

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

DAY SCHOOL FOR PALESTINE | ABERDEEN DISPATCH | STUC: "NO TURNING BACK"

NEW UNIONS

PERMITS AS SHACKLES

**PALESTINIAN WORKERS BETWEEN
DEPENDENCY AND COLONIAL CONTROL**

Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network



Scottish
Palestine
Solidarity
Campaign

BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

PERMITS AS SHACKLES: PALESTINIAN WORKERS BETWEEN DEPENDENCY AND COLONIAL CONTROL



Photo: Gabi Nogueira/Scottish PSC Archive

PNFTU Team

From the Occupied West Bank

On April 14, 2026, a [shocking video circulated](#) of around seventy Palestinian workers from the occupied West Bank arrested by Israeli occupation forces at an Israeli military checkpoint near Qalqilya, as they tried to reach their workplaces inside Israel. They had been packed into the back of a garbage truck, pressed against one another inside a waste container never meant to carry human beings. For nearly four hours, they remained trapped in that suffocating space. At least three reportedly struggled to breathe. Yet, the fear of suffocation was not their only fear.



PERMITS AS SHACKLES: PALESTINIAN WORKERS BETWEEN DEPENDENCY AND COLONIAL CONTROL | PNFTU TEAM

All along the way, they feared being discovered before reaching work – a discovery that could mean arrest, violence, and the loss of even the smallest chance to earn a day’s wage.

Abu Mohammad, one of the workers in the truck, later said he had not known that the road to the 1948 territories would pass via a garbage container. He and the friend accompanying him hesitated at first. But seeing dozens of other workers getting in, decided to join them, saying: “death with the group is mercy.” Then, speaking with a trembling voice and holding back tears, he described the unbearable weight placed on a father trying to feed and support his family. Pointing toward a nearby mountain, he said: “this mountain could not carry what a father carries in that moment.”

This was not an isolated incident. It was a brutal image of the forced misery imposed on Palestinian workers in their search for a livelihood. In one scene, it exposed the layers of structural violence produced by Israel’s colonial regime: a system that deprives Palestinians of work, cages their movement, criminalises their survival, and pushes them to risk their lives for the possibility of a wage.

Since Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, large segments of Palestinian workers have become increasingly dependent on the Israeli labour market, after the occupying state opened its labour market to them under controlled conditions. Over time, this work became one of the central sources of income in Palestinian society, within a multidimensional Israeli policy that combined economic, security, and political objectives.

At another level, Israel treated work permits as tools of discipline, surveillance, and political control, turning the need for work into a privilege conditioned on Israeli “security” approval and political submission.



PERMITS AS SHACKLES: PALESTINIAN WORKERS BETWEEN DEPENDENCY AND COLONIAL CONTROL | PNFTU TEAM

Through a complex permit regime, the occupying state monitored workers, pressured them, and limited their involvement in any act of resistance by linking their sources of income to the possibility of revoking permits or denying access to them. Permits became another weapon of collective punishment, through the confiscation or freezing of work permits for workers from entire villages and towns following acts of resistance attributed to those localities.

Although work inside Israel represented, for many Palestinians, a source of income higher than the employment opportunities available within the Palestinian economy, it also carried harsh conditions of precarity and humiliation. A worker begins the day before dawn, passes through long lines and overcrowded checkpoints, undergoes inspection and waiting, and reaches the workplace only after the crossing has consumed a significant part of his energy, time, and dignity. Workers who enter without permits face compounded precarity; they become more vulnerable to exploitation, and in many cases, employers evade their financial obligations toward them or deprive them of basic rights such as insurance, compensation, and safe working conditions. In this way, the absence of a permit becomes an additional entry point for extortion and exploitation.

Work in Israel also carries another complex emotional and political dimension, one that rarely receives sufficient attention. The Palestinian workers are not only compelled, for economic reasons, to work within a market controlled by the same powers that control their land, movement, and resources. In many cases, labour is also absorbed into sectors that help reproduce this control: construction, infrastructure, and certain forms of agricultural work tied to Israel's control over land, water, and crossings, including work in settlements or in projects that serve the settlement economy.



PERMITS AS SHACKLES: PALESTINIAN WORKERS BETWEEN DEPENDENCY AND COLONIAL CONTROL | PNFTU TEAM

This places workers before a harsh contradiction: the need to support their family and secure the requirements of daily life, while knowing that their labour takes place within an economy bound up with the colonisation of their land and society.

The phenomenon of permit brokers adds another layer of exploitation. Human rights reports and workers' testimonies have documented the payment of high monthly sums to Palestinian brokers in exchange for obtaining a permit, reaching in some cases between 2,000 and 2,500 shekels per month. These amounts reveal the emergence of a parasitic economy within the permit system itself: an economy that drains the worker before he even reaches the workplace.

After October 7, 2023, this structure appeared in a more acute and brutal form. The Israeli occupation government suspended work permits and **revoked the permits of more than 140,000 Palestinian workers** from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, depriving tens of thousands of families of their primary source of income. This was not limited to economic exclusion; it also took the form of direct punishment. Israeli authorities arrested thousands of Palestinian workers who were inside Israel and transferred them to detention centres and prisons, amid a clear absence of information regarding the places of detention and the legal status of many of them.

This decision has had a direct impact on the Palestinian labour market, as a large segment of workers was removed from their primary source of income all at once, at a time when the Palestinian economy was already suffering from a structural weakness in its ability to create alternative employment opportunities.



THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

PERMITS AS SHACKLES: PALESTINIAN WORKERS BETWEEN DEPENDENCY AND COLONIAL CONTROL | PNFTU TEAM

Reports from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that **Palestinian workers in Israel and the settlements on the eve of 7 October accounted for around one-fifth of Palestinian workers**, which illustrates the scale of the shock created by the suspension of permits for both households and the local economy. According to the latest available official data, the Palestine Monetary Authority estimated **unemployment in Palestine at 46% in 2025, with 28% in the West Bank and 78% in the Gaza Strip**, and with more than 650,000 unemployed people. In parallel, recent international estimates point to an unprecedented expansion in levels of poverty, to the point that speaking of a “living crisis” has become an inadequate description; large segments of Palestinians, especially in Gaza, are facing a comprehensive social collapse that affects their ability to secure food, shelter, medical treatment, education, and the minimum conditions of survival.

As Israel has continued to close its labour market to Palestinian workers, while its ongoing economic strangulation has destroyed local alternatives, many workers have been pushed into deadly routes to reach their source of livelihood. The same colonial economy that forced workers into the back of a garbage truck has also pushed them toward the apartheid wall: climbing over it, passing through its openings, walking through remote and dangerous routes, or paying smugglers to get them across, knowing that the search for a day’s wage could end in arrest, injury, or being killed by Israeli occupation forces.

Between October 7, 2023, and January 22, 2026, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has documented **Israeli occupation forces killing 16 Palestinian workers and injuring more than 249 others** while they were attempting to cross the wall to reach workplaces.



The Palestine New Federation of Trade Unions

New Unions

PERMITS AS SHACKLES: PALESTINIAN WORKERS BETWEEN DEPENDENCY AND COLONIAL CONTROL | PNFTU TEAM

OCHA notes these figures are not comprehensive. Meanwhile, Palestinian sources indicate that Israeli occupation forces have killed more than 40 workers while they were trying to reach their jobs or while being pursued at workplaces.

The tightening of restrictions on Palestinian workers after October 7, 2023, forms part of a broader Israeli policy of ethnic cleansing, aimed at pushing Palestinians to leave their land by making the conditions for staying increasingly severe and unlivable. Israel does not rely solely on direct military expulsion; it also uses everyday economic and living tools to suffocate Palestinian society: land confiscation, military checkpoints and closures, freezing of permits, destruction of productive sectors, and the systematic strangulation of Palestinian livelihoods. In this way, the strangulation of the Palestinian economy becomes a central pillar of the policy of expulsion, because it turns daily life into a permanent burden and pushes families to search for survival elsewhere.

The garbage truck was not an exception to this structure; it was one of its clearest images. It is a call to act against the entire system that cages Palestinian workers between poverty, permits, checkpoints, and Israeli bullets. This is the time to escalate BDS against Israel's settler-colonial, apartheid, and genocidal regime; to isolate it through sanctions; to end all state, corporate, academic, cultural, and institutional complicity; and to demand a full military embargo. The struggle of Palestinian workers is part of the struggle against the colonial economy that steals land, exploits labor, destroys livelihoods, and forces Palestinians from their homeland.



WE ARE NOT TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL:

A Scottish PSC joint report on “Scottish Workers: Day School for Palestine”



Photo: Gabi Nogueira/Scottish PSC

Gabi Nogueira & Kerris Duffy
Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign
Edinburgh Branch

In April, the Scottish PSC TU Network teamed up with **Workers for a Free Palestine** to deliver a “day school” to equip Scottish workers and trade unionists with practical tools to translate workplace solidarity with Palestine into tangible action. Two years into the ongoing genocide, the gathering addressed the growing need among workers who remain committed to the Palestinian cause, but are unsure how to move from policy statements to concrete BDS wins.

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

WE ARE NOT TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL | GABI NOGUEIRA & KERRIS DUFFY

The day opened with a powerful address by Stop the Wall National Coordinator, BDS National Committee Secretariat and New Unions Executive Committee Member, Jamal Juma, who situated the Palestinian struggle within the broader context of British colonial history. “The Palestinian question didn’t start in 1948, nor in 1967 – it started with the British Empire.” On the day, Juma gave a first-hand account of the dramatic escalation of settler violence since 2023, the ongoing illegal annexation of the West Bank, and the systematic economic collapse being imposed on Palestinian communities and their workforce.

Highlighting the need for a workers' movement that organises to raise class consciousness within the Palestine solidarity and trade union movements alike, a speaker from W4FP advocated pushing for stronger positioning: “it’s important to connect what’s happening in Palestine with the exploitation of people here in Britain, the conditions we face as workers and the internal structures [that sustain imperialism in its core].”

From hospitality to transport and arms factory workers, panellists and attendees engaged in a series of thought-provoking discussions and workshops that sought to distinguish and address the challenge of moving from a purely “service providing unionism” to grassroots organising in the workplace – sharing personal experiences and exploring ways to use the tools we have available to build workers' true collective power from the ground up.

In Scotland that weekend for a series of talks hosted by Scottish PSC, trade unionist and Swedish Dockworkers Union leader Erik Helgeson was one of the panellists at School Day for Palestine. In his address, Helgeson stressed that building a union culture of accountability through day-to-day unionism is key: “that’s what builds trust and raises a sense of responsibility. It’s not buying a service from the union rep, but that culture change takes time. Before solidarity action, you need to get the hard conversations out of the way.”

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



**Scottish
Palestine
Solidarity
Campaign**

BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

WE ARE NOT TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL | GABI NOGUEIRA & KERRIS DUFFY

“Confront, be humble, make the argument. We organise on the basis of human rights. Workers rights are human rights,” said Helgeson.

Activist, Scottish PSC organiser and millennial worker Kerris Duffy was also in attendance at School Day for Palestine and wrote her own personal account for Scottish SPSC TU News:

“Personally, I came into the world of organising and activism quite late in comparison to my peers. I attended my first Palestine Solidarity demo in 2021 and joined SPSC after the events of October 7th. I was quickly welcomed into a community of diverse, exciting and at times challenging perspectives that have both shifted and solidified my worldview. I quickly realised that experience and expertise weren’t necessary.

With the support and encouragement of my comrades, I was thrust into situations where I would “just” figure it out and learn from my mistakes. It seems so simple now that I begin to wonder why it has taken me so long to join in the first place.

Despite always being someone who cares deeply, I used to struggle to understand where/if my voice and experiences would be of any value. I knew how to challenge people in my inner circles and was great at pub politics, but beyond that, I didn’t think there was a place for me in activism.

I’m not an academic, I haven’t read the Communist Manifesto (I’ll get it!), and I really love reality TV. I also didn’t know how to find these groups. I didn’t go down the traditional route of attending university – the environment most associated with providing young people (particularly millennials) with a space to engage with political activism for the first time. I went straight into the workforce instead, working in child and social care services.”

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



**Scottish
Palestine
Solidarity
Campaign**

BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

WE ARE NOT TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL | GABI NOGUEIRA & KERRIS DUFFY

“Historically, this is an environment with a predominantly female-centred workforce, and one where, due to systemic misogyny, unionism and labour organising were not only not discussed but oftentimes seen as the 'antithesis' of the nature of the job. “We’re not in this for the money, we’re here because we care” was a common sentiment.

Combined with the fact that the only representation of female-led social justice movements I’d heard of at that time were the Suffragettes, I had an ingrained, unchallenged and false assumption that trade union organising and social justice movements were predominantly led and organised by men... Thankfully, I was so wrong.

As I became more involved with Scottish PSC, I quickly realised that community organising came naturally to me. I’d been unknowingly doing it all my life. All those years working in the care sector had given me practical experience working with people from all walks of life, providing solidarity. But the notion of labour and union organising still felt “alien,” albeit exciting to me.

In that sense, the “Scottish Workers: Day School for Palestine” was a great opportunity to finally contextualise how my experience as a community organiser could be used to build a labour movement at my workplace. With a mix of workshops, discussion groups and talks from labour organisers in Palestine and across Europe, the event highlighted the importance of labour movements historically and, particularly, in relation to Palestine. Israel’s economy is not only built on the exploitation of Palestinian labour, but it’s also propped up by investment in and the development of the tech and arms industries.

Hence, the heavy focus on pension fund divestment, boycotting Barclays and the removal of Elbit Systems. And it’s here where it became apparent to me that there’s a disconnect between labour and community organisers.”

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

WE ARE NOT TOO COOL FOR SCHOOL | GABI NOGUEIRA & KERRIS DUFFY

“Through the discussions, I was struck by how many worker-led initiatives and campaigns for Palestine are already happening and, more importantly, the number of wins they’ve achieved. Why was this the first time I was hearing about these? I think the reason is quite simple, however. This was possibly the first time in a while that trade unionists and community organisers sat in the same room together, explicitly to talk about how to organise around Palestine and learn from one another.

As community organisers, we often forget that we’re workers too and that the work we do in our communities can and should bleed into our work lives. Likewise, trade union organisers must remember that they are part of a wider community of people doing grassroots work to influence public opinion – and that wider engagement with those communities is needed to build a stronger, inclusive and robust network of workers willing to enact social change.

If community organisers aren’t aware of labour movements within a targeted workplace, how can we build a campaign that supports the workforce rather than hindering their efforts while creating external pressure? And if labour movements aren’t engaging with communities outside the workforce, they risk not only failing to recruit new members but also missing opportunities to collaborate and strengthen their campaigns.

The good news is that working together is not only possible, but the only way forward! We’ve seen it before, when grassroots LGBTQ+ community groups rallied together to create the [Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners](#) campaign in the 1980s.

We must continue to create spaces like the Day School, where we can share ideas, resources and skills to build truly interconnected people-powered solidarity campaigns that win – not only for Palestine, but workers' struggles around the world.”

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



ABERDEEN DISPATCH: ERIK HELGESON



Photo: Arbetet Journal/Personal Archive

Esmond Sage
SPSC Aberdeen Branch
Aberdeen City, Unison International Officer

It was a full hall of trade unionists, activists and workers who gathered on 9th April in Aberdeen to listen to Erik Helgeson's reflections on his struggle in solidarity with Palestine to organise Swedish dockworkers to boycott Israeli military cargo. Let's start with Tommy Campbell's thoughts, the President of Aberdeen Trades Union Council:

“It was an excellent solidarity event. Erik was very good at giving an honest overview of the political world of workers, whether it be at the docks or any other workplace in the public or private sector. He explained well how trade union representatives have to navigate and win over workers who all have different political outlooks to take solidarity action in support of the Palestinian people. I will raise the matter at my Unite retired members branch and also at ATUC about writing to Erik's employer condemning his unfair dismissal and demanding his immediate reinstatement.”

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

ABERDEEN DISPATCH: ERIK HELGESON | ESMOND SAGE

Erik didn't come with a presentation or 'sales pitch', just with the insight and experience that comes from waging protracted and collective struggle. We ran a loose interview format where Erik took the time to talk us through both the overview and the fine details, which always interest observant trade unionists.

Tommy attests to Erik's honesty. He didn't sugarcoat things or try to invent victories where there were none. That's not to say there were none at all – his very presence among us was a victory for the international solidarity movement. But as workers in struggle, we know that any victory is hard won. Erik's evident respect for his audience of fellow workers was refreshing.

The most interesting honest insight – and one I think many activists in the room needed to hear – was Erik's acknowledgement that for the solidarity action to be effective, workers with reactionary views needed to be able to air those out in a full and frank democratic debate. Christian Zionists, who had a bizarre apocalyptic adherence to Israel, needed to be able to speak.

Many workers who were not as politicised as Erik, and did not make the same link between their everyday struggles and the struggles of the Palestinians, needed the space to be able to say things which we disagree with, and have their views respectfully challenged. Too often, where our work involves building and elevating popular consciousness in support of Palestine, we want to run away from these conversations or brush them under the carpet. When the Swedish Dockworkers Union had done this previously, it had only undermined their capacity to act in unity. Erik didn't want to make the same mistake this time.

Alessandra Cecolin of the Universities and Colleges Union took further reflections on the subject of how we talk about Palestine with others and in the public sphere, and applied them to her own work:

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



**Scottish
Palestine
Solidarity
Campaign**

BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

ABERDEEN DISPATCH: ERIK HELGESON | ESMOND SAGE

“Attending this trade union meeting proved to be a genuinely formative experience, and one that has prompted me to think more carefully about what it means to be an active, committed member of UCU rather than simply a dues-paying one.

The testimony delivered by the visiting speaker from Sweden was, without question, the most powerful moment of the session. Hearing from a trade unionist operating within a different national context – yet grappling with strikingly familiar struggles – brought an important clarity to the work we do here. Their account carried the weight of lived solidarity: it was not an abstract principle but concrete collective action that had enabled their union to amplify its voice and protect its members. For those of us in UCU, it served as both an inspiration and a mirror.

One of the sharpest takeaways from the meeting was a reminder that the ability to speak up does not reside in any individual. It depends entirely on the strength and collective effort of the membership. A union is only as powerful as the people willing to show up, organise, and stand together. This feels particularly urgent right now. It is easy, especially in academia, to assume that institutional prestige or individual expertise affords us some protection – but the Swedish speaker's account made clear that protection comes from solidarity, not status.

The discussion also foregrounded the relationship between trade unionism and political activism, particularly in relation to Palestinian voices. This was important and, I felt, necessary. Support for Palestinian academics, students, and communities does not materialise on its own. It requires the organised, sustained backing of trade union members who are willing to make that support visible and structural. Political solidarity is not a side issue – it is inseparable from the broader project of defending academic freedom and the dignity of those most marginalised within our institutions.”

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



**Scottish
Palestine
Solidarity
Campaign**

BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

ABERDEEN DISPATCH: ERIK HELGESON | ESMOND SAGE

“What made this part of the discussion most uncomfortable – and therefore most valuable – was the frank acknowledgement of how pro-Palestinian voices are being silenced in academia, frequently through the misapplication of antisemitism definitions. This is a deeply serious issue. The conflation of legitimate criticism of Israeli state policy with antisemitism has created a chilling effect in universities, where colleagues and students fear professional or reputational consequences for speaking out. For UCU members, this silencing does not just affect those directly targeted – it complicates and constrains our collective voice at an institutional level, making it harder to organise, advocate, and fulfil our duty of care to all members.”

Leaving the meeting, I feel a renewed sense of responsibility. Solidarity is not passive. If the Swedish speaker's testimony taught me anything, it is that the unions which make a difference are the ones whose members actively choose to be present – in meetings, in campaigns, on picket lines, and in the conversations that others would rather not have.”

Erik has paid a high personal price for his solidarity, but he remains supported by his union and he had the support of every person in the room. It is that collective solidarity that joins us to Palestine and joins us to each other here in Scotland and with workers around the world, that makes that sense of responsibility which Alessandra talks about possible to act on.

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

STUC: NO TURNING BACK



Photo: Hussein Ezzedine/Scottish PSC

Hussein Ezzedine
Scottish PSC TU Organiser
Edinburgh Branch

The Scottish Trades Union Congress met for three days in April. In contrast to last year, when a raft of motions on Palestine were on the agenda, such motions were largely absent this time. With the policy on the genocide already established, this may be understandable. Alternatively, the lack of meaningful progress on previously agreed commitments may have contributed to a sense of apathy.

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

STUC: NO TURNING BACK | HUSSEIN EZZEDINE

During the congress, the [Hind Rajab installation](#), which was touring Scotland that week, was exhibited outside the Caird Hall, and delegates came out to view, and many were clearly moved. The ambulance and recreation of the car in which Hind and her family were murdered tells her story and aims to raise awareness of the impact of Israeli military violence and occupation.

Throughout, Scottish PSC activists lobbied and distributed leaflets to delegates, advancing a clear message: no more policy without action. This call to honour and implement existing commitments resonated strongly with many attendees.

The proceedings opened with the adoption of a constitutional amendment to make Congress a bi-annual event. At a time of acute crisis for workers in Scotland, it could be speculated that this shift may reflect the diminished vitality of Congress. When a dynamic response is needed, Congress is seemingly no longer viewed as central to delivering it.

Several debates touched on Palestine. Notably, a composite motion on Ethical Procurement, moved by Edinburgh Trades Union Council and seconded by SPSC affiliate Midlothian Trades Council, was passed. The motion calls for a strengthened Scottish Government procurement policy to prioritise human rights, ethical standards, and international law. It further demands a legal obligation to exclude companies from public contracts where there is evidence of complicity in war crimes or breaches of the Genocide Convention.

However, the central motion on Palestine came from West Lothian Trades Council and was moved by Neil Findlay, a former Labour MSP. This motion explicitly reaffirmed the STUC's commitment to Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), calling for existing commitments to be fully implemented and for greater visibility of both the STUC and the wider trade union movement within the campaign.

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

STUC: NO TURNING BACK | HUSSEIN EZZEDINE

Crucially, it includes a commitment to declare all STUC workplaces as Apartheid Free Zones (AFZs).

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has led the way across these islands by declaring itself an AFZ. Their Scottish counterparts are now moving in the same direction. As delegates left the hall, they were handed AFZ cards and encouraged to put policy into practice. Every delegate returns to a branch where they can propose declaring an AFZ. Meanwhile, the General Council holds a clear mandate to act and must do so in line with conference decisions.

There can be no turning back!

Though AFZ had been endorsed at last year's Congress, this motion takes things further and articulates the frustration felt after a year of inaction on 2025 resolutions, and many more on other commitments.

But we must look forward, not backwards – this represents a “fork in the road” moment, one that will lead either to a collapse of remaining union credibility or to a profound and transformative breakthrough.

Affiliates are encouraged to declare their unions and workplaces as Apartheid Free Zones and to work with the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign to advance the initiative.

Scottish PSC will continue to work, relentlessly, on this and look forward to playing our part in turning policy into action.

[Link to motions passed](#)

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



WORDS INTO ACTION PLEA



Kevin Robertson
Scottish PSC, Time to Divest Organiser
Lanarkshire Branch

As a Unite member and Scottish PSC Trade Union Network activist, I distributed flyers and spoke to members of my union's Scottish Executive Committee as they arrived at the Glasgow headquarters for their Spring meeting on Tuesday, 7th of April.

Unite, along with all the main unions, TUC and STUC have adopted wonderful motions and position statements on Palestine and BDS, so far, with very little real action.

This is just the start of us taking the plea to turn these words into action into the heart of the decision-making of all the trade unions in Scotland...And we won't be stopping there! Not until all trade unions can clearly demonstrate a real and meaningful implementation of the policies agreed by their members.

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026



UPDATE

Scottish PSC has, over the last month, welcomed several new affiliated branches; these include Unison Argyll & Bute, Unite Glasgow University, and the Unite Retired Members Glasgow Branch who have all signed up. Meanwhile, ASLEF Motherwell Branch has reaffirmed its commitment by renewing its affiliation.

We also received valuable support from union branches, as well as the Edinburgh and Aberdeen Trades Union Councils, for both the Workers' Day School for Palestine and the Erik Helgeson tour. This support was greatly appreciated and played a key role in ensuring the success of these events, helping to offset a significant portion of the associated costs.

In addition, another branch has declared itself an Apartheid Free Zone (AFZ), with ASLEF Bathgate Branch taking this important step. Speaking on behalf of the branch, Craig Laird stated: *"We want to show solidarity with the Palestinian people's fight for freedom, support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, and fully endorse the AFZ initiative."*

While it hardly needs repeating, the Scottish trade union movement has long supported Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

Even before this year's key STUC Congress commitments, the AFZ initiative was endorsed at the 2025 Congress, alongside a pledge to encourage unions to affiliate with our campaign.

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026

apartheid
free zones
SCOTLAND

UPDATE

Of course, to date evidence of these motions being implemented has been thin on the ground. The progress we are seeing is the direct result of the consistent grassroots efforts of our network of trade unionists and supporters. Achieved despite elements of factionalism, indifference and even hostility toward the struggle for Palestinian freedom from some.

As stated earlier we are indeed at a “fork in the road” moment.

Remember, becoming an AFZ costs nothing. It simply requires a pledge to support the principles and tactics of the Palestinian-led BDS movement, including avoiding products and services from Israel or from companies complicit in human rights violations and occupation.

Scottish PSC TU Network

SAY YES TO BDS!



Photo: Scottish PSC Archive

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**



**Scottish
Palestine
Solidarity
Campaign**

BUILDING EFFECTIVE SOLIDARITY

THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS ISSUE

Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | May 2026



Photo: Scottish PSC Archive

GET IN TOUCH

Hussein Ezzedine

SPSC Trade Union Organiser
husseine@scottishpsc.org.uk

Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

info@scottishpsc.org.uk



Scottish PSC Trade Union Network Newsletter | Issue N° 20 05/2026

www.scottishpsc.org.uk/TUNetwork

**Scan the QR Code to join the
Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**

