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GROUP DEBATE ISRAEL/ PALESTINE (Motions 1, 1A, 1B)

Motion 1: Palestine

This Branch:

- calls for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the siege and blockade of Gaza, an end to the continued bombing and the threat of ground invasion. We call for the immediate opening of humanitarian corridors to allow for the supply of essential goods, energy and medical aid.
- believes forcibly displaced citizens in Gaza must be allowed to return to their homes, with humanitarian aid used to rebuild homes and other infrastructure.
- believes both Palestinians and Israelis have a right to security and life. This branch therefore also condemns the attacks by Hamas. Palestinians have a right to resist occupation in pursuit of self-determination. However, Hamas does not only resist Israel but fights proactively for its own aim of a repressive theocratic state. There is no justification for its attacks on civilians, and we call for the release of all hostages. Israel has a right to defend its civilian population, however the right to self-defence does not extend to besieging an overwhelmingly civilian population.
- believes the conflict can only have a just resolution through a framework based on equal rights for both peoples, including an equal right to self-determination: an end to the occupation, and the foundation of a genuinely independent Palestinian state, in contiguous territory, alongside and with equal rights to Israel.
- will support those voices on both sides who have shown tremendous courage in promoting peace and dialogue and a just settlement and a democratic solution. This branch particularly highlights the work of Standing Together, a joint Palestinian-Israeli social movement, which is organising anti-racist, anti-war, and solidarity activity within Israeli society.

- opposes the rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia in the UK and worldwide. This branch will work with the wider anti-racist and trade union and labour movement to campaign for peace and a just settlement to the conflict.

This branch therefore resolves to:

- invite a speaker from Standing Together to (remotely) address a future branch meeting
- seek to amplify other socialist, working-class and labour-movement voices in Israel/Palestine, promoting a politics of equal rights and coexistence.
- Send to National Delegate Conference with necessary redrafting

Moved: Ruth Cashman

Seconded: George Wheeler

Motion 1A: Alternative Motion

This branch notes:

1. Hamas, other Palestinian resistance movements and civilians launched an unprecedented attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, killing at least 1,151 Israelis, including 764 civilians, of whom 50 were under the age of 20, and took at least 231 hostages (source: *Times of Israel*).
2. Since then, the Israeli Defense Forces have launched an equally unprecedented assault by air, sea and land against the population of Gaza, which has lasted 16 weeks and killed at least 26,422 people, including over 10,000 children and over 8,000 women, as of 29.01.24 (source Gaza Health Authority). An estimated 8,000 Palestinians remain buried in rubble. In addition, Israel has killed 373 Palestinians in the West Bank and imprisoned 6,330 more, mainly youths.
3. The IDF has destroyed or damaged nearly 70% of Gaza's homes, put out of action nearly all its hospitals and health centres, destroyed water desalination, sanitation, water and energy facilities, bakeries, schools and universities, roads and agricultural land, and repeatedly ordered civilians to move south, leaving between 1.7m and 1.9m Palestinians (75-85% of the population) displaced, close to starvation, living in tents or sleeping rough in the winter, and crammed into the small city of Rafah in the deep south.
4. Israeli ministers have repeatedly called for the expulsion of all Palestinians from Gaza, most recently at a far-right conference in northern West Bank, where, according to *Haaretz*, "'We need to find a legal way to voluntarily emigrate [Palestinians],' said Israel's far-right national security minister, before a Likud lawmaker explained that in war, 'voluntary is a state you impose [on someone] until they give their consent'.

5. The International Court of Justice delivered an overwhelming interim judgement on 26.01.24, calling on Israel to punish those inciting genocide and to take measures to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza. It has to date refused to comply with these rulings.
6. The Western powers, almost without exception, have steadfastly refused to call for a ceasefire and 10 of them, led by the US, UK and Germany, have cut off funding for the UNRWA, the only effective aid agency operating in Gaza. Lambeth Council has voted down a motion calling for a ceasefire.
7. Meanwhile the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions in Gaza, including the General Union of Municipal Workers, has issued a call for all trade unions to 'pressure all governments to stop all military trade with Israel and, in the case of the US, funding to it' and to 'pass motions in their trade unions to this effect'.

This branch believes:

8. We are witnessing an ongoing genocide in Gaza, 'the intent to destroy a national, racial, ethnic or religious group, in whole or in part' (UN Convention on Genocide, article 2).
9. The right to self-defence does not and cannot be extended to cover up for this crime.
10. Silence is violence (Black Lives Matter slogan). All authorities, including Lambeth Council, trade union and Labour Party representatives, and Lambeth schools, that have not taken a stand against this crime and educated its constituents, are complicit in this crime.

This branch resolves:

11. To call on Israel to stop its war now, to withdraw all its forces from Gaza, to allow aid into Gaza unimpeded, to contribute fully to the rebuilding of Gaza, to end its siege of the strip, to dismantle its illegal settlements on the West Bank, to release all Palestinian prisoners.
12. To call on the UK government, the Mayor of London, the Labour Party, the TUC and Lambeth Council to call for an immediate, total and permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the West Bank.
13. To support all calls by trade unions and the Palestine solidarity movement for action, up to and including walk-outs where possible, in solidarity with the Palestinians.
14. To send messages of solidarity to the PGFTU, the GUMW and to all those groups in Israel calling for a ceasefire, including Standing Together.
15. To send this motion to the National Delegate Conference with necessary redrafting.

Moved by Jeremy Drinkall

Seconded by Dan Jeffery

Motion 1B: Alternative Motion

This branch notes:

1. That Hamas, which is a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK, carried out a horrific massacre of over 1200 people of different nationalities in Israel on 7 October 2023 which included burning, rape and mutilation, as well as taking over 230 people hostage.
2. Hamas has continued to fire thousands of rockets into Israel indiscriminately, with the aim of harming civilians
3. That Hamas fires its rockets towards Israel from within residential areas of Gaza, and many of them fall short and kill and injure Gazan civilians.
4. That Hamas trains children to hate Israelis from an early age and recruits teenagers under the age of 18 for its military campaigns. If they are killed they are classed as children but they are also combatants.
5. That around 120 of the hostages, including babies, children, women and old people still remain in captivity after nearly 4 months.
6. That Hamas has spent millions of pounds of foreign aid in building tunnels and building up stockpiles of weapons rather than on assisting its citizens
7. That Hamas uses its citizens as human shields
8. That the citizens of Hamas are unable to live in freedom, with freedom of speech, and fear to speak out against Hamas.

This branch believes:

1. If Hamas released all the hostages and laid down its arms the war with Israel would end
2. Peace between Israelis and Palestinians will not be possible if Hamas remains in control of Gaza.

This branch resolves:

1. To recognise and promote the right of Jews and Arabs to peacefully co-exist in Israel and around the world
2. To send this motion to the NEC for discussion and voting.

Mover: Audrey Johnson

Seconder:

Motion 2: Pay Campaign

This Branch notes:

Local government has endured central government funding cuts of more than 50% since 2010. Between 2010 and 2020, councils lost 60p out of every £1 they have received from central government.

New research by UNISON has shown that councils across England, Wales and Scotland are facing a collective funding shortfall of £3bn by the financial year 2023/24 and a cumulative funding gap of £5bn by 2024/25.

Councils led the way in efforts against the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a huge range of services and support for our communities. Local government has shown more than ever how indispensable it is. But Covid has led to a massive increase in expenditure and loss of income, and as we emerge from the pandemic, local authorities and schools need far more support from Westminster.

Recent funding announcements from the Government relating to schools did nothing to help. Council and school workers kept our communities safe through the pandemic, often putting themselves at considerable risk as they work to protect public health, provide quality housing, ensure our children continue to be educated, and look after older and vulnerable people.

Since 2010, the local government workforce has endured years of pay restraint with the majority of pay points losing at least 25 per cent of their value since 2009/10.

Workers are now facing the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, with inflation hitting 10% and many having to make impossible choices between food, heating and other essentials. This is a terrible situation for anyone to find themselves in. At the same time, workers have experienced ever-increasing workloads and persistent job insecurity. Across the UK, 900,000 jobs have been lost in local government since June 2010 – a reduction of more than 30 per cent. Local government has arguably been hit by more severe job losses than any other part of the public sector

This Branch believes:

Workers deserve a proper real-terms pay increase. The Government needs to take responsibility and fully fund this increase; it should not put the burden on local authorities whose funding has been cut to the bone and who were not offered adequate support through the Covid-19 pandemic.

This Branch further notes Lambeth UNISON were one of only two branches to reach turnout threshold set by the anti-union laws in the 2023 ballot

This branch resolves to:

Campaign for abolition of the anti-union laws and restoration of local government funding and a fully funded pay rise.

Begin a local pay campaign on deleting the bottom pay grades and including optional spinal points

Mover: Ruth Cashman

Secunder:

Motion 3: Year of LGBTQ+ Worker 2024

This AGM notes.

1. Since UNISON was found in 1993 it has prided itself on its Self -Organised Groups (SOG).
2. The Black Workers Group (BWG) is a SOG of Lambeth UNISON which fights all forms of oppression and for the liberation of all people.
3. Whilst we organise fighting racism, we do not believe there is a hierarchy of oppression.
4. We are in solidarity with all fights of those who are oppressed and exploited.
5. We are proud of the Equalities Diversity Inclusion (EDI) work in Lambeth Council and the role UNISON activists have played challenging institutional problems in the Council. EDI covers racism, homophobia, sexism, ageism discrimination of all groups.
6. The Patrick Vernon race and diversity report (2019) made 40 recommendations, 30 pertaining to race discrimination. The report acknowledges that more work is needed with regards to disabled and LGBTQ+ staff. It is in this light that BWG will continue fight for equality of all oppressed groups.

This branch resolves:

7. To celebrate the Year of The LGBTQ + 2024 called by UNISON nationally.
8. To organise activities and stalls around the Year of the LGBTQ+ alongside other UNISON branches.
9. Take part in activities called by UNISON.

Proposed: Samuel Kamara

Second: Jocelyn Cruywagen

Motion 4: Climate Change and Global Warming

AGM affirms that climate change is a class issue and a trade union issue.

AGM notes that the:

- UN Secretary General has said we are in a new era of global boiling with unprecedented extreme weather impacting every part of the globe with increasing frequency.
- International Energy Agency (IEA) states that to stay below the Paris Climate Agreement of 1.5°C fossil fuel use must reduce by 25% this decade and we cannot develop any new fossil fuel sites.
- Working class in the U.K. and globally are already being impacted by the terrible consequences of climate change, through loss of lives, livelihoods, food, access to water, housing and accommodation, forced migration, unbearable working conditions and an intolerable burden on emergency services.
- UK government is doing little to safeguard workers or people from the impacts of climate change and, far from it, is advancing a narrative that seeks to make a virtue of weakening its commitments.

AGM believes:

- We need a rapid transition away from oil and gas to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown.
- Failing to take urgent measures to transition away from fossil fuels puts jobs at risk from sudden climate events or their economic consequences and foregoes opportunities to build in a timely way the larger skilled workforce needed across the whole economy without which decarbonisation cannot happen.
- Inequality and declining standards of living for working class people are explicitly locked into a fossil-fuelled market economy and austerity policies.
- The costs of transition to a decarbonised economy and society must not fall on those least able to pay.
- Transition policies must be generated by state investment.
- We must resist attempts aimed at using climate to divide working people; this only serves elites and distracts us from our common interest in jobs and a secure future.
- Political posturing on net zero policies does not help our class and we must fight for policies that address climate change and environmental degradation rooted in economic and social justice.
- Trade unions and workers in all sectors are central to transition plans.
- Workers in other countries are our allies.

AGM agrees to fight for:

- Policies to address climate change and environmental degradation that are in the interests of workers and communities, and a plan for the forms of bargaining and industrial action to achieve them.

- Negotiated transition plans that guarantee protection for all workers in all sectors of the economy including across all equality strands, and as a minimum should cover jobs, wages, pensions, training and skills and trade union rights.
- Public ownership of key sectors such as energy, water, transport, mail, broadband, education, health and social care.
- A fair and progressive taxation system, accessing the wealth of one of the world's richest countries without asking working people to pay for a crisis they did not create.
- A National Climate Service to plan, coordinate, fund and ensure education/ training for the workforce necessary to undertake the rapid and wide scale transformation to a decarbonised economy.
- Workers and their unions being directly and immediately engaged with government in designing and defining what the decarbonised industries and their workforces of the future look like.
- Solutions to the climate crisis that are in the interests of workers and communities, not capital.

Further, AGM agrees to build combines within and across sectors, at the level of branches as well as nationally and globally, to develop common industrial strategies that contribute to a 'whole economy' approach to decarbonisation, including engagement with community and climate justice groups.

Mover: Simon Hannah

Secunder: