

# THE PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE: A WORKERS' ISSUE

SPSC TU Network Newsletter | August 2026

EDITORIAL: JOIN A UNION | PROTEST IS NOT TERRORISM | UNITE THE UNION +

# TRADE UNIONS

## A FORCE FOR SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE

Photo: Gabi Nogueira/Scottish PSC Archive

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## EDITORIAL

# JOIN A UNION: A GUIDE



Photo: Gabi Nogueira/Scottish PSC Archive

## Scottish PSC Trade Union Network

As workers in Scotland, facing rising living costs, job insecurity, and worsening conditions, trade unions are the most effective tool for collective power in the workplace. For those committed to solidarity with Palestine, unions are also a key organising space where that solidarity can be turned into collective action.

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## Who is a Worker?

We encourage all workers, including those who aren't currently in paid employment, for example those who have caring responsibilities, the unemployed, students, volunteers, or the retired, to join and actively participate in a trade union.

Unions are not service providers; they are democratic organisations built through participation, organising, and collective decision-making. However, a union is only as strong as its members: membership alone is not enough.

**The strength of a union comes from active members shaping its direction, building workplace organisation, and taking collective decisions together**

Trade Unions are important because they shift power from the individual to the collective. On your own, it is difficult to challenge workplace conditions and/or raise concerns about international complicity. **But together, we have leverage.**

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## Choosing a union in Scotland

There is no “best” union in the abstract. The most effective choice is usually the union that already organises your workplace or sector, as this is where recognition and bargaining power are already in place. Where no union is currently active, joining is still a step toward building organisation and future recognition.

Most unions have a retired members section, which allows members to remain active, whilst Unite Community Branches (only £2.81 per month) cater for those who are not in employment; there is a union for everyone!

## A force for solidarity with Palestine

Scotland's trade union movement has a proud history of standing in solidarity with struggles for freedom and justice around the world.

**Building meaningful workplace solidarity with Palestine, however, requires organisation, commitment, and collective action**

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## EDITORIAL: JOIN A UNION | SCOTTISH PSC TU NETWORK

**The SPSC Trade Union Network**, led by our Trade Union Working Group, connects trade union branches and activists across Scotland, strengthening solidarity with Palestine and advancing Palestinian rights in workplaces, unions, and communities.

The support we provide includes:

- speakers and education
- campaign coordination
- sharing organising resources

### Take the first step

The first step is, of course, joining a union and becoming active within it. However, what matters most is not just membership, but how you organise together to shape your workplace and your union.

There are over 40 **Scottish Trades Union Congress** (STUC) affiliated trade Unions, representing around 560,000 workers across Scotland. If you are unsure which union applies to your workplace, the **TUC Union Finder** can help guide you.

There are also independent non-affiliated unions such as the **Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain** (IWGB).

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## As a Union member

Start locally;

- speak to colleagues
- identify shared concerns
- engage through your branch

Examples;

- submit motions calling for solidarity actions, humanitarian support, or ethical workplace policies
- raise discussions on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) and the products and services present in the workplace
- propose branch statements or “Apartheid Free Zone” commitments. Invite speakers or organise educational meetings on Palestine

Focus on collective values;

Support grows when grounded in shared principles:

- workers' rights
- opposition to racism, occupation, injustice and inequality
- humanitarian concern

**Framing solidarity in these terms helps build unity and avoids unnecessary division**

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Be strategic and democratic;  
Workplace organising requires patience and collective agreement. Not all unions and branches will be ready for the same actions at the same time.

Strong union organising depends on;

- building support
- respecting democratic procedures
- maintaining cohesion while organising for change

Take these three steps today:

- Become a Union Member
- Join **Scottish PSC Trade Union Network**
- **Contact** us for support



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# RESISTING REPRESSION AND AUTHORITARIAN ABSURDITY

## SAVING LIVES IS NOT TERRORISM

# ESCALATE



**HUNDREDS ARE SIGNING UP TO ESCALATE - WILL YOU JOIN THEM?**

**Colin Sutherland**  
**UNISON City of Edinburgh Branch**

Following the draconian sentencing of the Filton Four and the Court of Appeal's decision to uphold the proscription of Palestine Action earlier in June, **Defend Our Juries** has escalated its action against both the proscription and the government's use of it as a way to expand its repression of dissent and free speech.

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RESISTING REPRESSION AND AUTHORITARIAN ABSURDITY | COLIN SUTHERLAND

Volunteers were asked to record videos declaring that “saving lives is not terrorism,” that they supported Palestine Action and that they encouraged others to do so, as well. If they were prepared to take the extra risk involved, they also declared themselves members of Palestine Action. At the time of writing this article, 84 such videos, including eight from Scotland, had been posted on social media and the police had already begun arrests in Scotland, England and Wales.

The placard-bearing demonstrations supporting Palestine Action, for which over 3,500 people have been arrested so far, were in breach of Section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000. The videos, however, breached Section 12 of the Act, and if membership is declared, they are in breach of Section 11 as well. Under the government’s repressive exploitation of anti-terrorism legislation, these constitute more serious offences, carrying a sanction of up to 14 years in prison.

In England, these are Crown Court offences, requiring a jury trial and all the additional bureaucracy, administration and time involved, which is, of course, part of the reasoning behind the escalation. The situation is different in Scotland, where the option to continue to prosecute these offences in the Sheriff Courts is available to the authorities – it remains to be seen whether or not this will turn out to be the case, though it seems likely.

The volunteers who posted the videos consist of people of principle and conscience from all walks of life, including retired doctors, farmers, nursery and school teachers, and members of the clergy.

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Sue Parfitt, an 83-year-old retired Anglican priest, pointed to the absurdity of her arrest under terrorism legislation on the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg show. However, it is important not to imagine that embarrassment is likely to cause a change in the government's direction. If that were the case, it would have happened long before now, and neither would we have been treated to Yvette Cooper's stone-faced response to the retired Anglican priest in her subsequent interview with Kuenssberg.

Self-serving state functionaries like Cooper, the home secretary who prescribed Palestinian Action in the first place, are committed to instituting the suppression of dissent, protest and action against British complicity in Israel's state policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing. The very fact that they are doing so, undeterred by the damage they are doing to reason and basic human rights in this country, simply confirms and reinforces that complicity.

If we care to consider the historical record, we find the direction of travel we are on is an alarmingly familiar one. We also find there that absurdity is actually part of how repression works. Writers from Franz Kafka to Günter Grass, and from George Orwell to Emile Habibi, have long chronicled the cruel absurdities that characterise a repressive authoritarian government. Edward Said, the

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## RAISE THE PALESTINIAN FLAG | LUKE THOMSON

celebrated Palestinian academic, writer and activist himself observed that, every morning, Palestinians under occupation wake up to a world that is utterly preposterous.

It is impossible to live freely and normally in a world where nothing makes sense, and everything is unpredictable, where fear and uncertainty have become constant companions. Today, Palestinians know this better than anybody else on Earth. For those of principle and conscience, solidarity with the Palestinian people is in resisting those who aid and support their oppression and murder through the import and imposition of repression here. That is why those who are engaged in resistance to such a world armed only with rationality and decency need to be paid attention to and supported in whatever ways possible.



Photo: Jordan Pettitt/PA)

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## PROTEST IS NOT TERRORISM

Campaign calls for collective action against the further criminalisation of protest in Britain and launches resource pack for trade unionists



Photo: Gabi Nogueira/Scottish PSC Archive

**Gabi Nogueira**  
**Scottish PSC Organiser**  
Edinburgh Branch

First published in July 2025, **Protest Is Not Terrorism** is an open letter signed by over 1,700 individuals and a growing list of organisations, protesting the unlawful proscription of Palestine Action, and the relentless, unprecedented assault on civil liberties and the right to protest that has

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followed the ban – a move pushed by Zionist lobbyists and rolled out by British state warmongers. Its dire consequences, quite frankly, predictable.

“The Home Secretary’s decision to proscribe Palestine Action represents a major assault on freedoms which trade unions and movements for justice have defended over the last two centuries. Peaceful protest tactics which damage property or disrupt 'business-as-usual' in order to call attention to the crimes of the powerful have a long and proud history. They are more urgent than ever in response to Israel’s genocide against the Palestinian people,” the letter states.

From the insidious sentencing of the first four **Filton 25 defendants**, each condemned to a minimum of five years in prison under a “terrorist connection” allegation by judge Jeremy Johnson, to the obscene treatment of **Brize Norton 6 actionists**, currently held without trial in British prisons, the state’s attempt to further criminalise dissent, to intimidate and curb a growing pro-Palestine sentiment in the country, has seen no bounds.

Meanwhile, activists across Britain, including in Scotland, have spent the past year getting arrested in their thousands under the Terrorism Act for holding paper signs and wearing t-shirts, opposing genocide and calling on the UK government to lift the proscription.

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In late July, [Barclays 5 activists](#) have also been found guilty of criminal damage for taking direct action against the bank accused of holding billions in shares of companies whose weapons, components, and military technology have been used in Israel's rampaging violence against Palestinians in Gaza and in the West Bank, including Elbit Systems.

After the verdict, they've been told by Judge Philip Parry that he intends to consider a "terrorist connection" to the offending. Parry [reportedly attached Johnson's judgment when asking lawyers for submissions](#) on whether there was a terrorist connection in the Barclays case. This is the [first time in British](#) history that people have been sentenced as terrorists for property damage.

Unprecedented times call for mobilisation and the fight continues. In its [open letter](#), Protest Is Not Terrorism calls for unity against state repression: "We call for the launch of an urgent campaign by trade unions, those involved in the mass movement for Palestine, and everyone who wants to protect civil liberties, against the further criminalisation of protest through the use of terrorism laws and other forms of repression."

The campaign has since launched an [online archive](#) for trade union activists who wish to organise against the criminalisation of our movements, containing model motions and other resources, updated periodically. If you'd like to contribute, add a link to a resource or send the wording of a motion you've got passed in your union branch, please get in touch with [Protest Is Not Terrorism via email](#).

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## RAISE THE PALESTINIAN FLAG



Photo: Scottish PSC Archive

**Luke Thomson**  
**Chair**

Unite Edinburgh Community Branch

Unite Edinburgh Community Branch has written to Unite's senior leadership calling for a Palestinian flag to be flown outside the union's office at 22 York Place, Edinburgh. It's a simple ask, but one we think matters, and I want to explain why we've made it and why we think it's worth other branches taking up too.

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## RAISE THE PALESTINIAN FLAG | LUKE THOMSON

Unite has a proud record of internationalism. Our union has repeatedly backed calls for a ceasefire, an end to the occupation, and accountability for violations of international law. But that solidarity too often lives in conference motions and press statements, worthy, but easy to walk past without noticing.

Flying the flag outside our Edinburgh office would change that. It would be something members, visitors and the public actually see every time they walk down York Place: a concrete, everyday sign that this union means what it says.

As I wrote in our letter, this isn't a symbolic add-on to what Unite already believes; it is making that belief visible. We're asking the union's leadership to treat this as a natural extension of positions already agreed at the branch, regional, and national levels, not as a new or controversial demand.

### Part of a Wider Movement

We're not asking for anything unusual. Trade unions, local authorities and civic institutions across the UK and beyond have flown the Palestinian flag from public buildings and union offices as a statement of support since the escalation of Israel's assault on Gaza.

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Unite is one of the UK's largest unions, with a long history of anti-imperialist and internationalist campaigning; we believe it is well placed to do the same, and that our Edinburgh office should lead by example.

I'm sharing this with SPSC because I think it speaks to something the labour movement needs to keep doing: embedding solidarity with Palestine not just in one-off statements, but in the everyday, practical culture of our branches and workplaces. The labour movement's founding commitments to internationalism and opposition to colonialism and occupation put a particular responsibility on us to act, not just to declare.

### What Happens Next?

Our letter has gone to Unite's senior leadership for consideration. We've also offered to bring a formal motion to committee if that turns out to be the right route. I'm hopeful this will be acted on quickly, and I'd encourage other Unite branches in Edinburgh and across Scotland to raise similar motions in their own workplaces and branch meetings.

I will keep SPSC updated on how this progresses.

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## UNITE THE UNION: MOVING TOWARDS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION



Photo: 2025 Policy Conference/Unite The Union

### Scottish PSC Report

In July 2025, Unite the Union's Policy Conference overwhelmingly adopted an **Executive Council statement on Palestine**. The policy committed the union to backing a full arms embargo against Israel, supporting worker-led boycotts of military equipment and goods linked to violations of international law, and protecting members who refuse to handle or transport weapons bound for Israel.

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## UNITE THE UNION: MOVING TOWARDS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The full statement can be read [here](#):

The comprehensive policy position not only included a raft of demands, but also made a number of commitments. These included resolving to ***“Implement and resource Unite Policy as decided upon by the lay membership at Unite’s Policy Conference.”***

Over the last year progress towards effective implementation of Unite policy on Palestine has been frustratingly slow, but it is welcome that proposals have now been presented to the Unite Scottish Executive Committee on how to take this forward.

To help turn policy into action a one day activists forum will be held on **Tuesday 25 August** to develop a workplan for the implementation of the policy. Whilst the forum will be open to participation by interested activists across all sectors of the union in Scotland the participation of representatives and activists from certain key sectors including **Aerospace and Shipbuilding** is particularly encouraged.

This is an opportunity which cannot be missed, Unite members are urged to **contact your representatives** for more information, and to register for this important event.

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RADICAL POETRY GRAEME BRADLEY / ARTWORK DAVID SWIFT



THE WOMB

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## RADICAL POETRY GRAEME BRADLEY / ARTWORK DAVID SWIFT

I have eyes yet cannot see.  
It is dark where I lie.  
I close them tight regardless,  
for there is peace behind my eyelids.

I am alone.  
Muffled voices filter from the other side,  
but I cannot shout.

I can feel my fingers but I cannot move  
my hands nor my arms.  
I cannot feel my toes.

I am held tight.

My torso is wet.  
A droplet runs around my hip to my back.  
I can feel – less so – another travel its path.  
It is not cold.

I can breathe, but only just.  
Space is constricted.  
My small lungs fight to expand –  
short and sharp, and often.

There is a texture in the air I breathe.  
Grit coats my mouth.  
My face itches. My eyes sting.  
How I so wish to raise my hands  
to relieve this torture.

A coarse, cold, and abrasive force  
presses against my face –  
rough, dry, powerful.

How long have I been here?

Now I can smell water, like fresh rainfall.  
I can hear it forging its path downwards  
towards me.  
Water.  
The harbourer of life.

How long must I remain here?

My knees are wet.  
The water is rising like a shadow over me.  
It reaches my fingers  
somewhere in the wet darkness below.

I try to scream but only a dry, desperate  
whisper escapes my mouth.  
It fails to penetrate the confines of my  
enclosure.

The water collars my neck.  
I can't move.  
I can't move.

I try to blow it away but the sliver of water  
skirting backwards across the surface  
is instantly replaced  
in a new wave of attack.

It seems my tears are on their side.

But the water won't break and deliver me  
into life,  
for it is not a womb,  
but my tomb  
of rubble.

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More than 20,000 children are missing in Gaza.  
Many of these children are buried under rubble.

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Poem by Graeme Bradley  
Artwork by David Swift

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Photo: Scottish PSC Archive

## GET IN TOUCH

**Hussein Ezzedine**

SPSC Trade Union Officer

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## WRITE FOR US

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