

# **NUMSA dedicates Workers Day to the struggle of the people of Palestine**

**1 May 2024**

## **Press statement**

**Note: The Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal is distributing this statement for informational purposes only. We do not endorse all the political positions of NUMSA and in particular the South African Police Union (SAPU).**

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa NUMSA is celebrating Workers Day at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) with Abahlali Basemjondolo- (ABM), the South African Police Union (SAPU) and Municipal and Allied Trade Union of South Africa (MATUSA). NUMSA is dedicating this Workers Day to the struggle of the people of Palestine. For the last seven months the Apartheid state of Israel has launched an unrelenting campaign to wipe out the people of Palestine. NUMSA continues to condemn the Israeli Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu for his genocidal campaign against the people of Palestine, and we condemn U.S. President Joe Biden for defending them and continuing to send arms and aid to Israel.

We re-iterate that this is not a war, what we are witnessing is ethnic cleansing. NUMSA stands in solidarity with Palestinians. We believe that resistance is not terrorism and if you look at the scale of the genocide, it is obvious that Israel intends to wipe Palestinian people off the face of the earth. Israel is determined to finish the work it started in 1948 which resulted in the dispossession and daily oppression of Palestinian people.

NUMSA has received a letter from Angela Davis, a radical American revolutionary, civil rights activist, Marxist and feminist. Ms. Davis was a leader in the local chapter of the Communist Party in her area and she also collaborated with the Black Panther party. She is an honorary member of the ILWU Local 10 which is a progressive dock workers union in the U.S. The International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU) Local 10 is famous for boycotting Israeli owned ZIM line ships. We must also credit the union for the role it played in driving Boycott campaigns against Apartheid South Africa and it also campaigned tirelessly for the release of African American political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. NUMSA has a special relationship with this organisation for its courageous stance against injustice.

Ms. Davis has personally requested that NUMSA must work with her on a campaign to defend Palestine. As a union we warmly welcome the correspondence from Ms. Davis and we have agreed that we will drive a campaign and we will mobilize progressive formations locally and in the region, and our friends from around the world to help us in this very important campaign.

NUMSA is dedicating Workers Day to the people of Palestine because we want to use this day to launch this program of action to unite NUMSA members around the call to intensify the battle to defend Palestine. We also want to use this day to make a clarion call to the working class, and to all progressive formations to deepen the fight against Apartheid Israel. We must do everything in our power to ensure that calls for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israel are speedily implemented in South Africa, but also, all over the world.

We have noted the media articles that are saying that the International Criminal Court is preparing to arrest members of the Israeli state and the Israeli Army for war crimes. This is way overdue. As a union we long to see Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in handcuffs for the deliberate mass murder of Palestinians. This would be the beginning of

justice for all the pain and suffering that innocent Palestinians have endured for decades, under the brutal, inhumane state of Israel.

This is why NUMSA is making a call for deeper international support and in particular the support of all dock and transport workers not touch cargo coming or going from Israel and to stop the transportation of arms to Israel. We are calling on progressive people of the world to unite against Israeli occupation of Palestine. We are also urging transport workers to play their role by refusing to offload arms and weapons caches to Israel. We recognize the struggle of the people in Palestine as our struggle. We have intimate knowledge of what Apartheid looks like and this is why we support all calls to intensify Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) on Israel. Israel must be treated like a pariah state. It must be banned from participating in any cultural and sporting events like Olympic Games and FIFA soccer matches for example. Israel must be completely isolated for behaving like Nazi Germany under Hitler. To us there is no difference between Israel today and the brutal Nazi regime which massacred millions of innocent Jewish people, simply on the basis of their religion.

In South Africa, Workers Day is a public holiday and it is important for the working class to understand that this is more than just a day off. This day, represents the struggles which were waged not just in the workplace, but also, battles which were fought on the shop floor to secure the liberation of Black people as a whole, as part of the broader fight to end Apartheid in our country.

Workers Day is a day where the global working class celebrates its gains and the achievements it has made through decades of struggle. This is not a day to be taken for granted, particularly for the South African working class which sacrificed blood, sweat and tears in the fight against the oppressive and brutal state of Apartheid.

The working class in South Africa must celebrate the defeat of Apartheid, because its destruction was due, largely to the unity of workers, who used their labour power to collapse the system through rolling mass action, strikes and protest. Under Apartheid, African labour was barred from organizing itself. The labour regime which existed back then was exclusively for the benefit of the white racist government, which ensured that it protects white workers by reserving skilled jobs for them only. Strikes were illegal and there was no protection for African workers from gross exploitation. The Apartheid system, implemented Bantu Education which was a sub-standard educational system reserved for Black labour only designed to create a pool of semi-literate, unskilled labour which was easy to exploit and abuse.

The democratic breakthrough that occurred in 1994, which resulted in the Apartheid system being removed from the statute books was significant, because the goal was to restore dignity and equality to the masses of the country, however, it failed to transform the lives of the majority of people in a meaningful way. Instead, for the last 30 years the ANC-led government has been playing security guard for white wealth. The ANC will not intervene in the economy for the benefit of the working class majority, who are mostly Black and African. Instead, it has done everything possible to ensure that the wealth of this country remains in the hands of a tiny minority and this is ultimately why South Africa is the most unequal society in the world.

The simple explanation is that we were lied to. We were made to believe that Capitalism and neo-liberalism could transform the lives of the majority of people, and this is not true. It is impossible for Capitalism to transform the lives of the masses because it is designed only as a system based on profit for the ultra-rich. The suffering the working class is experiencing today is because our macro-economic policies are designed to enrich the very few, whilst the masses suffer in a sea of unemployment and poverty.

Under Apartheid the racist government used SOE's to drive employment of white workers so that white families were able to give their children a better quality of life. Today, the ANC

government is privatizing SOE's and undermining their ability to create mass employment. They are doing this to please the banks and monopoly capital. The ANC is also refusing to intervene in the economy in a meaningful way to transform it, so that it serves the interests of the masses. It is depending on the capitalist markets, whose only goal is rampant profiteering, to transform society. This way of thinking is foolish in the extreme and demonstrate extreme naiveté. There is not a single example of a capitalist state whose policies have improved the lives of the majority of people, because this is impossible to do under capitalism.

True democracy and freedom can only be attained by implementing Socialist principles such as nationalization of the land and minerals so that the wealth of the country can be used for the benefit of all who live in South Africa, not just a tiny wealthy population. A caring Socialist state intervenes in the economy in a meaningful way by driving a job-led industrial strategy, by focusing on manufacturing. A caring Socialist state will ensure that SOE's are not privatized, because privatization would drive up the cost of services and enrich the wealthy capitalist elite, and result in massive job losses. Instead, a caring government would capacitate SOE's and strengthen them so that they can serve the majority of people better by creating jobs, and developing value chains and industries for the benefit of us all as a society.

As we reflect on Workers Day we must never forget that true power rests with the working class. The working class are the creators of wealth, and it is the united power of the working class that has the power to overthrow hateful, brutal regimes like Apartheid Israel. On this Workers Day, we call on workers of the world to unite in defence of Palestine so that its people can be free, from the river, to the sea!

Aluta continua  
The struggle continues

Issued by Irvin Jim

NUMSA General Secretary

### **Labor Action Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal**

725 Washington St., Oakland, CA 94607

(510) 417-1252

**<https://laboraction4mumia.org>**