

Oslo, 8th January 2009

## **The Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (NUMGE) Condemns Israel's Terror Bombing**

*Norway's Largest Trade Union Donates NOK 500, 000 to Norwegian Peoples Aid.*

There has been worldwide condemnation of Israel's terror bombing in Gaza. We are shocked, angry and dismayed at recent events. Many of us feel helpless when we see such brutal aggression inflicted on a people who are trapped in the small land area that is Gaza.

The Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (NUMGE) fully supports the statement by Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) condemning Israel's war crimes and are urging the Norwegian government to hold Israel accountable for its acts of war.

We would stress that a ceasefire in Gaza does not mean that Israel's occupation of Gaza is over. A genuine and lasting ceasefire cannot be achieved without negotiations with the organisation, which has been elected (after free and open elections) to represent the Palestinian people in Gaza and on the West Bank. We would also stress that a ceasefire in Gaza will not eradicate Israel's many breaches of international law in their treatment of the Palestinian people.

The NUMGE is therefore fully supportive of Foreign Affairs Minister Jonas Gahr Støres' initiative towards involving Hamas in negotiations.

Whilst the world has lived with the portrayal of a peace process in the Middle East for many years, Israel has daily reinforced its position as the dominant military force in the area, whilst relegating the Palestinians to a weaker position.

The Israeli occupation of Palestine is maintained by force and imposed blockades. The construction of dividing walls and checkpoints make everyday life for ordinary Palestinians impossible. Something, which, in turn, prevents real peace with freedom and justice for the Palestinian people

The discussion of a two state solution is drastically undermined by the fact that Israel has made the survival of a Palestinian state near impossible by its forced division of territory and its current policy of forced occupation.

There are strong and irreconcilable positions on both sides of the conflict. Bombing and war only serve to further alienate the parties from one another and will engender

consequences for those most affected by the conflict, which will take generations to heal.

The **(NUMGE)** is of the opinion that all parties must remember that:

- The causes of today's situation are to be found in a 60-year history of conflict between two peoples.
- There is a differentiated power relationship: Israel is the occupation power and Palestine is the occupied party.
- This is not a religious conflict. It is rather a conflict over territory, water and rights in a small confined area.
- Criticism of Israel as an occupying force cannot be equated with anti-semitism.

The **(NUMGE)** will continue its work by:

- Ensuring that Palestine is on the agenda in those international forums where the NUMGE is a participant.
- Taking part in community and network building between the Norwegian and Palestinian peoples e.g. town twinning.
- Continuing to liaise with Palestinian organisations - national, regional and local
- Buying Palestinian goods.
- Supporting cooperative projects with Norwegian People's Aid.
- Informing and educating trade union representatives and members on the situation in Palestine.
- Exchange visits of support are as important as economic support (people to people cooperative ventures)

The **(NUMGE)** will also maintain a critical eye on:

- Multinational corporations which support Israel
- Israeli companies operating in the Norwegian market (e.g. iMDSOFT in Norwegian hospitals)
- Israeli goods from the occupied areas.
- Norwegian Government Pension Fund investment in Israeli companies.

The **(NUMGE)** has approved the donation of NOK 500,000 to Norwegian Peoples Aid's work in i Gaza/Palestine.

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