

DGB-Positions on the Middle East conflict

(presented by the President of DGB, Michael Sommer, to the Executive Board of the DGB, which took note approvingly)

Berlin, September 2007

As Germany marks Anti-War Day, the Confederation of German Trade Unions calls upon all trade unionists to work for a more peaceful world. The slogan “No more war!” remains as relevant as ever.

This event gives us cause to draw attention once more to a conflict that has moved the world perhaps more than any other and defied peaceful resolution for many decades: the confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians.

There have been victims and perpetrators on both sides of this bloody conflict. And the hundreds of casualties on both sides – most of them civilians – have brought untold suffering to Israeli and Palestinian families alike. To those who hold political responsibility within both parties to the conflict, the dead are a rebuke urging them to reach a peaceful settlement at last.

The DGB takes a firm view that a just and comprehensive peace between Israelis and Palestinians can only be achieved by means of negotiations between the democratic representatives of both sides, with the participation and encouragement of the international community.

The basis for such a process, whose ultimate goal should be peaceful coexistence between two sovereign, democratic states, must remain the Road Map drawn up by the Middle East Quartet (UN, EU, United States and Russian Federation), which lays down steps towards the termination of conflict in the Middle East. The European Union has a particular responsibility to give this peace plan its consistent support.

The presence of United Nations peace forces in the crisis region has contributed tangibly in recent months to a de-escalation of the conflict. The DGB expressly welcomes this UN commitment, in which Germany is also playing its part.

The DGB has always been aware of its particular historical responsibility towards the state of Israel. This remains self-evident to the Confederation and its affiliated trade unions: Israel’s right to exist is non-negotiable. Anyone who challenges the foundations of the Jewish state can always reckon with our decisive resistance.

The DGB and the Israeli Histadrut can look back on many years of close, friendly relations. Meetings between Israeli and German trade unionists are a cornerstone of the German-Israeli partnership. This is also a solid basis for conducting debate in a spirit of critical solidarity about measures by the Israeli government which may not be conducive to the search for a just peace.

The DGB also maintains ongoing dialogue with brothers and sisters in the democratic Palestinian trade unions. They need and receive our help in a variety of ways, both through the international trade union family of the ITUC and by means of many bilateral assistance projects to support the work they do locally, often at risk to their lives.

Labour organisations on both sides are willing and able to build peace. We support the efforts of Palestinian and Israeli trade union members and their organisations to uphold their mutual contacts and we urge them to stand by their cooperation even during critical stages of the conflict. In this difficult process of rapprochement, our Israeli and Palestinian brothers and sisters deserve our solidarity and material support.

The DGB categorically rejects calls for boycotts that are targeted one-sidedly at Israeli citizens, institutions and products. Anyone resorting to a one-sided boycott of Israel will in fact weaken the position of the majority on both sides who are ready for peace and will play into the hands of radical and fundamentalist forces.

Peace in the Middle East is not an impossible vision. It is feasible. The DGB will continue to work for this, along with our brothers and sisters in Israel and the Palestinian territories, and to provide concrete assistance.
