and workplace representatives to co-ordinate such action against complicit corporations. We reiterate our encouragement to unions to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, urge union members to join the PSC Trade Union network, and agree to organise, jointly with the PSC, a trade union conference in 2015 to review progress on the action points listed above.

Congress reiterates its solidarity with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, and our commitment to visit Gaza with the PGFTU as soon as is practicable. We will continue to be guided by the PGFTU and encourage unions to revitalise their contacts with sister organisations in Palestine, especially to assist them in rebuilding their organisations in Gaza. We will seek the support of the ETUC and ITUC for the policies set out in this statement, and support the calls of the ETUC and ITUC for a just settlement to the problems of the Middle East.