

Scottish Trades Union Congress

Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions Discussions

Views of Affiliates

A1 Introduction

A1.1 In September 2008 the General Council was presented with a report on the views of affiliates had provided in relation to boycott, disinvestment and sanctions. Affiliates had been asked in January 2008, and again in June 2008, to forward to the STUC any views its organisation has on the call for a boycott, disinvestments and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with universal law and international principles of human rights. Affiliates were invited to forward any policy positions they may hold on this issue, or to indicate if they did not hold any views on this matter.

A2 Views of Affiliates

A2.1 It was reported to the General Council in September 2008 that six affiliates had forwarded comments to the STUC. A number of these affiliates submitted detailed responses, and conference motions. The full views of affiliates were provided to the General Council in the September 2008 report. The views on the affiliates on BDS are briefly summarised below.

A2.2 In their responses to the STUC, Edinburgh Trades Union Council and Kilmarnock and Loudoun Trades Union Council support boycott, disinvestment and sanctions, and believe that STUC should actively campaign for BDS.

A2.3 UNISON Scotland forwarded policy agreed at UNISON's National Delegate Conference in 2007 which states that ending the Israeli occupation demands concerted and sustained pressure upon Israel including an economic, cultural, academic and sporting boycott. UNISON supports disinvestment from companies involved in the occupation and the maintenance of the illegal Wall, and a ban on all goods from the illegally occupied territories.

- A2.4 The STUC received a response from Unite T&G, in early 2008 which indicated the T&G Section of Unite had conference policy which supported a boycott of Israeli products and services. However, it was noted at the General Council in September 2008, that given the creation of the merged Unite union, this was not the policy of the new union. Unite the Union in April 2009 provided the STUC with a statement agreed by the Unite Executive Council. The statement encourages members to boycott goods, especially agricultural produce from the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories, and agrees to investigate the union's holdings in companies engaged in building the separation wall and divest from them.
- A2.5 UCU Scotland reported to the STUC in February 2008 that it had received legal advice stating it was beyond the union's powers and unlawful for the union to call for or to implement a boycott of any kind of Israeli universities.
- A2.6 USDAW informed the STUC that it does not support boycott, sanctions or disinvestment of Israel.

A3 Conclusions

- A3.1 In discussion within the General Council at the September 2008 meeting, other unions reported that they did have policy on BDS. Whilst there was no clear consensus amongst those responding, our two largest affiliates support some kind of boycotting action against Israel. It was agreed that these views were important to the General Council's deliberations, along with the important evidence and report that would be provided by an STUC delegation to Palestine and Israel to speak directly with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, and the Histadrut.