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United Teachers of New Orleans

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The membership of United Teachers of New Orleans (AFT Local 527) calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza in order to allow for urgent humanitarian aid to reach the people of Gaza and to allow for the commencement of peace talks so that a permanent ceasefire may be achieved.

As of January 9th, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that over 23,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since October 7¹. Furthermore, all 625,000 students in Gaza currently have no access to education and 70% of school buildings have been damaged or destroyed, including 56 schools serving as shelters for displaced civilians.² As educators, we are deeply troubled by these attacks against schools, which U.N. human rights experts have described as crimes against humanity.³

These events didn't occur in a vacuum, and they also didn't begin on October 7th. These events have a genesis in the 19th century with the inception of the right-wing ideology of Zionism. Through its creation, the Palestinian people have suffered the full brunt of Western Imperialism, including the Nakba in 1948, where hundreds of thousands of families were forcibly expelled from their homes to make way for settlers. To deny these facts would be ahistorical and disingenuous to the current resistance and the struggle being waged in Gaza.

Indigenous peoples experiencing the violence of occupation have the right to armed struggle. When discussing Palestine in 1982, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 38/17 to "reaffirm the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle" – something they have declared a human right since 1960.⁴ In line with this, we condemn the genocide being perpetuated by the Israeli regime, a colonizing occupier, and affirm support for the Palestinian liberation movement.

UTNO calls for the Biden administration to suspend any further military or economic support to Israel until a ceasefire is achieved and the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank ends. No nation is above the international laws which govern human rights and the rules of war – laws which must be upheld and enforced without exceptions. The Biden administration has continually bypassed Congress to continue funding genocide; these acts are undemocratic and further dismiss the millions of voices who have called for a ceasefire. UTNO calls on the U.S. government to cease its funding of genocide and to end its hostilities towards the Palestinian people in Gaza, the West Bank, and across the diaspora.

¹ Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #88." 2024. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. January 9, 2024. <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-88>.

² Frankel, Julia. 2023. "Israel's Military Campaign in Gaza Is among the Most Destructive in History, Experts Say." PBS NewsHour. December 21, 2023. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/israels-military-campaign-in-gaza-is-among-the-most-destructive-in-history-experts-say>.

³ "Gaza: UN Experts Decry Bombing of Hospitals and Schools as Crimes against Humanity, Call for Prevention of Genocide." 2023. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. October 19, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/gaza-un-experts-decry-bombing-hospitals-and-schools-crimes-against-humanity>.

⁴ UN General Assembly, *Importance of the universal realization of the right of peoples to self-determination and of the speedy granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples for the effective guarantee and observance of human rights*, 3 December 1982, A/RES/37/43, available at: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-185486/>