



PRMI International Bulletin

Gaza, Palestine liberation and Our programme

22 March the PRMI is organising an online meeting open to all members and supporters to discuss and review our approach to the recent movements in solidarity with Palestine, including our political position in relation to the struggle for the liberation of Palestine.

To facilitate the discussion, we are distributing a series of articles/documents which raise questions and pose different positions.

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For notes

Additional reading

Recommended watching:

The film "No other land" is described as a "rage- and pain-filled documentary from a quartet of Palestinian and Israeli filmmakers". It can be purchased or rented at [\(25\) No Other Land - YouTube](#). Why not arrange a watch party to prepare for the discussion on 22 March?

Additional reading:

Articles by the former CWI/ISA section in Israel/Palestine

[Bloodbath deepens with Netanyahu gangs regional escalation](#)

[Ceasefire after 15 months of hell](#)

Articles by Peter Hadden

[Middle East conflict - has it been resolved?](#)

[Problems for Palestinian Peace process](#)

[Middle East -on a knife edge](#)

Article by Peter Taaffe

[Socialism and national rights |](#)

Other writers

[Mostafa Omar: The Palestinian national liberation struggle: A socialist analysis](#)

Questions for discussion

The workgroup to prepare this discussion have identified a series of questions that have already been raised and will assist comrades in preparing for the meeting. They are:

- What is our evaluation of the significance, character and potential role of the international Palestine solidarity movement. What should be our programme for the tactics and strategy of this movement? What is the best approach to calls for boycotts, including the calls for academic boycotts which came to prominence during the campus occupations last year?
- What is our programme for the resistance of the Palestinian people; including our attitude to armed resistance, our approach to organisations like Hamas, Hezbollah etc. Is the use of the term "terrorism" to describe the methods of these groups appropriate in light of the racist deployment of the term by the bourgeoisie?
- How central is the role of colonialism to the dynamics in Palestine-Israel and what are the political implications of this? What is the place of "settler colonialism" in our analysis? What similarities and differences are there compared to other colonial projects?
- What is the potential role of the Israeli Jewish working class in the struggle for Palestinian liberation? How do we evaluate the consciousness of the Israeli Jewish working class, the possibility of this consciousness being transformed, among the class as a whole or in particular layers, and how this change could come about? In what way should the consciousness, or fears, of the Israeli Jewish working class be factored into the tactics and strategy of the Palestinian liberation movement or the international solidarity movement?
- What is our position on the socialist solution of the national question in Palestine-Israel? Is there an Israeli Jewish nation with a right to self-determination and what does that mean? Should we put forward a position of 1 socialist bi-national state, 2 socialist states or a more open position, such as a socialist federation? How does the right of return of Palestinian refugees factor into this?
- Many ISA sections consciously did not use the term genocide to describe the onslaught against Gaza. Was this a mistake and if so how serious a mistake? What did the differences over the use of this term reflect?
- Is the Israeli regime accurately described as apartheid?

- How can we sharpen our critiques of capitalism and imperialism's effect on the occupation?
- Overall, do we judge the historic position of the ISA to have been sound? What were its most important distinctive elements; what should be retained and what should be rejected?

Additional questions:

- Where is the occupation going? If Oct 7 threw into doubt the strategy of the Israeli ruling class to "manage" the occupation through increasing displacement and repression without resolving anything, what are the alternative paths they could take? Is a dynamic of more rapid ethnic cleansing posed and how seriously should we view the Trump proposals to displace the entire population of Gaza? How much does Trump strengthen the most reactionary and genocidal sections of the Israeli ruling class? Overall, does the Israeli state emerge from this strengthened or weakened so far?
- How serious is the crisis for the Arab ruling classes who have pursued a policy of open or tacit normalisation with the Israeli state? Can the question of Palestine be a key factor in a broad revolt of the masses in the Middle East?
- While there has been a big increase in Palestinian solidarity internationally, the Palestinian masses have been hit by genocide in Gaza, and a major increase in violence, pogroms, repression etc in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and also a major increase in repression within the Green Line. What are the prospects for mass resistance from below by the Palestinian masses? How do the different factions, including Fatah/PA and Hamas, stand?
- Is regional war still on the agenda and what could this look like? How do we factor in the fall of the Assad regime, the defeats inflicted on Hezbollah, the relatively weakened position of the Iranian regime and the tendency of Trump to act as an accelerant?

The Marxist left, the national conflict and the Palestinian struggle

Document produced and agreed by the National Committee of the Socialist Struggle Movement 2 April 2016

1.1. The continuing escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict intensifies the national polarisation in this period, and destructive trends of nationalist reaction in Israeli society raise their head. The horrors of the Gaza war in 2014, the image of victory for the Likud party in the 2015 elections, the continued brutal and murderous attacks by the Israeli regime on the Palestinians, which are nothing but state terrorism; the attacks on democratic freedoms and the increased political persecution of Palestinian MKs [members of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament] and of anti-occupation activists amongst the Jewish public – all of these contributed to the strengthening of pessimistic moods first and foremost among the Palestinian masses, including among the Arab-Palestinian public in Israel, among more left-leaning layers in the Jewish public and among the left from both national groups. In fact, the left in Israel is in crisis these days, as can be seen openly, among other places, in the leadership of the Communist Party (CP) and Hadash [Democratic Front for Peace and Equality – established and controlled by the CP].

1.2. These processes do not occur in a vacuum. The trends of counter-revolution in the region in recent years have been

expressed, among other ways, in a certain strengthening of the Netanyahu regime, while despair and security fears among the Jewish public, fuelled at present also by the desperate, wholly counter-productive individual terrorism against Israelis, serve as a basis for Zionist-nationalist reaction.

1.3. A Pew Research poll conducted back in the first half of 2015 pointed to the figure of about 48% of the Jewish public treating positively the idea of a transfer/expulsion of Arab residents from Israeli territory. This figure is in addition to other prominent characteristics of national chauvinism of a broad layer in the Israeli public. Nevertheless, the reaction is not unlimited and it should be taken into account, for example, also that 46% of the Jewish public or 58% of secular Jews, expressed opposition to that idea. In parallel, the Peace Index poll of January pointed to polarisation in the Jewish public between 45% who support and 45% who oppose the idea of annexing to Israel the occupied territories seized in 1967.

1.4. Among the Palestinian masses, especially in the '67 territories, there is once again a significant withdrawal of support for a 'two states' position, to an extent not seen for several years. Opinion polls conducted by Palestinian

organisations for some period consistently teach about the lack of trust in the possibility of a solution to the conflict and of liberation from national oppression. These moods express revulsion from the fraudulent promises for the “coming state”, which lead thus far to the worsening of oppression and to mass killing; and to galloping settlement building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Moreover, the Netanyahu regime makes it clear openly that it continues to sharply oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state.

1.5. However, the idea of one bi-national, Israeli-Palestinian state, is still rejected by an even larger majority of Palestinians, as in fact it amounts to giving up the demand for an independent Palestinian nation state (as reflected consistently in opinion polls, e.g. the JMCC poll conducted in early March). Although there’s a sentiment of sympathy for the old programme of the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organisation] to achieve an Arab-Palestinian nation state on the entire territory west of the Jordan river, that is not perceived as a practical programme and it is mainly a sentiment of revulsion from the history of oppression accompanying the years of existence of the State of Israel since the Nakba [the “disaster” of the 1948 Palestinian exodus]. Such a programme is indeed a bourgeois national utopia. Neither the PLO nor Palestinian political parties Fatah and Hamas have any road they can propose in order to “occupy” Israel, which is today the strongest military power in the region. Thus, the pro-capitalist leaderships of both those parties seek at the bottom line to lean on alliances

with imperialist powers so that those will pressurise Israel for some concessions.

National polarisation

1.6. As a response to attacks from the state and to nationalist reaction in the Jewish public, a trend of national seclusion of Palestinians in Israel has been strengthened. There is a layer of young people who become radicalised and tend now to refer with deep suspicion and cynicism not only to the idea of ‘two states’ but also to slogans about ‘peace’, ‘co-existence’ of both nationalities and ‘joint struggle’, as well as to social movements developing among workers and youth in the Israeli-Jewish public. That layer has no trust in the potential for a joint struggle of workers and youth of both national groups on living conditions and against discrimination, exploitation and oppression – what is perceived many times to amount to giving up the road of a serious struggle for national liberation and as banging heads against a wall when dealing with prejudice and national chauvinism in the Jewish public.

1.7. The periodic strengthening of these approaches, which at times reflect rationalisation of political despair, is not surprising, considering the hypocritical rhetoric of the Israeli regime, the weakness of the left in the Israeli public, the experience of the recent decades, and particularly the experience of the Oslo agreements that were promoted under false slogans about peace but secured the continuation of national oppression in other brutal forms. To that should be added the dangerous national chauvinism, expressed also by outrageous support for

severe attacks against the Palestinians, characteristic of the Histadrut [the main trade union organisation] leaders, and the Labour and Meretz parties – as Israeli establishment parties identified at the current stage with the left wing of Israeli politics. In addition are the camouflaged chauvinistic approaches of liberal movements, such as 'Peace Now', which spread slogans about peace but do not reject consistently and sweepingly the oppression of the Palestinians.

1.8. To that layer of young Palestinians being pushed into struggle there is no visible clear left, socialist, alternative in front of their eyes to the fraudulent imperialist programmes. Left political movements, and first and foremost the CP and Hadash, which have helped spread illusions in the Oslo agreements and similar programmes – and which have not corrected their position to this day – bear some responsibility for it.

1.9. The phenomenon of Jews and Arabs photographing themselves, particularly in workplaces, with the message "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies", or joint demonstrations of residents under this message, as a protest against the escalation in nationalist violence, is indeed narrow in scope but it would be a mistake to belittle it. Such is an honest and courageous response which helps undermine the nationalist reaction in society and advance class solidarity. Nevertheless, amorphous slogans about "co-existence" and "Jewish-Arab partnership" in a reality of deep national separation and sharp national oppression of the Arab-Palestinian public indeed cannot suffice and at times might even

serve as hypocritical lip-service. A genuine joint political struggle of workers and youth of both national groups demands at the bottom line a programme for the elimination of all forms of discrimination and national oppression of Arab-Palestinians and generally.

1.10. Advancing such a broad struggle is one of the important tasks of the socialist left among both national groups. Socialist Struggle Movement opposes completely the political repression and the violent witch-hunt conducted against the Arab-Palestinian public in Israel, regardless of the political controversies with other movements, including from the Palestinian right-wing. We have explicitly, and in an explanatory way, opposed the outlawing of the Northern Islamic Movement – a hypocritical and dangerous move intended to assist the Israeli regime with tagging the Arab-Palestinian and Muslim public in Israel as scapegoats, intended to criminalise and ease steps to repress political struggles among this public and send a threatening message to further political movements that are in conflict with the regime, firstly Palestinian movements but not only. The proposed legislation for the suspension of MKs continues the same logic.

'Divide and rule' Palestinians

1.11. The lack of general social movements of workers and young in Israel since the 2011 protest movement, allows isolationist perceptions of 'identity politics' to strengthen among oppressed groups in society. Against this background, many activists conclude that the political struggle against national oppression of the

Palestinians requires a strategy based on 'national unity' which cuts across social classes and political approaches. That is also as a response to measures of repression and the 'divide and rule' policy used by the Israeli regime. It tries to tear apart the Palestinian masses on a geographic, religious and ethnic basis – including through the nurturing of Israeli militarism by encouraging the military draft of Arab citizens in Israel – thus harming, in fact, the potential for a wide and effective struggle against national oppression. Rejection of the instigation of ethnic-religious conflict is definitely just, and so is the understanding that a broad and strong movement is needed.

1.12. Nevertheless, in the '67 territories, in the Palestinian diaspora and within the Green Line, the watering down of the differences between right-wing and left-wing forces in the Palestinian public and between local elites and the workers, farmers and youth will significantly restrain the potential for a successful struggle that could realise the aspirations of the masses to solve their plight.

1.13. The embryonic form of the capitalist police state represented by the Palestinian Authority of Fatah and the PLO, and its parallel in its Islamist version headed by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, are a warning sign of the direction in which right-wing pro-capitalist leaderships may lead to. Within the Green Line in particular, the dimming of political differences among the Arab-Palestinian minority in the name of 'national unity' eventually plays into the hands of Israeli right-wing rule, which is interested in isolating this public in order to ease the policy of repression.

1.14. In the run up to the 2015 elections, unfortunately, Hadash did not insist on putting forward a prominent left alternative on the countrywide level. Instead it capitulated to pressures and teamed up, in an unprincipled manner, to the founding of the "Joint List", as a coalition of left-wing and right-wing forces in the Palestinian public, including pro-capitalist and conservative forces. The left is the wing required to give the significant concessions in this alliance. The countrywide profile of Hadash, as the most prominent left force at that level, has been dimmed – the bloc wasn't only "technical" and there was another practical option, on which some within Hadash tried to convince others, of standing in a separate leftist list. As we warned in advance, despite the talks about an "historic" development, the Joint List has not, so far, led any significant struggle and has not managed to present any essential achievement. It remains 'neutralised' in the parliamentary field, and consequently has also disappointed layers of supporters who pinned hopes on it.

1.15. The broader layers in the Arab public, a majority of who are under the poverty line and under a daily offensive because of their national background, are interested, in the long run, in practical solutions to the burning problems of poverty and national discrimination (which in fact intensifies poverty and the rest of their plight). But the political forces on the List do not manage to sketch a horizon for an effective struggle for change – they don't manage to advance a genuine potential threat to the Israeli right wing,

the Netanyahu rule, the national oppression and Israeli capitalism.

1.16. Weaknesses in the political programme, including regarding socialist change of society, and the lack of reliance on the struggles of the working class and the masses, are root causes of the narrow approach of Hadash of working in the parliamentary field and orientating to election campaigns. This is done in a manner almost detached from the building of an extra-parliamentary struggle, and that approach is also reflected in unprincipled political alliances.

1.17. Some of the CP leadership may claim that theirs is a “practical” approach to change reality in complex circumstances. Of course serious political organisations need to examine when it is necessary to change demands and tactics. But for the Marxist left, such changes should be done on the basis of a principled and class approach. Unfortunately, that was not the approach of the CP leadership, which has tended to adopt a reformist approach which weakens the left, as it nurtures illusions in solutions in the framework of capitalist society, keeps broad layers in a relatively passive role and destructively gives up the building of a political struggle based on the working class in society. The same logic leads the CP and Hadash to side with Russian imperialism, the Assad regime and Hezbollah in the civil war in Syria, as forces allegedly playing a “progressive” role, in accordance with the Stalinist tradition of tending to side with forces that are in conflict with the western imperialist powers.

1.18. On the other hand, if the leftist forces in Hadash would have adopted a class approach and a socialist programme in a central and prominent manner, they could have used their relative weight on the countrywide level much more effectively in order to challenge the right-wing forces in both national groups.

Linking to a struggle for socialist change

1.19. Our organisation on the national and international level is fully committed to promoting internationalist solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian masses for liberation from national oppression, and is committed also to contribute to the discussion in relation to the way in which this struggle could win.

1.20. Generally, and particularly given the moods today and the brutal intensification of repressive measures used against the Palestinians, would it be not right to promote at present a programme of ‘two states’ to solve the conflict? In the context of the capitalist Middle East today the meaning of this demand is indeed the founding of a neo-colonial puppet state for the Palestinians, and not genuine national independence. The fundamental problems of the Palestinian masses would not be solved and the bloody conflict would continue.

1.21. Moreover, the idea of a bi-national state is completely utopian in a capitalist context – the decisive majority of both nationalities are not interested in giving up national independence and sharing a single state, and even if such a state would be

coerced somehow, it would be based on inequality and a deep national schism.

1.22. This fact underlines that at this stage, even while the slogan of 'two states' in itself comes into increased suspicion, the idea of a solution based on two national states – although in a socialist context – is still necessary. At this stage, advancing a programme which proposes a solution in the form of one joint state for both nationalities, even a socialist state, is not capable of supplying a basic answer to the fears, suspicions and the intense yearning for national independence on the part of both national groups. Nevertheless, the role of the Marxist left is also to explain that working class layers and the masses of all national groups have an interest, at root, in a united struggle around a programme for socialist change.

1.23. Although significant struggles could definitely gain important achievements before, only on a socialist basis will it be possible to equate the living conditions of the Palestinians to those of the Israelis – and to raise, in fact, the general living standards far beyond the best conditions that could possibly be achieved under capitalism – and to guarantee a complete equality of rights in all spheres. Only that way would it be possible to make sure that all resources in society serve rationally and democratically the welfare of the masses, and also allow the necessary investment of resources for the Palestinian refugees – a just solution of their plight requires a struggle to guarantee conditions of welfare and equality in the region, and advancing of direct dialogue and consent, which would include recognition of the historic injustice and the right to return. In these

circumstances, the diminishing of mutual loathing and national schism may prepare the ground also for a joint socialist state.

A class approach to Israeli society

1.24. The approaches of sections of the international left who adopt a narrow national approach to the problem and propose to ignore the fears of millions of Israeli Jews and their will for national self-determination, do not represent any serious road for a solution. The catastrophic process of occupation, expropriation and oppression of the Palestinians by the Zionist movement and the State of Israel does not negate the fact that masses of Jewish refugees from European countries and from Arab and Muslim countries were cynically exploited by the world powers and by the nationalist Zionist elite. The simplistic nationalist reference to all Israeli Jews as 'settlers' ignores among other things the fact that the majority of them are country-born, without any affinity to another country.

1.25. Considering the history of the Holocaust, the persecution of Jews and the anti-Semitic threats of reactionary Arab and Islamist forces in the Middle East, a programme that would propose that millions of Israelis simply give up national independence will be perceived as an 'annihilation' plan. It will push the Israeli working class more strongly into the hands of the Israeli right-wing and for a 'survival war' by any means, including nuclear weapons. More than this, even in a hypothetical bloody scenario in which an external force subdues Israel militarily,

then millions of Israeli Jews would become an oppressed national minority and the national conflict would continue in a terrible new form.

1.26. True, the Zionist movement and the State of Israel have implemented and implement until this day a colonialist policy striving for the pushing aside and expropriation of the Arab-Palestinian population in favour of the Israeli-Jewish population. This policy includes not only the history of uprooting the Palestinian population and the settlements enterprise today in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, but also organised plans of the state for the 'Judaization' of territories within the Green Line, particularly in the Negev and Galilee.

1.27. The Israeli ruling class sees the expropriated Palestinian masses as an existential threat for the future of its rule. The Israeli capitalist regime, which is still in a conflict with the Palestinian population and with the Arab and Muslim populations in the region, strives to base its existence on mobilising support from the Jewish population in Israel and through collaborations with the imperialist policy of the capitalist powers, especially the US, as well as with autocratic regimes which are willing to do business with it. Not by accident it supported and even was mobilized for imperialist wars in the region; assisted the Jordanian monarchy to crush the 1970 Black September uprising; was one of the last partners the Apartheid regime in South Africa maintained; has assisted for decades the armament and military training of dictatorships around the world, including the former military dictatorship in Chile and the militias which committed the genocide in Rwanda; and

symbolically it offered the Egyptian autocrat Mubarak political asylum.

1.28. Against this background, there are currents in the left opposing the 'right of existence' of Israel. Of course the Marxist left opposes all regimes of oppression in the region and globally. But on this basis one could allegedly oppose also the 'right of existence' of the United States, Germany, Britain or France, which as major imperialist powers have caused the greatest horrors in history.

1.29. There are those who claim that specifically the right of existence of Israel should be opposed because it is a nation state 'made up' and established under the sponsorship of the capitalist powers in order to serve their imperialist policy in the Middle East, and because it's been established through the expropriation of the Palestinian masses. However, generally, the national borders in the Middle East, which the civil wars in Iraq and Syria undermine now, were dictated to a large extent by the imperialist powers, through the Sykes-Picot agreement signed secretly a hundred years ago and a series of following imperialist agreements.

1.30. The claim in regards to national states which the imperialist powers created de facto or nurtured for their benefit can serve also against the right of existence of a series of other states in the world, including in the former USSR territories, the Balkans, the Baltic area, Pakistan or Taiwan, for example. Aside from that, although the process of establishment of the State of Israel had unique features and although the Marxist left had warned about the expected destructive repercussions of the Partition

Plan and opposed it, it should be taken into account that a long list of national states were created in a tragic manner as a result of occupations, mass uprooting of populations, colonial expropriation and nationalist policy striving to change the demographic composition in favour of the ruling national-ethnic group.

1.31. However, the important question, also in relation to the US for example, is how it's possible to advance from a reality of oppression and robbery to a solution to the fundamental problems and for the establishment of a new, democratic and equal society. The Marxist left cannot suffice in pointing to the reactionary character of regimes and their bloody history – it needs to show how capitalist and imperialist nations are based on contradictions, how they could split on a class basis and how it would be possible to get over the calamities of the capitalist and imperialist era in that way. Thus the State of Israel as well is not only a settler/colonial state, ruled by one nationality and expropriating another – it is also a capitalist state of class exploitation and oppression in a crisis-ridden class society.

1.32. Parts of the international left tend to adopt a nationalist attitude to the millions of Israeli Jews, as one block of reaction, a society of settlers, in which the fundamental contradiction is allegedly not a class one but a national one, and in which the masses have no real interest in ending the oppression of the Palestinians, in social liberation or in socialist change. This is a crude abstraction, to say the least, of the concrete reality. As such it is actually blurring, and not sharpening, the picture of the forces of reaction in society, as does

every nationalist approach which abstractly blames the masses for the crimes of “their” ruling classes and regimes.

1.33. Such an approach reduces, in fact, the responsibility of generals, tycoons and nationalist parties for the horrors they help create. It also befogs the difference between ideological settlers, including nationalists who take an active part in the barbaric expropriation of Palestinian families within the Green Line, and millions of exploited and relatively impoverished workers who suffer from Israeli capitalism and from the ongoing national conflict. It is an approach which depicts Israeli society in a non-dialectical fashion and almost as one without internal contradiction.

1.34. Although the national antagonism is usually the most prominent one and restraining the development of the class struggle on the side of the workers, the class antagonism is nevertheless the fundamental internal contradiction which undermines ‘national unity’ and represents the potential for getting beyond Israeli capitalist society and building a new society. Objectively, and regardless of the moods and reactionary perceptions which are widespread at the current stage, the Israeli working class has a key role to fulfil in the struggle against Israeli capitalism and for the socialist change of society.

Who profits from the occupation?

1.35. The claim that the Israeli-Jewish working class specifically profits from the occupation and the national oppression of the Palestinians is similar to the claim that

in any state responsible for imperialist exploitation and imperialist wars and occupations the working class 'profits'.

1.36. The working class in the developed capitalist countries has succeeded, at root, through struggle, to gain achievements against the ruling classes, with improved living conditions in comparison to those of the masses in the neo-colonial world. However it is a mistake to interpret the national gaps in living conditions or the spread of right-wing political perceptions across layers of workers as an expression of cross-class joint interests. On the contrary, the brutal austerity decrees carried out repeatedly against workers generally in those countries, whether in Europe, the US or Israel, and which worsen existing social-economic distresses, emphasise that within the framework of the capitalist system even those relative achievements are pretty limited and are not guaranteed – the global economic crisis in recent years has exposed again, more forcefully, the contradiction of class interests, with the ruling classes attempting to burden the cost onto the backs of the masses.

1.37. Surely, certain layers in the Israeli working class, for example in the large settlements, are 'bribed' in order to politically support the settlements enterprise, including with some direct and indirect economic benefits. But a wider analysis of the interests of the working class does not point to any essential economic interests, neither to a genuine 'political profit'. Israeli capitalists profit from the settlements' industrial zones and generally from the super-exploitation of Palestinians as cheap labour (although this is a narrow share of the entirety of profits

of the Israeli capitalist class, while the main policy of Zionism and Israeli capitalism in relation to the Palestinians is uprooting and expropriation, with the purpose of strengthening the social base of the regime). Also, it's worth noting that the capitalists are less exposed than workers to nationalist-based confrontations in the streets and the workplaces and to personal security risks as a result of the conflict.

1.38. The Israeli-Jewish working class – workers discriminated against from Mizrahi and Ethiopian backgrounds and former USSR workers, but also Ashkenazi descended workers – indeed does not suffer the same level of oppression and poverty as the Palestinian masses. But it suffers collectively from 'divide and rule' on a national basis, competing in a race to the bottom against cheap labour, and above all suffers the political and security consequences of the perpetuated conflict. Generally not insignificant layers in it even tend to a certain extent to have a reserved attitude towards, and be alienated from, the settlement enterprise. The nationalist-racist reaction within it does not rely, at root, on an economic interest but mostly on security-existential fears (more than any other problem, including the historic ethnic discrimination of Mizrahis, which the Likud and Shas parties manage to cynically exploit). This means that section is being politically shackled to the ruling class on the basis of a false identification of the policy capable of answering its security interests. As mentioned, to the benefit of the Israeli ruling class, other reactionary forces in the Middle East mobilize to contribute their share to that result.

1.39. There are powerful ideological mechanisms allowing Zionist nationalism to mobilize support even from among parts of the Arab-Palestinian public in Israel, and particularly Druze and Bedouin workers and poor, but it does not mean that these mechanisms are based on the fundamental and broad interests of those groups. The Marxist left should help shed light on the fact that eventually, the fundamental interest of the working class on both sides of the national schism is a joint struggle against the crimes of the Israeli ruling class.

1.40. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is of course not symmetrical and it wears a national-colonial character, between an oppressive and expropriating nationality and an oppressed and expropriated nationality. But the Marxist left cannot take a simplistic nationalist approach to Israeli society. As opposed to ideas promoting 'normalisation' of the occupation and oppression of the Palestinians – including the economic and military relations between the Palestinian Authority and the Netanyahu government – the Marxist left should advance a struggle against national oppression, as well as dialogue and joint struggles, especially of workers, on both sides of the national divide, which will help clarify the joint broad interests in a struggle against Israeli capitalism and for a new society, without any national discrimination.

1.41. While approaches which seek to put a 'collective guilt' and take, for example, the action of a blanket boycott against Israeli society, might create an impression that the struggle is generally against Israelis, and thus play into the hands of the Israeli right-wing, a class

approach to Israeli society, as well as more selective and focused protest boycott initiatives, could pose a much more serious threat against the Israeli right.

1.42. At the height of the struggle against the Apartheid regime in South Africa, the Marxist left there called for the building of independent formations of the working class in South Africa itself (a stance which the leadership of the ANC in exile did not put forward, at that time) and explained the importance of those formations also appealing to white workers and involving them in the struggle – despite the white population being a small minority that held widespread prejudices and racist views. This was done with the purpose of helping to split and undermine the social base of reaction, through winning over white workers to the side of the struggle and neutralizing opposition to the struggle by further layers, in a manner which, in fact, undermined the basis for an ethnic civil war. Aspects of this approach were eventually adopted by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the ANC.

1.43. As opposed to the Stalinist traditions, the Marxist left never abandons a class analysis or class-based political programme in favour of advancing a national or a 'patriotic' approach to the progressive struggles it supports, even when it comes to national liberation struggles.

1.44. Our basic political programme is for a struggle to eradicate all forms of discrimination and oppression in society and for a socialist society on the regional and world level, which will overcome all the national and ethnic schisms. However,

it is not enough to speak only about the future socialist society, especially considering the centrality of the national struggle of the Palestinians and the national conflict. In the current circumstances, a programme which will include recognition of an equal right for existence and self-determination, which will be expressed in two socialist states with equal rights, with full equal rights for minorities, and aspiring that the two states would work voluntarily in a joint confederative framework and as part of a confederation of socialist states in the region, could potentially convince broad layers on both sides of the national divide and serve as a basis for a joint struggle against Israeli capitalism and for social justice and peace. We do not presumptuously put forward a ready-made map with new borders – this question and others will eventually be decided as a result of democratic processes led by broad movements.

1.45. Taking into account the present deep gaps in the political perceptions on both sides of the national divide and in the region, in general (and, in fact, on the international level, influenced at this time by the lack of strong socialist parties of the working class), and considering the suspicion towards the ‘two states’ position, it is clear that the starting point for explaining and promoting this programme, including via political slogans, cannot be identical in every situation and in relation to every audience. But the programme itself is in our opinion the objectively necessary programme today. At the same time, we are definitely open to the development of a fruitful discussion on this

question with left and socialist movements on both sides of the Green Line and internationally.

Putting forward an alternative

1.46. The tendency of parts of the left to identify the dangerous trends of reaction in Israeli society arbitrarily as ‘fascism’ is dangerous politically, as it may lead to wrong conclusions about the opportunities on the agenda and about the strategy and tactics required for the struggle at the current stage. For that matter, the harsh attacks on democratic freedoms in Turkey, Russia or Egypt, brutal as they are, do not represent fascist regimes.

1.47. The Kahanist-fascist terrorism against Palestinians, and even against asylum seekers and against the left, is indeed a real danger; but that which is reported by the Israeli capitalist press tend to awaken revulsion among the broad Israeli public (as was evident, for example, after the murderous arson attack in Duma). In fact, even the government and the ruling class are forced to disassociate from it, as it is perceived in their eyes as a destabilizing factor. The Kahanists are not about to take state power in the near future and are weaker than their counterparts in Greece, for example. There is definitely more time before armed Kahanist gangs could win mass support, create frenzy on the streets of the cities, murder daily and physically crush all aspects of democracy and of working class organisation.

1.48. Nevertheless, there is an important need for community defence formations – democratic and if required armed – against attacks by the settlers, the military and the police in Palestinian towns in the West

Bank, East Jerusalem and some of the towns within the Green Line, as well as for the organising of self-defence formations on left demonstrations which take place under higher security risk. But, at the same time, there is a need for left and socialist political forces that would propose a way for political struggle for change.

1.49. It is clear that organising for a political struggle is more complex in the '67 territories under intense and lethal repression conditions – every protester risks imprisonment and death – first under the military dictatorship of the Israeli regime, but also under the governments of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas. The popular mass strike organised by the teachers in the West Bank in February-March was the largest workers' struggle in recent years in the Authority territories. It succeeded in rocking a bureaucratic trade union, shook the Palestinian Authority itself, which serves as a subcontractor of the occupation, and brought back on the agenda the perspective for a movement of broader layers into struggle.

1.50. Developments of this kind may create the basis also for the growth of left and socialist forces that will propose an alternative to the dead end of the right-wing leaderships of Fatah and Hamas. Advancing the idea of popular assemblies in towns and neighbourhoods in this period could help with developing a discussion on strategy, tactics and demands, to involve broader layers, and to elect democratic action committees which would help organise and lead the struggle, in the spirit of the revolutionary struggle traditions of the first Intifada. The history of the Palestinian liberation struggle has

seen mass uprisings, and a new generation of activists will discover again these vital events and the rich lessons they left behind.

1.51. The Netanyahu regime is far from leaning on sweeping support among the Israeli public. It is clearly weaker than was the Sharon regime at the height of the second Intifada. It was presented with – in 2011 – the largest social protest movement in the history of Israel and with a series of social struggles. Both in the 2013 election and the 2015 election it faced revulsion from relatively wide layers. Despite the clear use of nationalist-racist demagoguery in order to mobilize voters, Netanyahu has only been able to compose government coalitions of hard-pressed majorities in the Knesset, which were enabled only by the assistance of new capitalist parties which promised “change”, like those of Lapid and Kahlon.

1.52. The eruption of the ICL (chemical) workers around the 2015 elections and the later struggle of those from an Ethiopian background, which included Likud voters, have emphasized how much the base of support for the Likud rule is undermined. The ICL workers have entered into direct conflict with Likud, and in the Ethiopian-descent struggle a layer of activists who were radicalized through the conflict with the establishment have come to some leftist conclusions. In addition, the gas protest movement has brought onto the streets a series of demonstrations reflecting revulsion from the Netanyahu regime despite the hindering role played by the pro-capitalist leadership in that struggle.

1.53. The Netanyahu regime receives not a little political aid from reactionary forces in the region, from 'opposition' parties in the Knesset and from an enlisted nationalist press. These enable it to exploit to a certain extent, and in some conjunctures even widely, the security and existential fears among the Jewish public. But the ongoing escalation in the conflict also raises some doubts and questions among parts of the public.

1.54. On the one hand, the idea that the oppression of the Palestinians and the problems of the conflict would be solved as a result of pressure inflicted on Israel by other capitalist governments is an illusion. The solution will not come from the 'outside'. But nonetheless, developments which show potential and achievements for mass movements and for the left regionally and internationally have influenced – as happened during the Arab revolutions in 2011 – and will influence the openness to leftist, class and socialist ideas among layers of the working class and middle class in both national groups. The political earthquake represented by the Sanders campaign in the US is already a certain point of reference.

1.55. The advancement of principled collaborations between left political forces could help to begin to get over the lack of a political force based on the working class in both national groups, and to help begin to put a socialist alternative on the agenda at the countrywide level.

1.56. On both sides of the Green Line there is a need for political organising on an independent class basis, the organising of broad parties which will express the plight and vital interests of the working class, and

will advance a struggle around a socialist programme in order to propose a way out of the bloody conflict, of the national oppression of the Palestinians and of Israeli capitalism.

1.57. The Socialist Struggle Movement is fully committed to a struggle on the basis of a class and internationalist approach for a socialist change, and we have full confidence in the potential of socialist and Marxist ideas to convince and win support on both sides of the national divide.

A strategy for the national and social liberation of the Palestinian masses (Part 1)

*Resolution passed by the Congress of the Belgian section
7-9 February 2025*

2.1. Since 7 October 2023, following the Hamas attack, the genocide of the Palestinian people has entered a new phase. According to the Hamas Ministry of Health, at least 46,000 people died, including more than 18,000 children. But these figures are far lower than the reality. This is according to The Lancet, which estimates that the number of deaths is underestimated by 41%. The Lancet indicated that the real number of deaths in Gaza could be higher than 186,000 if indirect deaths, notably due to famine and lack of health care, were taken into account.

2.2. After 15 months of genocide, a ceasefire agreement has been reached between Hamas and the Israeli state. The agreement, which normally comprises three phases, stipulates that Hamas will release 33 Israeli prisoners, including all women (soldiers and civilians), children (under 19) and men over 50. In exchange, Israel will release 30 Palestinian prisoners for every civilian hostage released and 50 Palestinian prisoners for every Israeli soldier released by Hamas. The number of Palestinians released will depend on the number of hostages released and could be between 990 and 1650 detainees.

2.3. Although the ceasefire agreement

represents relief and respite for Palestinians living in Gaza, it does not mean an end to the colonial war or to the genocide. In the short term, the Israeli state could sabotage the ceasefire agreement once all the hostages have been released by Hamas, and resume its genocidal offensive. Furthermore, even if the agreement were respected, a return to the status quo offers no solution for the Palestinians, particularly as the Israeli government intends to continue its settlement policy. The state has built more than 700 settlements beyond the "green line" in 50 years, and violent raids by settlers on Palestinian villages have increased since the genocide began. There can be no peace as long as the colonisation, apartheid and massacres committed by the Israeli state continue.

2.4. With the ceasefire, the movement's immediate demand for solidarity with the Palestinian people has been met. This does not necessarily mean that the movement will run out of steam. The question of what strategy for genuine national liberation will become central to the movement. This underlines the need for revolutionary organisations to be able to present the movement with a programme capable of achieving this

objective.

2.5. In order to play a role in the struggle for Palestinian national and social liberation, the organisation must be able to question some of our traditions. The international movement has placed the Palestinian question in a global perspective, refocusing Palestine in the global political debate and avoiding falling back into the trap of the Oslo peace process. The two-state rhetoric was denounced, while Israeli domination of the whole of historic Palestine was exposed. By integrating the situation of refugees and Palestinians from 1948, the movement gave a wider resonance to the Palestinian struggle. The solidarity movement with Palestine does not limit solidarity to the Palestinian question alone, but also expresses a broader anti-colonial consciousness. Solidarity with the peoples of Sudan and eastern Congo are good examples.

2.6. The party must now review all its positions on the Palestinian national question, particularly on the following issues:

- Analysis of the Israeli state, Zionism and apartheid, as well as the position of "two socialist states in a socialist federation in the Middle East".
- The role we assign to the Israeli working class and labour movement.
- Our approach to the Palestinian resistance, and to the movement in support of Palestine more generally.

What Israeli working class are we talking out? The working class in Palestine-Israel and its composition

2.7. Our organisation differs from the majority of revolutionary organisations that support the national liberation of the Palestinian people in that it gives the Israeli working class an important role. It relies on the class fractures present within Israeli society, and hopes that these fractures will create the basis for a union of the Palestinian and Israeli masses against the Israeli bourgeoisie and its state, as well as against the Palestinian bourgeois or reactionary forces; within the framework of a regional and international struggle against the capitalist mode of production as a whole.

2.8. The key factor in the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinian people is clearly not the Israeli Jewish working class, but the strategy of exploiting the class contradictions within Israeli Jewish society remains relevant. While the Israeli working class enjoys very significant material advantages over the Palestinian working class, there remains a fundamental relationship of exploitation between workers and bosses, as in all capitalist societies. Moreover, the Zionist state has clearly not kept its promise of security for the Jews, since any security based on a system of apartheid and repression will also be temporary and illusory.

2.9. However, bringing this perspective forward today also means honestly acknowledging the extent of racist,

chauvinist and genocidal feelings within Israeli Jewish society, including the working class. These feelings are worse than they have perhaps ever been. To take just one example, a recent survey found that 52% of Jewish Israelis fully supported Trump's plan to ethnically cleanse Gaza, while 30% considered it "not practical, but desirable". Only 3% described the plan as "immoral". The Palestinian movement, whether in the region or the international solidarity movement, should not try to adapt to the current consciousness of Israeli Jewish workers. On the contrary, it must openly question it.

2.10. The Israeli working class is not a monolithic bloc, but a heterogeneous whole made up of Jewish workers, indigenous workers with Israeli citizenship, and workers from the West Bank and Gaza, with or without work permits. The material living conditions of these different strata are radically unequal. Major sectors of the Israeli economy draw on a workforce from the West Bank and Gaza. This workforce, regulated by the Israeli administration through the allocation of movement and work permits, compensates for the shortage of Israeli labour depending on the economic situation and for specific sectors of activity (mainly construction, agriculture and catering). For example, during the Israeli economic recession from 1973 to 1976, while the Israeli unemployment rate remained stable, the number of Palestinian workers fell considerably.

2.11. The state issues these permits through a quota system, and many applicants are excluded. Those who do obtain a permit face daily challenges,

including long waits at border crossings, strict security checks and exhausting journeys. 19,000 Palestinians in Gaza are in this situation. These workers are employed in particularly arduous, dangerous and physically demanding jobs where there is a shortage of Israeli labour, such as construction, agriculture and manufacturing. There is also an internal division in the workplace between Arab and Jewish workers, in which Palestinian workers are the least well paid and the most exploited.

2.12. The small proportion of workers who obtain a work permit have no legal recourse or medical cover and work in sectors with a high accident risk. They are often mistreated by employers who know full well that Palestinian workers do not enjoy the most basic rights and protections.

2.13. Apart from the economic advantages of using such a workforce, it is also an effective way of monitoring this population. To obtain a work permit in Israel or in the settlements, a Palestinian from the West Bank or Gaza must ensure that their file is approved by the Israeli military administration. They and their close relatives must not take part in any trade union or political activity deemed hostile to the occupation. Families, and sometimes entire villages, are thus careful not to be the subject of any "security ban" so as not to be deprived of an Israeli work permit.

2.14. In this context, working in Palestine and being a trade unionist in Palestine means being constantly confronted with a double constraint: that of the daily struggle for a wage, for a job, but it also means doing

so in very specific conditions: those of occupation and colonisation. In the post-7 October situation, resources are blocked by Israel and as a result wages are not paid. The struggle for the right to a salary and a job takes on a particular meaning.

2.15. These constraints due to colonisation, occupation and apartheid are specific to Palestinian workers. Israeli Jewish workers have completely different material conditions, which has implications for the way in which they organise their struggles, particularly in terms of demands. The Israeli workers' movement has never integrated the demands of Palestinian workers living and/or working inside the "green line". On the contrary, the main organisations of the Israeli workers' movement have historically been built on the dispossession, exploitation and extermination of the Palestinian people.

2.16. The post-war Keynesian model - fuelled by donations from Zionist sympathisers around the world, from imperialist countries and supported by German reparations - ran into hyperinflation in the 1970s, as it did in many capitalist countries. From 1985 onwards, the Israeli capitalist state - partly under pressure from the Reagan administration in the United States - decided to switch to neo-liberal policies of privatisation, wage moderation and deregulation.

2.17. While in the 1970s the Israeli state was still trying to integrate Palestinian workers as an over-exploited and discriminated layer, the neo-liberal turn reinforces the trend towards the marginalisation of Palestinian workers,

coupled with continuing waves of immigration from the former Soviet Union and other parts of the world.

2.18. The neo-liberal decline is affecting not only Palestinians, but also the Israeli Jewish working class. Neo-liberal policies are leading to a decline in purchasing power, partly because of the high cost of housing. Israel is the second most unequal country in the OECD and spends the least on its social security system, partly because of the high price paid for the policies of military occupation.

2.19. According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, 53% of Palestinian families were living in poverty in 2023. Among the Jewish population, the figure was 18%. This reflects not only the enormous marginalisation, discrimination and over-exploitation of Palestinians, but also a relatively high level of poverty among Jewish families in Israel (higher than poverty among the white working class in Belgium). According to a study carried out in 2022, around a third of Holocaust survivors in Israel were living in poverty.

The Israeli workers' movement: a movement with colonial and Zionist origins

2.20. The dominant trend in Zionism for most of the twentieth century was "Labour Zionism". Unlike the "political Zionist" trend founded by Theodor Herzl and advocated by Chaim Weizmann, Labour Zionists did not believe that a Jewish state could be created simply by appealing to the international community or to a powerful imperialist power, such as the United Kingdom. On the

contrary, Labour Zionists believed that a Jewish state could only be created through the settlement efforts of a Jewish working class in Palestine. It is this "left" Zionist movement that will produce the frameworks and structures of the future Israeli state, not the theocratic right.

2.21. At the origin of this trend was Poale Zion (Workers of Zion), which was supposedly inspired by Marxism. The emergence of Poale Zion marked a fundamental break with the Jewish Marxist tradition. Whereas before, Jewish liberation could only come about in the diaspora, through class struggle and the advent of socialism, it is now impossible to envisage Jewish emancipation without the formation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

2.22. In October 1906, Poale Zion, then renamed the "Party of Jewish Social Democratic Workers in Israel", held its congress in Jaffa. David Ben-Gurion, the central figure of the future Israeli state, chaired the sessions. At this congress, he defended a line hostile to collaboration between Jewish and Palestinian workers. On the contrary, he argued that the Arab and Jewish economies should be segregated. He justified his position by pointing out that it was necessary to combat the Arab labour force then employed in the Jewish settlements, as it was cheaper than the labour force of Jewish settlers. To convince the landowners, he argued that although Jewish labour was more expensive than Arab labour, it would offer a better return on investment in the long term. This was because Jewish labour was "more intelligent and industrious". He added that this policy would foster a sense of national

belonging, enabling the Zionist movement to transcend class divisions.

2.23. At the end of the congress, Ben-Gurion was elected to the party's central committee and immediately launched a campaign to exclude Palestinian workers from the land held by the Jewish National Fund (a body of the Zionist movement founded in Basel in 1901 to manage the purchase of land in Palestine). This initiative marked the first stage of the "socialist" Zionist project of *Kibbush Ha'avoda* ("conquest of labour"), which called for the "dictatorship of the Hebrew proletariat".

2.24. When it became clear that the Jewish settlers had no intention of cohabiting with the indigenous populations, but rather of replacing them, the Palestinian people began an anti-colonial struggle against Zionism and the British occupiers. As in many other cases of resistance to colonialism, this struggle often took the form of violent armed combat.

2.25. Between 1936 and 1939, there was a massive anti-colonial uprising which began with violent action by an Arab militia, resulting in a few casualties among the Jewish settlers, followed by equally deadly action by a Zionist militia. This action led to a vast strike movement and the creation of National Committees in the towns to develop the movement.

2.26. The wealthy Palestinian families who led the nationalist movement placed themselves at the head of this strike movement, collecting money for the strikers, but also pushing for a policy of reconciliation with the British occupying forces.

2.27. This is the same Palestinian elite that provided civil servants and occupied positions in the state apparatus under the Ottoman Empire. These wealthy families played a similar role in the 1920s and 1930s, under the British occupation, which encouraged Zionist colonisation. They are said to have organised the nationalist resistance, but this did not stop the same wealthy strata from secretly selling land to Zionist settlers.

2.28. In response, the Jewish Social Democratic Workers' Party in Israel created the Hashomer, a Jewish militia to defend the settlers. At the time, the settlers were very explicit about their aim of driving out the Palestinians and taking over their land. This rhetoric of "self-defence" remains, even today, a central tool of the Israeli state to justify both the genocide of Palestinians and the expansion of Israeli borders and settlements.

2.29. Following the Jaffa Congress, the Jewish National Fund continued its expansion. The strategy consisted of buying up land from landowners - who often did not even live in Palestine - before expelling Palestinian workers and replacing them with Jewish workers. It was on this despoiled land that the famous "kibbutzim" were built. The supposedly collectivist and pseudo-socialist utopia of the kibbutzim was built on the expropriation of the Palestinians.

2.30. Poale Zion split in 1919-1920, following a similar division to that which had occurred within the Workers' International. The right wing, led by Ben-Gurion, formed Ahdut HaAvoda (Labour Unity) and

opposed affiliation to the Comintern, preferring a rapprochement with the Second International.

2.31. Left-wing splits from Poale Zion founded the Palestinian Communist Party in 1923. Initially, the leadership was made up almost exclusively of Jewish activists and intellectuals. The Comintern leadership was wary of an exclusively Jewish organisation and asked the PCP to fight against Zionist dispossession and to change the social composition of the party.

2.32. The PCP organised groups of Jewish and Palestinian workers on the basis of the industrialisation that accompanied the creation of the territory under British mandate. At the end of the 1920s, it organised unions uniting Jewish and Arab workers under Stalinist leadership. During the anti-colonial strike movement of 1936-1939, the PCP uncritically followed the nationalist Palestinian leaders who inhibited the movement, without proposing an independent class policy.

2.33. Ahdut HaAvoda replaced the Hashomer with a more structured and sophisticated military force: the Haganah (Defence). Trained by the British, this new military organisation would later become Tsahal, Israel's "Defence" Forces. The rise of the Haganah was a response to the intensification of Palestinian resistance to the occupation, hence the need for an armed force capable of maintaining and imposing the occupation regime by force.

2.34. In 1920, the same year that the Haganah was founded, the General Federation of Workers in the Land of Israel, known as Histadrut, was created. Histadrut

was distinguished by its central role in the Jewish colonisation project in Palestine. Its main objective was to establish a Jewish national home, an essential condition for achieving the "conquest of labour". This institution is therefore part of a colonial logic rather than a perspective of defending workers' rights.

2.35. To achieve this objective, the Histadrut set about actively destroying unions such as the railway, post and telegraph unions, which brought together Palestinian Jewish and Arab workers. Although there were socialist currents favourable to the joint organisation of Jewish and Arab workers, these were liquidated in 1926. The dominant trend remained that of Jewish nationalism, where the Histadrut's main enemy was not the employers, but the Palestinians.

2.36. Within the Jewish left and the trade union movement in Mandatory Palestine, there were groups and individuals (comparatively few) who opposed Zionism and sought genuine solidarity with Palestinian workers. There were also important examples of united struggle between Jewish and Palestinian workers, including the 1946 general strike. These examples of unity always met with hostility from the leadership of the Zionist Labour organisation and were never strong enough to break the hold of that leadership over the majority of the Jewish working class in Palestine. For real and lasting unity to emerge, it would have taken more than a simple common struggle over wages and working conditions, but also a rejection of Zionism on the part of Jewish workers, since the Zionist project was correctly

understood by Arab workers as implying their dispossession and subordination.

2.37. Planned and structured discrimination, similar to that of apartheid, permeated the Histadrut's actions. In 1927, Haïm Arzlosoroff, a Zionist Labour leader and collaborator of the Nazi regime, proposed that Zionism should be inspired by the South African ban on people of colour, which excluded black workers from skilled union jobs. As a result, Palestinian workers were prevented from organising within the Histadrut.

2.38. Histadrut's aim was to "educate" the Jewish proletariat in manual labour so that they could "become" Israelis. The aim was not to fight the bosses, but on the contrary to advocate class collaboration, which was seen as essential to the unity of the Jewish nation. As a result, the Histadrut functioned as a yellow trade union.

- *"The socialist regime and the commune can have no interest for us in this country if those who apply them are not Jewish workers. We did not come here to organise anyone, and we are not here to spread the socialist idea to anyone. We are here to establish a homeland of work for the Jewish people"* (Lutte Ouvrière, David Ben-Gourion quoted in *Israël - Après la victoire du Hamas et avant les élections du 28 mars*, 2006).

2.39. As soon as it was founded, the union integrated the Haganah. The Histadrut became a key driving force behind the colonisation of Palestine. It established itself as a key organisation in all aspects of the settlers' daily lives, acting as a veritable government in the making. All the functions

characteristic of a modern state were already established there, which enabled the future Israeli state to immediately equip itself with a highly effective administrative and operational structure.

2.40. The Histadrut ran a colossal economic empire, including agricultural colonies, transport cooperatives, and industrial, commercial and financial establishments, all dedicated to creating exclusively Jewish economic enclaves. The union went so far as to recruit "labour guards", who visited building sites and factories to intimidate employers and workers. They used threats to demand that Arab workers be replaced by Jewish settlers.

2.41. In 1930, under the supervision of the Histadrut, Ahdut HaAvoda merged with another pseudo-socialist party, Hapoel Hatzair (The Young Worker) to form Mapai (Workers' Party in the Land of Israel), again led by David Ben-Gurion. Mapai quickly became the dominant force in Israeli politics, responsible for the Nakba, the occupation and apartheid, until it was transformed into HaAvoda (Israeli Workers' Party) in 1968, where it retained a major influence in occupation policy. On 30 November 2024, the party merged with Meretz to become "The Democrats".

2.42. Histadrut still represents the majority of Israeli workers, with almost one million members. It remains actively involved in the colonisation and apartheid process. In particular, Histadrut collects social security contributions from Palestinians working in the territories controlled by the Israeli state, even though

these contributions should theoretically go to the Palestinian trade unions. These contributions, withheld by Histadrut, are not always redistributed to Palestinian workers.

2.43. From the founding of Poale Zion to Mapai and then the Israeli Workers' Party, via the Kibbutz, Histadrut, Hashomer and Haganah, the Israeli workers' movement and "socialist" Zionism have shaped every aspect of Israeli society. This movement, in close collaboration with a "liberal" Zionist bourgeoisie, organised the colonisation and occupation, as well as the economy, finance, culture and education. It also structured the state and the army. It was only in the last period, under the influence of neo-liberalism, that the workers' movement saw its influence diminish, giving way to right-wing and far-right forces such as Likud. The rise of Likud must also be understood in the light of the war in Lebanon in 1982, the political failures of the Labour Party in the negotiations, and the strategic errors of the PLO.

2.44. As it stands, the Israeli workers' movement is incapable of playing a leading role in the liberation of the Palestinians, let alone in the establishment of a socialist society. Until the Israeli masses renounce Zionism and colonial society as a whole, there can be no lasting alliance between the Palestinian masses and the Jewish workers of Israel. In this sense, Zionist "socialism" is an aberration. Zionism is the particular form of capitalism in Israel. Just as there can be no anti-racist racists or anti-fascist fascists, there can be no socialist Zionism

2.45. At the same time, struggles that

organise Jewish and Palestinian workers together or bring Jewish workers and oppressed people into conflict with their own ruling class can play a positive role, opening up the possibility for sections of Israeli Jewish workers to break with Zionism - even if this is not their starting point. However, this potential is unlikely to be realised unless there are political forces that put forward a bold programme explaining the need for a total break with Zionism, apartheid and colonialism for the Israeli Jewish working class.

Mobilisation against judicial reform

2.46. Contemporary social mobilisations in Israel continue to ignore the colonial nature of society and the state. This is particularly true of the mobilisations against Netanyahu's judicial reform, which are widely promoted by the organisation, notably in the newspaper's publications and internally, to highlight a climate of political instability and fragility in Netanyahu's government that the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023 is said to have interrupted and consigned to oblivion.

2.47. Although a small minority of demonstrators brandished demands or slogans against the occupation, the vast majority of this movement did not voice any criticism of the government's policy of colonisation and apartheid. Threats by Israeli reservists to stop their military service - which often consists of committing war crimes - have only served to exert pressure in favour of a victory against judicial reform. In this way, the survival of the Palestinians and the

maintenance of oppression in the occupied territories have been used as a lever for blackmail to guarantee better living conditions or more democratic rights for Israeli citizens.

2.48. These demonstrations took place within a colonial consensus firmly rooted in Zionism, whether authoritarian or liberal. They were encouraged, even directed, by the liberal opposition to Netanyahu's government and are part of a wider dynamic of attacks against the government, led by another current of the Israeli bourgeoisie, opposed to the government.

2.49. Broadly speaking, Israel is based on two bourgeoisies: the first, associated with cutting-edge technologies, the military-industrial complex and a "liberal" establishment; the second, linked to colonial expansion. Although their borders are porous, the first bourgeoisie, dependent on international economic exchanges, is concerned about Israel's image abroad. Faced with a government that is multiplying its racist excesses and weakening the institutions of "Jewish democracy", this economic and military elite has taken the lead in the protests, seeking to promote a different image of Israel, one that is supposedly committed to freedoms.

2.50. For the first time, it was the descendants of the former dominant pole of the Israeli bourgeoisie who supported these demonstrations. Senior members of the state apparatus, leading military figures and figures from the Israeli bourgeoisie found themselves in the camp opposing the government.

2.51. The apparatchiks supervising

military activities in the occupied territories formed the hard core of the movement and played a crucial role in the opposition bloc to the government. Coming from an Ashkenazi (European Jewish) elite, they see Netanyahu's reforms as a frontal attack on their dominant positions within the state: not only in the security apparatus, but also in financial institutions, the judiciary and academia. This liberal bourgeoisie believes that the reforms would weaken its historic hold on these levers of power while strengthening a protest coalition of Orthodox Jews, settlers and Mizrahi (Eastern Jewish) supporters affiliated to Likud and the second bourgeois bloc, who aim to make Israel more religious, nationalist and expansionist. In the eyes of this liberal bourgeoisie, the triumph of this coalition would represent a threat to their secular way of life, compromise the security of the State and further tarnish its image on the international stage.

2.52. The image conveyed by the Western media, which described these mobilisations as an attempt to save democracy, is profoundly misleading. The movement was not about protecting the rights of minorities, let alone those of Palestinians on either side of the Green Line. During the first hundred days of the new Netanyahu government, while secular Israeli Jews were demonstrating to preserve their so-called democracy, nearly a hundred Palestinians, including many children, were killed by the Israeli armed forces. These murders were not mentioned in the speeches at the demonstrations.

2.53. However, these killings, like the pogrom in the Palestinian town of Huwara in

February 2023, motivated some young people to join this movement against Netanyahu's racist regime. The few Palestinian flags flying alongside Israeli flags were quickly removed by the other demonstrators. These Palestinian flags often came from the youngest demonstrators. All they know about Israel is Netanyahu's regime, where LGBTQIA+ and women's rights are under constant attack. Among a layer of radicalised youth, this means a much more developed understanding of the intersection between the struggle for democratic rights and the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

2.54. For the Zionist opposition, whether from the Labour Party or aligned with leaders Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid, the urgency was to "safeguard democracy". "This is not the place for purist arguments", said former Labour MP Stav Shaffir in a tweet. By advocating the defence of "democracy" while ignoring abuses, these protests revealed Israel's fundamental paradox: a state that claims to be both democratic, guaranteeing equality for all, while at the same time giving supremacy to Jewish identity and interests to the detriment of non-Jews. Israel cannot be democratic and a Zionist apartheid regime at the same time.

2.55. The party has systematically overstated the positive elements of these mobilisations, while dismissing the reactionary aspects. Although the mobilisations in Israel may play a significant role, they are not necessarily a sign of a break between the bourgeoisie and the Israeli working class. Consequently, it is wrong to say that one of the negative

aspects of 7 October is that it put an end to mobilisation.

2.56. It is true that one of the aims of the right-wing attack on the Supreme Court was to pave the way for the circumvention of the minor restrictions that the Supreme Court had sometimes imposed on the oppression of Palestinians by the Israeli state. It would be normal for Marxists based in the State of Israel to participate in these demonstrations, but with policies that put the oppression of the Palestinian people first. Nevertheless, the Palestinian masses would never join a movement based on the blind defence of a "democracy" which colonises, despoils and enslaves them. How would the Palestinians enter this struggle?

2.57. The starting point for solidarity between Israeli and Palestinian Jewish workers is the need to challenge the racist and chauvinist consciousness, a direct consequence of colonisation, which currently prevails very widely in the Israeli Jewish working class, as it is by far the greatest obstacle to the development of such unity. It is a mistake if, in the name of a united struggle, we deny or diminish the reality of this reactionary consciousness.

Apartheid

2.58. Some members of the organisation have frequently contested the use of the term "apartheid" to describe Israeli society, arguing that the existence of a working class in Israel is proof of a different reality. According to this position, Israeli society cannot be likened to South Africa under apartheid, where white settlers formed a bourgeois elite that economically

dominated the black population. The presence of a Jewish working class in Palestine-Israel would thus mark a major distinction from the South African regime, where the white population as a whole enjoyed a dominant position.

2.59. Apartheid in South Africa was based on the exploitation of black labour in the service of the white ruling class. The white bourgeoisie maintained its domination through direct control of the economy, natural resources and systematic exploitation of the black working class. Internal struggles, particularly trade union struggles, disrupted the profitability of capital and weighed on the economy. In Palestine-Israel, on the other hand, the Palestinian working class is largely undervalued. Israel has largely managed to do without Palestinian labour, thanks to economic globalisation and the management of "surplus populations". Despite the use of Palestinian workers in many sectors, the main objective of the Israeli ruling class's policy towards Palestinians has been displacement rather than over-exploitation.

2.60. But apartheid is not defined in terms of the class nature of the dominant group. The existence of a Jewish Israeli working class is therefore not a relevant factor in characterising apartheid. What characterises apartheid is the institutionalisation of racial oppression: one dominant group imposes its supremacy on another through a legal system of segregation. In the case of Israel, state laws and policies are designed to ensure the domination of the Jewish Israeli population over the Palestinian population.

2.61. This domination is exercised not only in the occupied territories and illegal settlements, such as Gaza, but also within the "green line", where Palestinians who are citizens of Israel reside. Israeli policies in the occupied territories include strict population and spatial control measures, such as checkpoints and movement restrictions for Palestinians. These policies have led to a fragmentation of the Palestinian territory and a restriction of the rights of the populations concerned.

2.62. One hundred and twenty-two years after Herzl published *The State of the Jews*, a further step was taken with the adoption, on 19 July 2018, of a fundamental law with constitutional force passed by the Israeli parliament. Entitled "Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People", this law openly endorses a system of apartheid. Article 1 stipulates: "The exercise of the right to national self-determination in the State of Israel is reserved for the Jewish people", a right denied to Palestinians who are citizens and residents of the same State, but granted to a Jew living on the other side of the world.

2.63. According to this law, the State's resources must be used exclusively for the benefit of the Jewish majority. This principle is directly reflected in Netanyahu's government programme, which states that the Jewish people have "an inalienable and exclusive right to all parts of the Land of Israel". This programme explicitly includes the development of settlements in "Galilee, the Negev, the Golan Heights and Judea Samaria".

2.64. This discriminatory approach was also recently reflected in an amendment to

the Law on Nationality and Entry into Israel, adopted on 15 February 2023. This revision makes it easier to deprive Palestinians of their nationality and permanent resident status, which risks rendering some of them stateless.

2.65. Also, by stating that "Hebrew is the language of the State of Israel", this law strips Arabic of its status as an official language, granting it only a "special status to be determined at a later date". This decision is part of a wider process of cultural marginalisation aimed at erasing any form of institutional recognition of the Arabic language, which remains the mother tongue of the majority of Palestinians living in Israel and the occupied territories.

2.66. In this respect, some comrades are trying, in a spirit of comparison, to draw parallels between this situation and the cultural erasure of Amazigh or Tamazight in the face of the Arabic language. Palestinian Arabic represents a form of resistance against a colonial project aimed at erasing all traces of Palestinian identity. To set this linguistic oppression against others is to ignore the intersectional dimensions of the struggles: each oppression is shaped by specific historical, geopolitical and social features, which makes any attempt at hierarchisation futile.

2.67. The violence against these "second-class citizens" stems from the contradictions inherent in Zionism, a project aimed at establishing a "State of the Jews" in a territory largely populated by non-Jews. This ethno-nationalist model justifies the adoption of discriminatory laws conferring rights and privileges on the

Jewish population, while denying Palestinians living in the same territory access to the same rights. Apartheid is rooted in this racial hierarchy.

2.68. In short, the fact that Palestinians are subjected to mobility restrictions, land confiscations, discriminatory laws and separate management of their economic and social rights amounts to a regime of apartheid. The Israeli case certainly has some notable differences with South Africa, notably the genocidal nature of the occupation. While South African apartheid was based on the use of military and police force to repress all opposition, it focused mainly on marginalising the black population, confining them to areas often deprived of resources and economic opportunities, in order to maintain a relationship of dependence. On the other hand, the Israeli occupation went further by imposing genocidal policies, aspects that have no direct equivalent in the South African context.

2.69. Thus, ignoring the reality of apartheid has not only weakened our link with the movement, but has also led to major political errors. It has obscured the centrality of colonial domination to the class struggle in Palestine-Israel. Massacres, forced displacements and strategies of systematic destruction, such as those seen in Gaza in 2023-2024, go beyond racial segregation and are part of a genocidal project.

The question of two socialist states in a socialist federation in the Middle East

2.70. For years, our international, and therefore the PSL, has defended the solution of two socialist states. The old position put forward a socialist Palestine and a socialist Israel. This went hand in hand with our pride in having a section in Israel-Palestine, making us the only Trotskyist organisation to have a presence there. We argued that this position was the only one that could be understood by the Israeli working class, which was seen as a key element in the liberation of Palestine. This analysis was then extrapolated to the whole of our international in order to maintain a coherent programme,—often coupled with the false idea that the same slogans and the same presentation of ideas were necessary in different countries and situations.

2.71. The basic position of socialists must be full equality from river to sea for Palestinians and Jews; this means no Zionist state and the right of return for Palestinian refugees, which, if implemented, would mean a significant demographic majority of Palestinians over Jews in the region and has therefore always been rejected by all sections of the Israeli ruling class. For socialists, it is necessary to reject the Israeli state as a state based on institutionalised racism, as well as Zionism in its entirety.

2.72. The expression "socialist Israel" is inappropriate, particularly in a context of genocide, pervasive policies of occupation, as in the West Bank, and the total

destruction of the population and infrastructure in Gaza. The fundamental problem with this position, however socialist it may claim to be, lies in the fact that the structuring institutions of Israeli society cannot be dissociated from its colonial character. Today - and this should probably have been the case even before the genocide in Gaza - we should be putting more emphasis on the fact that the region would be radically different after a socialist revolution and the overthrow of capitalism. The term "Israel" expresses a continuity of borders that we should avoid.

2.73. A socialist transformation in the region would have a significant effect on the Jewish-Israeli working class. Even more pronounced than the enthusiasm of the Jewish working class when the Mubarak dictatorship in Egypt was overthrown by mass mobilisations in 2011.

2.74. This will need to be accompanied by the building of a revolutionary force in Israel that advocates higher wages and benefits for all, whatever their origin. This force should also defend workers' control and management of big business and banks and advocate equal rights for Palestinians. It should propose a revolutionary conference with democratically elected representatives of Palestinian workers and oppressed people - from all over historic Palestine, including, for example, elected representatives of Palestinian refugees from other countries - to discuss the right to self-determination of Palestinian workers and their families and, at the same time, that of the Israeli working class.

2.75. Ultimately, an analysis of the nature

of Zionism can only lead to one conclusion: we support the dismantling of the capitalist and Zionist Israeli state. We stand for absolute freedom for the Palestinian people and an end to the system of oppression, where some live under colonial rule while others enjoy racial privilege. Our position must be aimed at breaking this system of apartheid, guaranteeing the rights of the Palestinian people and creating the conditions for Palestinians and Jews to live together on this land.

The importance of words

2.76. After the attack and massacres of 7 October, the organisation referred to Hamas and the Israeli State as back to back, in effect equating State terrorism with that of Hamas. Even if the organisation did not explicitly formulate this position, the material used, and in particular the slogan "Solidarity with all victims of war, terrorism and State terrorism". Subsequently, our organisation refused for several months to use the term "genocide" to describe the Zionist state's attacks on Gaza. These imprecisions in the choice of words to describe the events were critical political errors.

2.77. The focus on terrorism ignores the political context in which we live. Although the actions of Hamas may be terrorist acts in the traditional Marxist sense of the term, the word is now used by the white media bourgeoisie to discredit any form of resistance to imperialism, particularly in relation to the Palestinian struggle. More generally, the term helps to stimulate an Islamophobic atmosphere.

2.78. A striking example is the

accusations and convictions for "apologie du terrorisme" in France, targeting people like Rima Hassan, and more recently, Anasse Kazib, as well as other supporters of the Palestinian cause. This illustrates how the dominant Israeli discourse and that of its Western allies systematically incorporate this vocabulary into their media propaganda and legal arsenal. Their objective is obvious: to systematically associate any form of Palestinian resistance, or indeed any Palestinian individual, with terrorism.

2.79. Similarly, our reluctance to use the terms "genocide" or "apartheid" reflects our fear of offending the Israeli working class, heirs to the collective trauma of the Shoah, as well as a sensitivity to the prevailing media discourse, a consequence of our lack of attention to these issues. The refusal to use this word, which is justified because any colonial project based on settlements necessarily leads to genocide, is also due to the concessions made to the Israeli section during the debates within the ASI.

The Palestinian flag: an anti-colonial symbol

2.80. Ever since the Palestine solidarity movement took off, opposition to the use of the Palestinian flag and other symbols of the movement, such as the watermelon, has arisen within our organisation. This reticence is often based on the idea that this flag is also used by the Palestinian Authority (PA), masking class contradictions. However, such a perception betrays a profound disconnection with the Palestinian masses, for whom this flag embodies above all resistance to colonial

oppression, Zionism and imperialism.

2.81. Our position cannot be limited to abstract pacifism or moralistic criticism. This is not an inter-imperialist war, but a colonial confrontation, where solidarity must translate into unequivocal support for the victory of the oppressed people against their oppressor. Although the new Cold War is influencing recent events, it is not the dominant feature of this historic confrontation. We condemn, of course, the PA as an instrument of collaboration with Zionism. However, to confuse this institution with the Palestinian flag is a major error, which weakens our commitment to the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people.

2.82. By refusing to use the Palestinian flag and other Palestinian symbols, we claimed to know better than the masses what this symbol represented. Our role as a revolutionary party is clear: to support anti-imperialist struggles while going beyond the narrow confines of nationalism. The Palestinian flag must be reappropriated for what it really represents: a symbol of collective resistance, bearing the hope and dignity of the Palestinian people.

On the resistance of the Palestinian people

2.83. To refine this support it is necessary to carry out an analysis of the balance of power within the resistance. This is why it was agreed within the CoCom to postpone the analysis of a Marxist approach to guerrilla warfare and the Palestinian resistance until the next session of the congress. To tackle this question, it will be

crucial to restore the historical complexity of the Palestinian resistance. This postponement will allow for a more complete reflection, based on a rigorous study of Palestinian resistance and the links between past dynamics and current events.

Conclusion

2.84. In voting for this resolution, we declare that :

2.85. The recognition of errors of evaluation in the analysis of the composition of the working class in Israel, and of overestimation of the role that can be played by the Israeli workers' movement without breaking with Zionism. The organisation should launch a publication to present our position and explain the corrections made to it. Consideration should also be given to adding a warning to articles and publications that have presented inappropriate positions.

2.86. Clear and unequivocal recognition and condemnation of the genocide of the Palestinian people perpetrated by the State of Israel in Gaza and the maintenance of an apartheid regime throughout the territories controlled by the Israeli state, both inside the Green Line and in the settlements. Class solidarity requires an anti-colonial struggle and recognition of the racism of Israeli society from its inception and in its very institutions.

2.87. Recognition of the centrality of colonialism, including settlement colonialism, in the class struggle in Palestine-Israel. This centrality of the colonial fact must be highlighted in our public material, and must be a priority in the

party's programme, particularly as regards the struggle against the apartheid regime.

2.88. The abandonment of the old demand for two socialist states in Palestine-Israel.

2.89. An end to the use of the term terrorist in public material to describe any act of anti-colonial resistance in Palestine.

2.90. Support, not condemnation, of the use of the Palestinian flag, both in our publications and at demonstrations, for those comrades who wish to do so.

2.91. The approach to be adopted towards Jewish workers living in Israel is to convince those elements of the Israeli working class who can be won over to an internationalist approach to assist the resistance of the Palestinian proletariat, even if this resistance is violent. These elements must also fight for the rights of Palestinian workers and against the apartheid . These are necessary conditions for the liberation of the working class in Israel.

2.92. The organisation's support for the resistance of the Palestinian people, including armed resistance. We also affirm the need to continue discussions on this issue, and to put it to the vote at the next session of Congress.

Political situation Israel-Palestine

Response of eleven comrades to resolution proposed for the Congress of the Belgian section 7-9 February 2025

The purpose of this text is to provide a brief response to the circulation of the resolution on Israel-Palestine as part of the February session of Congress.

3.1. For fifteen months, the war waged by Israel took on historic proportions. Unlike past operations, Netanyahu's war government today seems determined to wage a war of extermination against Palestinians in Gaza. The announced fight to the death against Hamas involves the crushing of the entire Palestinian civil society, through the deliberate organization of a genocide, in full view of the entire world and with the greatest impunity.

Against whom should we fight?

3.2. This war of extermination is unfortunately just another episode in the extreme national oppression of millions of Palestinians by the Israeli capitalist regime. In recent decades, this regime has ignored the democratic rights of all communities in its path, including those of neighboring nation-states, and resorted to occupation as a last resort to establish its regional domination.

3.3. In doing so, the nature of the Israeli regime (even beyond Netanyahu's government) is deeply colonialist and also integrates a policy of segregation close to

apartheid. However, this colonialism has a special feature compared to other colonial processes of capitalism: there is no mother nation outside of Israel itself. It is crucial to consider this aspect in order to make credible demands and not get lost in a "copy-paste" logic.

3.4. Moreover, this colonialism also masks an additional social contradiction: Israel is also constructed as a class society, within which an elite lives off the labor of an immense majority, particularly the Israeli working class, which is composed primarily of Jewish workers. This also limits the comparison to the apartheid regime, where the systematic exploitation of South Africans was carried out by a white elite and where the white working class was (and is) only a small minority within the entire working class in the country.

3.5. Does the specific history of the state of Israel make the working class irreversibly subservient to the ruling class? We must not lose sight of the fact that the development process of capitalism in the "advanced" capitalist countries has systematically resulted in the construction of nation-states around the new dominant class of society, and that one of the tasks of the dominant class has been to form the social class it wants to exploit: the working class. Throughout history, the bourgeoisie

has done everything possible to “buy” social democratic leaders to maneuver and betray the labor movement, to win it over, to divert its political attention. This process is not unique to Israel. Does this mean that the working class is subservient to its ruling class for eternity, especially for all countries with a colonial history?

3.6. The Israeli working class, regardless of religion or ethnicity, has no interest in war. Last September, a general strike in Israel was accompanied by mass mobilizations (300,000 people), not explicitly to demand an end to the war, but to demand a cease-fire to secure the release of hostages. The war policy of the Netanyahu government, which ignores the fate of the hostages, was clearly denounced, as was the exploitation of this war by the elite. During such mobilizations, the illusion that a war is being waged to ensure security is undermined. The nature of the Israeli regime and the formation of an extreme right-wing government around Netanyahu should not obscure the makeup of Israeli society and the potential social force within it.

Using Marxism as a compass

3.7. As Marxists, we should strive to analyze society as complex processes, and not as fixed truths. This is why Marx explained that this new social class forged by capitalism, the working class, had the potential to overthrow and rule society, using the metaphor “capitalism has produced its own gravedigger.”

3.8. If the socialist movement rejects Israeli society as one bloc, this is a doubly counterproductive mistake: not only does it not intervene in the Israeli labor

movement with the aim of developing class consciousness and introducing the ideas of socialism, but moreover, it has the consequence of slowing down any dynamics of protest movements, by allowing the Zionist right to exploit the fear of security.

3.9. In all capitalist countries, the dominant ideology in society is that of the ruling class. This necessarily affects more or less important layers of workers. All opportunities to build class consciousness must be used to counter this.

3.10. It has never been said that the Palestinians' primary task was to concern themselves with the fate of Israeli workers in their confrontation with their elite. On the contrary, detaching Israeli workers from their ruling class is a task of the internationalist socialist movement.

3.11. We will never have the luxury of intervening in a social environment that is convinced in advance of our ideas. On the contrary, the rule is to intervene in an environment permeated by the dominant ideology and the complications of capitalism. It is an illusion to approach the Israeli working class only from the moment that it will be won over to the ideas of socialism overnight, as one block; it is a utopian view of mind. The task of Marxists is not only to seek an echo where it is easiest, or where it is most meaningful, based on the degree of oppression, but also and above all where there is a social force capable of changing the course of history. If it is not the Israeli working class that is the central driving force of the Palestinian national liberation struggle, we must still strive to break the bond between Israeli workers and their elite and build

unity in our social class across borders; that is how our class can be decisive. This is why under the apartheid regime we believed that we also had to build unity with white workers.

3.12. In the past, we have always considered Marxism as a compass, both for analysis and action. Basing yourself on Marxism means not so much collecting the most radical quotes possible, even if it means losing sight of the author's intentions, or pointing the finger at capitalism from time to time, but rather dwelling on an analysis of the whole situation. It is a class analysis in the sense that the course of events is judged not on the basis of the dominant images at any given time, but also and above all on the basis of the underlying processes, and the role that the division of society into opposing social classes plays over these processes.

3.13. If you reject this compass, you condemn yourself to suffer current events and to react in the confusion. On the contrary, using this compass makes it possible to refine the analysis, understand the contradictions and try to formulate slogans and demands to reach the layer in society that has the power to change the course of things: the working class, in all its diversity and unity, and its youth.

On the importance of credibility

3.14. In times of war, these social classes do not disappear. The right to self-defense and the defense of an oppressed nation does not mean that we should rally behind the banner of Arab nationalism or reactionary groups. We will never refuse to step side by side with flags of communities

fighting for their national liberation, which do not have the same character as flags of established powers. We can support the struggle against colonial oppression without waving national or other flags ourselves; they simply do not express what we want to bring to the resistance movements politically.

3.15. Moreover, just because it is a defensive struggle, against a militarily more powerful enemy, does not mean we should ignore the social projects of such organizations. In Iran, the Tudeh Party paid a high price for its cooperation with Islamic organizations during the revolutionary process of '78-'79. The new Islamic regime eventually became the embodiment of counterrevolution. Should we remember what happened to the regimes of the Baath parties, Saddam Hussein in Iraq or the Assad dynasty in Syria? Fundamentalist regimes that took power in the region? Have the millions of victims of these regimes become legitimate as part of the "resistance to Western imperialism"?

3.16. Where can it lead if we imagine that the enemies of our enemies are allies, even if only in certain circumstances? Although the attacks of 7/10/23 did not come out of nowhere and took place in a context of brutal national repression, at what point can we imagine that terrorist attacks on civilians are not reprehensible? How can we consider that carrying out rapes, mutilations and murders has some legitimacy when we take into account the ethnicity of the various parties? This kind of approach will never allow us to build our organization in the labor movement, in oppressed communities. This can only discredit our activists and sympathizers.

3.17. Criticism of terrorism as a method of struggle does not belong to the “white media bourgeoisie. Since the First International, Marxists have systematically opposed activists who advocated the use of terrorism, especially to “raise awareness. This is even why the First International ended, with Marx opposing the methods of the anarchists against the backdrop of the defeat of the Paris Commune. In the recent period we have been confronted with terrorism-based tactics, especially from the 1960s, with the development of Maoist movements, in the neo-colonial world but also in Europe. We do not think we have made a mistake in systematically opposing these movements and their methods. It is regrettable that the comrades do not see a difference between the propaganda of the ruling classes (regardless of their origin) and the necessary criticism of the tactics and strategies that the revolutionaries must adopt.

3.18. Under no circumstances can organizations like Hamas or Hezbollah offer solutions, whether it is to change society, or even to break the dynamic of oppression that the Palestinian masses suffer. These organizations have built an implantation among the people based on the desperation of the poor masses in the region, but nevertheless constitute obstacles to the struggle for national liberation, for the rights of women and minorities, as described in Nicolas Croes' contribution on the occasion of the last session of Congress. It is regrettable that so little attention has been paid to the content of this contribution.

What does the cease-fire mean?

3.19. A weak cease-fire has been signed between Hamas and Israel, providing immediate aid to the Palestinians. This cease-fire is the combined result of growing opposition in Israel to Netanyahu's war policy and of the international solidarity movement against the war, which has put increasing pressure on the Israeli government and its allies.

3.20. This timing also corresponds to a moment for the war government of Netanyahu and its allies at which additional damage can satisfy their imperialist hunger even if Hamas has not disappeared: weakening of Hezbollah and Hamas, strengthened positions in Lebanon and Syria, fall of Assad, weakening of Iran. The ceasefire also makes it possible to monetize, at least temporarily, Israel's internal social peace and prevent the war from turning into an uncontrollable regional conflagration.

3.21. This in no way means peace, or an end to the national oppression of the Palestinians. Netanyahu quickly announced that the resumption of the war could happen very soon, and retains the unshakable support of the United States with Trump, although his adventurism could also be a double-edged sword for Israel.

3.22. This ceasefire is also precarious because no fundamental problem has been solved, and the empty promises of the agreement only allow us to envision at best a status quo before 7/10/23, in other words the basis for new conflicts. The Netanyahu government is more weakened

than the image it wants to portray, and has never found a recipe other than war to overcome its instability.

3.23. The struggle for real and radical change must overcome all forms of national oppression and achieve equality of living conditions and rights between the two nations. The cease-fire removes a leaden weight and can also provide space for mass mobilizations. The return to ruins and the dynamics of reconstruction can stimulate popular mobilizations and international solidarity. In the past, we have referred to the first Intifada as a model for mobilization in Palestine, without reliance on the imperialist and Arab powers in the region. On the other hand, the end of the war and the weakening of Netanyahu may give more confidence to resume social mobilizations against his government's maneuvers.

3.24. On a capitalist basis, no diplomatic construction will make peace possible, because no national liberation is possible without social liberation. It is through the expropriation of resources from capitalists that true liberation can be achieved, not through the expropriation of one community by another. This is true for the Palestinians, but also for all oppressed national minorities in the region. This is why we believe that the demand for the right to an independent Palestinian state, in a federation of socialist states in the region, is the most feasible and relevant demand.

3.25. No socialist state will be built on the foundations of capitalist states, or even on the basis of dominant political structures that are corrupt and/or fundamentalist in the case of Palestine. Obviously, there is no

place for the Zionist state in a socialist society. Should we therefore assume the destruction of states as a fundamental demand to profile the ideas of socialism, especially when there is a national conflict? Demanding the death of the state of Israel will never bring about unity in our class. This is an example of what a transitional program is not.

Our political heritage

3.26. The war waged by Israel has led to a great deal of debate in society, and moreover within the party. A war situation often has the effect of fueling pre-existing discussions and polarizing positions. The war waged by Israel since the October 2023 Hamas attacks is clearly no exception.

3.27. Relatively massive mobilizations took place internationally to denounce and oppose this genocidal war. In the past, such mass movements have helped build international solidarity to stop wars. Class intervention in these movements plays a decisive role as pressure becomes a balance of power. This class intervention often takes place at a later stage of mobilizations against the war, when the war also involves some of the economic and social complications.

3.28. We must strive to see this possibility, this potential for the antiwar movement; and not repeat again the weaknesses and relative limits of the state of the movement. Unfortunately, this relative passivity of the working class in the anti-war movement can cause bitterness among a whole layer of combative activists, mingling with impatience and to some extent with despair in the context of a genocide.

3.29. Being Marxists, we are not insensitive to such an atmosphere. Therefore, collective discussions are important to ensure that we do not lose control in such situations. Unfortunately, we note that a growing number of comrades, especially in the field of national coordination, have chosen to break with this approach and reject our historical analysis and program regarding Israel and Palestine.

3.30. For our part, we wish to rehabilitate this analysis with this response, as we believe it retains its relevance in light of the events and challenges posed by the various protest movements.

3.31. We are also proud that we have had a sister department in the region, and the political construction work that this department has accomplished and continues to accomplish. This, along with the work of smaller sections in the Middle East, was also a reflection of our collective ability to carry out a nuanced analysis of Marxism in a complex situation, and translate it into a program that resonates. Losing ties with such revolutionary sections and activists should raise questions.

For a rejection of the resolution

3.32. The late publication before Congress of such a resolution does not allow for a more consistent response to it. It is regrettable that sufficient time was not respected before Congress, despite the announced democratic intentions of national coordination. In the coming months, we intend to continue to respond more extensively to this issue in order to further complete the historical analysis and program begun.

3.33. In any case, we believe that this resolution already represents a break with the tradition and Marxist and internationalist orientation of our organization. Therefore, we invite the comrades present at the congress to reject it when it is put to a vote.

A contribution to the critical review of our approach to the national question in Palestine-Israel

Document by Serge Jordan written February 2025

Introduction

4.1. Any critical appraisal of our work and analysis of the national question in Palestine-Israel must confront a hard truth: throughout its history the CWI, later ISA, has not been able to develop a meaningful foothold in Palestine specifically, and in Arab-majority societies more generally. Notwithstanding occasional recruits of a Palestinian background within the so-called Green Line, unsuccessful efforts to build in Lebanon and Egypt, and very limited results in Tunisia, our political current's practical experience of engagement with the societies most intimately bound to the Palestinian struggle has been, at best, minimal.

4.2. This absence of direct immersion in the lived experiences and struggles of the Palestinian masses, as well as in communities whose political, cultural, historical, religious and linguistic identities are deeply intertwined with the Palestinian question, has been and remains a major shortcoming. A sober acknowledgement of this fact, coupled with an open and critical examination of its causes, consequences, and of the steps required to overcome it, is an inescapable part of our review.

4.3. The initial geographical location and national background behind the birth of any Marxist group necessarily contains

'accidental' factors. Yet the persistence of this particular weakness over decades — surviving even the most comprehensive and largest revolutionary upheavals of the post-Stalinist era, which unfolded in that very region — cannot be attributed to accident alone.

4.4. This document does not claim to offer an exhaustive analysis of the reasons behind this situation, which are undoubtedly multiple and complex, comprising both objective and subjective reasons, including individual mistakes — and as someone who oversaw the work in Tunisia since its inception, it would be disingenuous to not include my own mistakes in this reckoning.

4.5. Equally disingenuous would be to underestimate the objective difficulties of the task at hand, especially in periods of deep mutual animosity between the national communities. In this respect, the Second Intifada in the early 2000's — which led to a strengthening of the Israeli right and deepened both the psychological and physical separation between the two societies, including by further insulating Israeli Jews from the realities of occupation—, and even more so the 15 months-long genocide carried out from October 2023 onwards —which has accelerated the Israeli regime's shift

toward outright eliminationist policies—, have marked two historical turning points.

4.6. It is also true, of course, that the composition of an organization does not mechanically reflect nor determine its political trajectory. However, a prolonged inability to address such imbalances can both indicate and reinforce deeper weaknesses in political orientation. This is why the Third International under Lenin insisted on the necessity for Communists to make special efforts to integrate colonized people into their ranks and foster revolutionary leadership among them.

4.7. In a situation of entrenched national oppression like in Palestine-Israel, it would be unreasonable to assume that a Marxist organisation that has evolved primarily within the Israeli-Jewish milieu for such a long time —without sustained, organic ties to the lived realities and moods of the oppressed nation— would not have been affected, even subtly, by this imbalance, in its internal culture and practices, and in the articulation of its program.

4.8. This question extends beyond Israel itself, in two crucial respects. On the one hand, the section has served as the main regional point of reference, source of analysis, and body of experience for the entire International on the national question in Palestine-Israel for years. This has inevitably left an imprint on successive generations of members and cadres across the CWI/ISA; certain “reflexes”, emphases, and modes of reasoning would have inevitably influenced them to a degree or another.

4.9. On the other hand, the role of the international leadership itself must be accounted for. This not only includes its

role in having shaped the historical approach towards the conflict (hence the attempt, in the present document, to delve into some of our historical material) but also its relationship with the section as it developed.

4.10. My insight into the latter is limited, hence requires critical scrutiny; but based on my nine years working for the International Secretariat of the CWI (between 2009 and 2018), this relationship seems to have been often marked by excessive deference, which allowed a narrow political outlook for the development of our work in the region to persist largely unchallenged. During the later period of the CWI, this often took the form of uncritical glorification of the section’s work; in the final year of ISA, this logic reached its most absurd expression in the caricatural parroting of the section’s own arguments by the majority bloc for purely factional purposes.

4.11. As it stands, parallels between the approaches of both organisations can hardly be avoided. To name but one obvious example, the CWI and the ISA stand as among the very few trends on the international left, and within the Gaza solidarity movement as a whole, that have refused to recognize the genocide for what it is. It is an indisputable fact that in ISA’s case, the leadership of the section was instrumental in this failure. This included, in April 2024, the drafting of a 10,000-word document, a central aim of which was to rationalize the non-use of the term.

4.12. The designation of what happened in Gaza as an “[Israel-Gaza war](#)” by the CWI, and at one point, as a “[proxy war](#)” by ISA, both obscured the asymmetry of power and the colonial dimension of the conflict.

Likewise, slogans used by some of our then-sections, such as the “Stop the war – Solidarity with Palestinian and Israeli working people” banners displayed by Socialist Alternative in the USA, reinforced a framework that falsely equated the two sides, as if this were a war between rival imperialist actors. Our former French section, Gauche Révolutionnaire, even published material featuring an image of a handshake—one hand wrapped in an Israeli flag, the other in a Palestinian flag. It is difficult to dismiss all of this as mere coincidence.

4.13. I have some sympathy for comrades arguing that the discussion must move beyond symbols and semantics. But in doing so, we risk missing a crucial opportunity to politically analyze what underlies them. For instance, the refusal to use the word ‘genocide’ reveals at least four critical problems, in my opinion.

4.14. First, an excessive concern with how the Israeli-Jewish working class would perceive our statements, even when we were simply, to use Rosa Luxembour’s expression, “loudly proclaiming what is happening”. Second, an overly rigid approach to the formulation of our program, in which the local section was given disproportionate weight in scrutinizing how we fine-tune our demands and slogans everywhere else—which was particularly problematic in the context of the effective detachment (although for no fault of their own) of the said section from the reality of a global mass movement shaking every continent at the time.

4.15. A third aspect is the sectarian idealisation of some unique ‘Marxist’ analysis which rejects the need to engage with legal definitions, terms or concepts

sprung from non-Marxist frameworks. By this logic, arguments for recognising the onslaught on Gaza as a textbook case of genocide were dismissed as “legalistic” or as “sowing illusions in bourgeois international law”. But this entirely missed the point. Millions appropriated the term genocide not out of blind faith in UN institutions or legal solutions but because they recognised the historic escalation of the Israeli state’s violence. Furthermore, refusing to integrate this shift in mass consciousness into our own terminology did nothing to expose legal illusions, it only exposed a disconnect from the living movement—a disconnect which, bizarrely, some of our former comrades erected as a Marxist virtue.

4.16. Finally, this position reflected a certain mystification of the Israeli working class and a downplaying of the reaction affecting it. Indeed, one of the more ‘objectively grounded’ justifications repeatedly put forward by leading Israeli comrades in our internal discussions during the early months of the genocide was that there was no sufficient basis/social support in Israeli society for a policy of genocide in Gaza—a claim that has collapsed under the weight of events.

4.17. According to a recent survey by the [aChord Center](#), 62% of Israelis agree with the statement that “there are no innocents in Gaza.” Another poll from the [Jerusalem Post](#) revealed that 73% of Israeli Jews consider Trump’s idea to expel all Gazans from the Strip “desirable”, while only 3% consider it “immoral”. [A poll conducted in December 2024 by Tel Aviv University’s Institute for National Security Studies \(INSS\)](#) showed that for the first time in nearly 18 years, a majority of Israeli Jews

oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state “under any condition”. In yet [a separate poll](#) conducted on January 29, nearly 70% of Israelis want to extend Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank.

4.18. While polling data can never capture the full complexity of political attitudes —and small but important counter-trends do exist— these figures unmistakably reflect a dominant mood within Israeli-Jewish society. These points are not meant as a call to abandon the fight to win sections of the Israeli-Jewish working class to a socialist, anti-Zionist position; but as a call for a more realistic and nuanced assessment of its current consciousness.

4.19. Furthermore, given the general crisis that has torn our former international apart —and particularly given the troubling course taken by the leadership of our former local section in this context (which is now in talks to potentially re-join the CWI)—we must ask ourselves whether these misjudgments are merely isolated incidents, or symptoms of deeper political blind spots.

4.20. Revisiting the material we have produced over the years with a critical eye, it becomes clear to me that on more than one occasion, our analysis displayed an inadequate sensitivity towards the oppressed nation; at times, it slipped into a form of ‘both-sidesism’ —as [in this statement](#), where the question of “self-defence” is framed as equally applicable to “both sides of the national divide”, as if they faced equivalent threats and possessed comparable means of defense)—and exhibited, on occasions, a certain hesitancy to speak out on issues that were ‘unpopular’ in Israel. The organization’s

non-committal and evasive approach to the ‘right of return,’ which I discuss in the final section of this document, is particularly revealing in this regard.

4.21. To be clear, and in anticipation of potential criticisms, my argument on the experience and trajectory of our former section should not be taken as a one-sidedly negative observation. It is clear that the weaknesses in our analysis and program over the years cannot be all imputed to it, nor to the specific demographic center of gravity of the CWI/ISA. As we will see, some of these issues long predate the official founding of the section in Israel in 1999.

4.22. Additionally, it is important to recognise that having a section actively involved within the entrails of Zionism did unquestionably serve as an international source of inspiration and a living example of what a class-based work within Israeli society can concretely entail. By confronting and challenging Israeli chauvinism directly on its home ground, it has pierced through the ideological fog surrounding Zionism and provided valuable insights into a working class that much of the international left often dismisses as either non-existent, entirely inaccessible, or irredeemable.

4.23. This is no academic question. The development of revolutionary socialist forces within the ‘Green Line’ remains, from my perspective, not just important but a strategic consideration in the struggle for the liberation of the Palestinians.

4.24. Of course, this struggle will, first and foremost, be driven by the revolutionary mobilization of the Palestinian masses themselves, in alliance with the Arab working class and all forces

fighting against oppression in the region, and bolstered by an international solidarity movement whose potential has been powerfully demonstrated over the past year and a half. Yet the special material foundation of the Israeli Zionist regime means that its overthrow cannot be achieved by external pressure alone, i.e. without the active breaking away of at least significant sections of the Israeli-Jewish working class from the Zionist project.

4.25. A key specificity of the colonial question as posed in Palestine-Israel and of the political economy underlying Zionism is indeed that it developed in a way that did not centrally depend on the exploitation of Arab wage labor. Israeli society is not based as much on the economic exploitation of the Palestinian people as it is based on their exclusion, displacement and physical elimination.

4.26. While Palestinian workers do play a role in certain sectors of the Israeli economy—particularly in construction, agriculture, and services—and have been used as both a ‘reserve army of labour’ and a source of extra profit for the Israeli ruling class, they have never been structurally indispensable to its functioning. The fundamentally disposable nature of this workforce was starkly demonstrated when, after October 7, the Israeli state revoked overnight the work permits of nearly all Palestinian workers from the occupied territories —roughly [150,000 from the West Bank and an additional 18,500 from Gaza](#).

4.27. This distinctive class dynamic underscores the need to develop socialist forces capable of challenging Zionism’s stranglehold inside Israel itself, encouraging class fractures from within as

a necessary component of a broader strategy to dismantle Zionist oppression and occupation, and advance the region’s socialist transformation.

4.28. That said, the necessity of this break does not negate—but rather heightens—the need for a serious reckoning with the historic shortcomings of our own tradition. In this light, important achievements and glaring gaps are not mutually exclusive. The strengths of our former organisation do not absolve us of the need to also critically examine the limitations and problems. If we accept, as we must, that the insights gained from this work have, in some respects, enriched our understanding, we must also recognize the other side of the coin: the fact that the lack of a deeper integration into the lived experiences of the Palestinian and Arab working class have, in other respects, restrained our political understanding and practice.

4.29. Perhaps most importantly, we should wonder whether, in turn, the practices, terminology, programmatic emphasis and political-cultural sensitivities—shaped, at least in part, by the specific composition and background of our organisation—, have hindered our ability to resonate and connect with Palestinian and Arab audiences, contributing in this way to enlarge and consolidate the original gap. Given the persistent vacuum of our presence in Arab-majority countries to this day—bar two PRMI supporters in Tunisia—, the question of whether this dynamic has played, however unintentionally, a role in perpetuating our marginalization in the region, needs to be raised.

4.30. I do not have the pretension to possess definitive answers to these

questions. But I hope that the present document can help contribute to this much needed and urgent collective reflection. Revisiting “The Marxist Left, the National Conflict and the Palestinian Struggle”

4.31. There is an abundance of written material to reflect upon. As a starting point, I would like to highlight the text “[The Marxist Left, the National Conflict and the Palestinian Struggle](#)”, published in English in 2016. While not particularly recent, this is a theoretically developed text that was agreed by the National Committee of the Socialist Struggle Movement, [translated into Arabic](#) and published as a pamphlet in that language, positioning it as a synthesis of key arguments of the section’s political approach on central relevant questions at the time for the left—including towards an Arab-speaking audience.

4.32. Admittedly, the text contains valuable material. But upon revisiting it recently, I was struck by its overall imbalance. While the text is without question sympathetic to the Palestinian struggle, there is a glaring disparity in the attention given to the situation within the ‘Green Line’ versus the realities in the occupied Palestinian territories, as it offers little more than cursory remarks on the specific conditions Palestinians endure under occupation and systemic oppression. The text acknowledges the “*security fears among the Jewish public*” early on, with similar references about the fear of Israeli Jews appearing multiple times. Yet, it fails to allocate a fraction of the same attention to the trauma and suffering of the Palestinians under military rule, apartheid, blockade, and repeated bombardments.

4.33. This imbalance is also reflected in the surface-level treatment of Palestinian politics compared to the analysis of Israeli political developments. The text doesn’t include any serious analysis of the historic or current roles of the Palestinian factions, the pressures shaping their policies, and the dynamics of the Palestinian national struggle under their leadership. While Fatah and Hamas are correctly labeled as “pro-capitalist”, the text offers little substantive explanation for the same.

4.34. Calls to reclaim the entire territory of historic Palestine are dismissed as a “bourgeois national utopia”, with no real attempt to explain, in a transitional way, the limits of that position. To be sure, this demand falls short of addressing the complex realities on the ground today—particularly the need for a program that acknowledges the existence and rights of both Palestinians and Israeli Jews—and as a result, concrete visions on how it would come about are most often blurry and confused. Within the occupied territories themselves, the support for such an approach is today strongly tempered by a dose of realism about its impracticability. Nevertheless, the text itself recognises that “*there’s a sentiment of sympathy for the old program of the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organisation] to achieve an Arab-Palestinian nation state on the entire territory west of the Jordan river*”. In that context, to brush it aside so casually appears somewhat tone-deaf.

4.35. Albeit with varying intensity depending on the country and context, this aspiration is still embedded in the collective psyche of the Arab masses, and has also found a renewed resonance in the international solidarity movement for

Gaza, encapsulated in slogans like, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” Historically it comes from the lived reality of dispossession and the searing trauma of the Nakba —the mass, violent expulsion and dispossession of the Palestinian people (between 1947 and 1949, Zionist forces seized 78% of historic Palestine, expelled at least 750,000 Palestinians, destroyed around 530 villages and towns, and killed up to 15,000 people in dozens of massacres). For countless Palestinians and supporters of their struggle today, it continues to symbolize the right to reclaim their land and assert their identity in the face of ongoing oppression and genocide. Dismissing it as a bourgeois fantasy fails to grapple with its historical weight and emotional depth, running the risk of alienating important layers of Arab and pro-Palestinian activists whom we want to engage.

4.36. Moreover, in a world where the leading bourgeois faction of the Palestinian struggle formally abandoned the goal of reclaiming all of historic Palestine as far back as 1988 —which at the time, was a stepping stone in the process of bourgeoisification of Fatah and the PLO—the term “bourgeois” applied to this demand becomes somewhat abstract, jargonish and ahistorical. It obscures more than it reveals, and ignores the contradiction between the bourgeois leadership’s retreat and the enduring attachment to this demand among significant layers of the Arab population — an attachment which has been reinforced by the deep discrediting and rejection of the ‘bourgeois’ Oslo framework.

4.37. Similarly, countering this demand, as the document does, by arguing that

“Neither the PLO nor Palestinian political parties Fatah and Hamas have any road they can propose in order to “occupy” Israel” risks reinforcing a narrative that misrepresents and delegitimizes Palestinian aspirations to reclaim their homeland and restore justice for generations of violent displacement, by baselessly casting these aspirations as expansionist and as some Palestinian mirror-variant of Zionism. Without doubting the former comrades’ best intentions, this type of formulation made this text largely unusable towards an Arabic audience in the region.

4.38. The text critiques the *“watering down of the differences between right-wing and left-wing forces”* by Palestinians and *“the dimming of political differences among the Arab-Palestinian minority in the name of ‘national unity’”* within the ‘Green Line’, framing these issues as important obstacles in the development of their struggle. But it doesn’t sufficiently account for the other side of the equation: the reactionary chauvinist/racist/Zionist ideas and sentiments prevalent within the Israeli-Jewish population, nor does it consider how these sentiments contribute to shape the national mood of the Palestinians and influence how they perceive their oppressors.

4.39. In its [Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions for the Second Congress of the Comintern](#), Lenin observed: *“The age-old oppression of colonial (...) nationalities by the imperialist powers has not only filled the working masses of the oppressed countries with animosity towards the oppressor nations, but has also aroused distrust in these nations in general, even in their*

proletariat.” He went on to explain that special efforts were necessary to overcome this distrust—which is undeniably very pronounced in Palestine-Israel, where more than 15 months of genocide have deepened it further.

4.40. Yet rather than seriously examining the factors that shape Palestinian consciousness and obstruct, *from their perspective*, the prospect of a united struggle with the Israeli working class—particularly its Jewish layers—the former comrades’ text is noticeably far more concerned with rationalizing the consciousness of the latter. This results in a lopsided analysis that downplays the depth of Palestinian distrust and sidesteps the realities that make working class solidarity so difficult.

4.41. The passage mentioning the Palestinian refugees’ right of return is murkily worded. Consistent with how our current has approached this question (see paragraphs 110 to 141 of the present document for more details), the revolutionary edge of this demand is diluted into broader references to socialism—framed as a prerequisite for its realisation. The text notably argues for advancing “direct dialogue and consent” as part of the requirements for a just solution to the refugees’ plight. The term “consent” in this context is particularly loaded, as it could imply that the implementation of this right must be subject to agreement from the Israeli side, rather than being a non-negotiable, historical right of the Palestinian people.

4.42. The parts under the subheads “*A class approach to Israeli society*” and “*Who profits from the occupation?*” are, in my opinion, quite crude, and at times

insensitive to Palestinian national aspirations. They create an impression of abstract internationalism that doesn’t engage enough with the concrete, uneven conditions created by national oppression. The need for a class approach is articulated mainly from the perspective of the fears of millions of Israeli Jews and their will for national self-determination, rather than from the point of view of what is positively necessary for Palestinian liberation.

4.43. The document correctly highlights the class contradictions within Israeli society, and tackles the fact that Israeli-Jewish workers do not “profit” from the occupation. This is generally true in that the Israeli working class is ultimately harmed by the perpetuation of the occupation. However, the stark material, social, and political disparities between the Israeli-Jewish and the Palestinian working classes are too overlooked in this context. The argument presents a global perspective that focuses on the commonality of exploitation within the capitalist system and the austerity faced by workers. But in doing so, it tends to downplay the uniquely brutal and specific nature of the colonial oppression faced by Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

4.44. On their daily commute, an Israeli-Jewish worker drives freely on well-maintained roads, bypasses checkpoints or passes through them without issue, and arrives at work without fearing military raids. A Palestinian worker from the West Bank has to wake up hours earlier, crammed into overcrowded checkpoints, subject to soldiers’ whims—harassment, detention, or outright denial of entry—only to reach a job where they are paid a fraction of what their Israeli counterparts earn. The

Israeli worker might worry about making rent; the Palestinian worker might return to find their home reduced to rubble.

4.45. Within the ‘Green Line,’ Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel face systemic racism and institutionalized discrimination that notably translates into significantly higher poverty and unemployment rates. Decades of racialized state policies and discriminatory land practices have left their cities and towns overcrowded, with crumbling infrastructure, poorer public services, and far less government funding than Jewish-majority areas. On top of this, many Bedouin Palestinian Arab villages in the Naqab (Negev) desert are classified as ‘unrecognized’ by the Israeli state, meaning they do not appear on official maps, are denied basic services such as water, electricity, sewage, and roads, and face the constant threat of demolition.

4.46. Marxists, in the region as elsewhere, have a principled duty to expose the class realities that underpin Israeli society (including within the Israeli-Jewish working class itself, which is not homogenous—Mizrahi, Ethiopian, and Russian-Jewish workers, for instance, face racial discrimination and greater precarity, despite retaining relative ‘privileges’ over Palestinians). But as part of this, they must also acknowledge and confront the huge asymmetry in the respective experiences, rooted in colonial oppression. Failing to do so risks creating the impression of abstractly placing these realities on an equal footing in the name of ‘class unity’.

4.47. To be fair, the text contains some limited attempts to acknowledge this imbalance. But they are underdeveloped, reading more like perfunctory and defensive side notes meant to buttress

what comes across as an essentially economistic argument, rather than parts of a comprehensive and independent recognition of, and genuine engagement with, the asymmetries provoked by the occupation. When applied to real-life discussions, such a blunt approach can undermine our ability to effectively convince people of our program and risks putting off those we aim to reach.

The merit, and problems, with the ‘two socialist states’ framework

4.48. The position adopted by our historical current vis-a-vis the national question in Palestine-Israel has evolved over time, reflecting —albeit imperfectly— the dynamic realities on the ground. As is well known, in 1947-48 Marxists opposed the UN partition plan for Palestine and the creation of the Israeli state, as a reactionary and colonialist response to a very real problem —the persecution of Jewish people— and as a purported fortress of Western imperialism in the region, “*a force in that area on whom they can lean in their struggle to keep the Arab masses subdued,*” as our predecessors in the Revolutionary Communist Party forewarned in August 1946 in their newspaper [Socialist Appeal](#).

4.49. This stance was consistent with the revolutionary Marxist movement’s long-standing critique of Zionism as a bourgeois nationalist project, dating back from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This position had already been asserted during the early years of the Third Communist International; for example, the “complete

liquidation” of Zionist ideology was posed as the “[most important condition](#)” for the affiliation of members of ‘Poale Zion’ (a movement that sought to combine Zionism with Marxism) to the Comintern.

4.50. In 1967, in the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War, [our forerunners wrote](#) that only under the leadership of the working class was it possible to build a democratic socialist federation of all Arab states; within this framework, Israel was envisaged as an “autonomous region” with full equal rights for all minorities. It is in the years after that the possibility for a separate socialist state of Israel, alongside a socialist Palestine, was raised.

4.51. As I will explain, I believe this position was ultimately more problematic and confusing than useful. But I do not think the logic behind it was entirely without merit. Interestingly, as recounted by Tunisian left-wing veteran Fathi Ben Haj Yahia in *‘The Bowl and the Cradle: Fragments of a History of the Left during the Bourguiba era’*, the Left group Perspectives in Tunisia experimented with a similar idea around the same period, with the formula of “two proletarian states side-by-side”.

4.52. Some on the left argue that the right of self-determination doesn’t apply to oppressor nations. This may be true in a formalistic and abstract sense; but it ignores the complex historical realities that shaped Israel’s formation and social base. Zionism, despite its inherently reactionary, racist and colonialist nature, succeeded in establishing a foothold not just because of imperialist sponsors —though that was critical— but also because of the historic

persecution, genocide and recurring flares of anti-semitic oppression faced by the Jews elsewhere.

4.53. This trajectory could have been cut across were it not for the repeated failures of the workers’ movement’s leadership in the interwar period. The inability of the socialist revolution to halt the rise of Nazism and prevent the Holocaust, combined with the defeat of the Great Palestinian Revolt of 1936–39 —facilitated not only by British repression but also by the Stalinized Comintern’s policy of subordinating the Palestinian Communist Party to bourgeois Arab nationalism— were decisive factors in creating the mass base and conditions for the establishment of a de facto Jewish supremacist state.

4.54. Throughout the 1920’s and 1930’s, moves towards working class-unity in struggle had emerged on multiple occasions, only to be repeatedly undermined by the Zionist ‘labour’ leadership, Arab nationalist leaders, and the erratic policies of the Stalinists. Even on the brink of the Nakba, the 1946 general strike —which brought together up to 30,000 Jewish and Arab workers— stood as a significant testament to the potential for such solidarity, despite the extreme polarization that eventually prevailed. The USSR’s support for the Nakba —through its early recognition of the State of Israel, its arms supplies to the Zionist militias, but also its refusal of an open-door policy for Jewish survivors—exemplifies the extent to which betrayals from the leadership of the working class at the time helped cement a reactionary outcome that was neither predetermined nor inevitable.

4.55. The fact remains that by the late sixties, Israel had a more densely populated and generationally rooted Jewish population, many of whom had entrusted their lives and futures to the state.

4.56. The Six-Day War, launched by Israel who henceforth occupied the remaining Palestinian territories of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip—as well as the Syrian Golan Heights—provoked the further displacement of around 300,000 Palestinians, an event known as the ‘Naksa’ (or ‘Setback’). But by exacerbating Jewish-Arab tensions in the region, it also triggered significant outbursts of antisemitism—accelerating the exodus of Jewish populations from Arab countries, particularly from North Africa. This was compounded by the reactionary policies of Arab regimes which, rather than advancing a principled struggle against Zionism, often scapegoated their own Jewish populations. The new wave of Jewish refugees migrating to Israel further reinforced the demographic and ideological foundations of the Israeli state, consolidating its (mis)perception as a ‘safe haven’ for Jews facing persecution.

4.57. This, of course, did not negate the oppression and dispossession of the Palestinians nor the Zionist State’s expansionist ambitions; on the contrary, both only became more entrenched. But it did mean that holding on to a blanket opposition to any state entity for the Israeli Jews became untenable—if, that is, one accepts the premise that socialism can only be achieved through the voluntary association of working people of all countries and nations.

4.58. A month after the Yom Kippur war, in November 1973, Peter Taaffe wrote [an article for an internal bulletin of Militant](#). It is worth revisiting, as the Socialist Party of England & Wales (CWI) recently republished it, uncritically praising its political content and clarity as a “*testament to our tradition.*” In it he wrote: “*Our position, with the main fighting slogan being the call for the socialist federation of the Middle East, expresses the real needs of the masses of the area. In Israel we would advocate a programme and perspective which based itself on opposing the imperialist policies of Zionism, which pointed to the Zionist state as being a bloody trap for the peoples of the area. At the same time, we hold out the prospect of a separate Jewish state and a separate Palestinian state if the peoples so desired on the basis of a socialist federation. Only a socialist federation could offer the possibility of solving both the social problems and the national rights of all the minorities both within Israel and throughout the Arab world.*”

4.59. Marxists recognize that national consciousness is a powerful force under capitalism. Both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis had developed distinct national identities and historical experiences. Since socialism cannot be built if one nation dominates or denies the rights of the other, the logic of recognizing, *in a future, socialist framework*, a right to statehood for both nationalities *if the peoples so desired* was (and remains) appropriate, in my opinion.

4.60. To be clear, this does not mean that Jews in Israel are an oppressed nation or a persecuted minority—they clearly are not.

Rather, the right to self-determination should serve as a safeguard for the future: in the event that, after the overthrow of the capitalist-Zionist regime, they become a minority, socialists would neither strip them of their national rights nor force them into a unitary state against their will.

4.61. However, recognizing a right and pro-actively advocating for its exercise are not the same thing. Recognizing a *right* means acknowledging its legitimacy in principle, while advocating for it implies promoting its realization. In our case, recognizing the right of self-determination for Israeli Jews means acknowledging that, under socialism, they should have the option to freely determine their own national status. **That is entirely different from explicitly advocating for a socialist Israeli state or socialist 'Jewish' state in the present**— especially if a multinational socialist federation, a bi-national state or another arrangement could better serve the interests of all working people in the region.

4.62. This is not a minor distinction, particularly given the overwhelming and justified hostility in the region toward the Israeli state, and, by extension, towards any formula that could be understood as legitimising it. The very fact that we have spent decades repeating variations of this demand —and often in a more rigid form than Taaffe's early formulation, which at least included the provision "if the peoples so desired"— speaks volumes about how cavalierly our tradition has treated the extreme sensitivity of this issue.

4.63. In seeking to make our socialist program arguably more palatable to Israeli-Jewish workers, we adopted a formula that

was anathema to tens of millions of Arabs. This points to a deeper problem: our approach was overwhelmingly shaped by concerns over how Israeli Jews would perceive our program, while nowhere near the same level of attention was given to how it would be received by Arab workers and youth in Palestine and the rest of the region. A fully internationalist approach would have started from the aspirations and agency of the Palestinian masses, ensuring that any formulation we advanced did not —however inadvertently—lend sanction to the very structures they fight to overthrow.

4.64. There were other issues in Taaffe's approach. For a start, the expression "Jewish state" has exclusionary implications. It conflates Jewish identity and statehood, erasing the fact that many Jews worldwide do not identify with Israel, and disregarding the rights of non-Jewish minorities within such a framework. Given the ruling class's use of this conflation to delegitimize criticisms of Israeli state policies as antisemitic, the Jewish supremacist nature of the Israeli State (today codified in law through the [2018 Nation-State Law](#)), and the systemic treatment of Palestinians as second-class citizens within current-day Israel, this term was problematic.

4.65. More fundamentally, the phrasing above does not confront the foundational displacement inherent to the existence of the Zionist state —in particular the continued ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, which was especially violent and concentrated during the Nakba and Naksa, and the ongoing denial of their right of return.

4.66. Lenin argued not only that no nation should be coerced into remaining within a state against its will—a principle often cited in the CWI—but also that the working class must defend the right to self-determination “without undertaking to give anything at the expense of another nation.” In this sense, leaving a formulation subject to the interpretation that socialists might be endorsing the imperialist-imposed ‘Green Line’ as the legitimate borders of a future ‘socialist Israel’, i.e. advocating the socialist extension of a state which was built precisely at the expense of another nation—all while remaining silent on the millions of Palestinians denied their right to return—represented a glaring omission. These unresolved issues—sometimes addressed with various (and most often problematic) formulations, sometimes ignored altogether—have, in my view, never been adequately addressed in the years and decades since.

4.67. Moreover, as I shall try to demonstrate, in the process of encrusting the “two socialist states” approach, our firm opposition to the Zionist state became more diluted over time. Whereas I agree that today, a national, Israeli-Jewish consciousness has effectively come into existence and consequently, in the context of revolutionary change in the region its people should be offered the right to self-determination—including to statehood if necessary—, as Marxists we should still unambiguously oppose, and stand for the dismantling of, the Zionist, capitalist and ethnocratic State of Israel. Yet a dangerous ambivalence has been entertained in the CWI over this question.

4.68. Consider, for instance, the following sentence from Taaffe’s 1973 piece: *“it is only the Jewish and Arab working class which can complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution, unity of the area, land reform, and **the expulsion of imperialism including the Zionist capitalists and their state.**”* (my emphasis)

4.69. Now compare this with a passage written a decade later, extracted from ‘Crisis in the Middle East’, an article published in Inqaba (the journal of the Marxist Workers’ Tendency, the then South African section of the CWI), signed by a certain ‘Daniel Hugo’: *“In 1948, Marxists opposed the creation of a separate Israeli state because it was clear from the outset that this artificial state would be a source of conflict and division among workers. But does that mean that Marxists should now stand for the destruction of the state of Israel?”*

4.70. The implied answer is that Marxists should not—as if the state of Israel was no longer a “source of conflict and division among workers”. With this implication, the article introduces a false equivalence between the current Israeli state, which enforces Zionist colonization, US imperialist interests, and capitalist exploitation, and Marxists’ recognition of the right of the Israeli-Jews to self-determination and to their own statehood in a socialist framework.

4.71. Marxists unequivocally oppose the oppressive foundations of the Israeli state, so yes indeed, are in favour of its root-and-branch “destruction”. This does not mean that those exact terms should be used as a slogan in every agitation material, nor that this idea cannot be calibrated in a language

that is intelligible to Israeli-Jewish working class people, obviously; but it means a principled commitment to overthrow the Zionist and capitalist state apparatus, and to replace it with a framework that ensures full rights and equality for both Palestinians and Jews. Especially in more developed propaganda material such as in the example cited, precision is crucial. Leaving such ambiguities open on a question of this importance, and blurring the lines between the class character of today's Israeli state and a hypothetical, future de-Zionized 'socialist Israel', is deeply confusing.

4.72. Later the same article is even more explicit, by stating: "*Subject to certain conditions—e.g. guarantees of the rights of minorities and of returning Palestinians—the need for an Israeli state to exist within agreed borders must be accepted today.*" (my emphasis) Here it becomes clear that the position has shifted from recognizing the right of Israeli Jews to self-determination under socialism to a categorical assertion that an Israeli state must exist. While the stated conditions are important, they are fundamentally incompatible with the very nature of what is commonly understood as the 'Israeli state'—a state founded on national exclusivity. This stance also disregards the possibility that, through the course of a struggle for revolutionary transformation, alternative political arrangements could emerge that ensure the rights of all inhabitants of historic Palestine.

4.73. Was this notable shift in political emphasis an isolated case, a clumsy formulation, or an issue related to the specific author of the above-mentioned article? Taaffe's own later writings suggest

otherwise. In an article entitled '[The National Question in Taiwan and Other Countries](#)' written in 2005, he explained, while polemicising with a Japanese left-winger: "*How can imperialism be defeated in the Middle East and specifically, in the case of the Israeli state, without a policy of changing the alleged "pro-imperialist" consciousness of the Israeli population? This in turn would be impossible without recognising the consciousness of the Israeli population on **the need for maintaining their own state.***" (my emphasis)

4.74. The expression "maintaining their own state" used here is outright problematic. As should be clear to all Marxists, it is not "their" state, but the state of the Israeli ruling class. By confusing the two, this formulation appears to be legitimizing the very structure and borders that sustains the dispossession and occupation of the Palestinians, by suggesting that they should be preserved. Marxists do not support the "maintenance" of any capitalist state—let alone one built on the blood, mass displacement and subjugation of another people, and on the denial of the latter's own right to self-determination.

4.75. Again, in the book 'Marxism in Today's World', originally published in 2006—which served as an important theoretical tool for the education of many CWI members over years—the same Peter Taaffe goes on: "*We accept that many Arab workers, to begin with, will have the attitude that the Israeli state has to be dismantled. It is an imperialist wedge against the Arab revolution. But once it is posed correctly, **it can be accepted.***" (my emphasis)

4.76. Where does one even begin to dissect the problems with this formulation? Arab workers' willingness to dismantle the Israeli State is reduced to an "attitude" that needs to be changed, rather than a legitimate aspiration grounded in their experiences. The tone also drips with paternalism, implying that Marxists have the authority to "correctly" frame the question for Arab workers, who are then expected to "accept" Taaffe's enlightened guidance. This language is disturbingly reminiscent of Arthur Balfour's infamous declaration that Zionism was "*of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices*" of the Arabs inhabiting Palestine.

4.77. Today, as anger for this genocidal state has surged across the world, and as its overthrow is rightly seen by millions of Palestinians as a condition for their liberation, such an approach is particularly jarring, and reveals not the limitations of Arab workers, but the shortcomings of our own tradition — who is in need of changing its 'attitude' if it doesn't want to remain an irrelevant factor in the region.

4.78. Yet these formulations are not accidental — the CWI archives reveal a recurring pattern of misguiding and insensitive phrasings of this nature. In [How Can A Palestinian State Be Achieved?](#) written in 2002, Hannah Sell writes: "*Israel is now in existence and over time the population has developed a national consciousness. Given this, to deny the Israeli Jews the right to their own nation, is a violation of the right to self determination. Moreover, it is unachievable given the military backing of*

US imperialism from the Israeli state." (my emphasis)

4.79. Invoking the military backing of US imperialism as one of the reasons to uphold the Israeli-Jews' right to self-determination empties the meaning of self-determination entirely. Genuine self-determination of either national group cannot exist as long as a state that functions as a strategic outpost for US imperialism in the Middle East, and imposes the oppression of one nation upon the other, remains in place. "*Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? It cannot*", Lenin famously said. Isn't that one of the central reasons why Trotskyists historically opposed the building of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine?

4.80. Moreover, similar to the other quotes above, this statement dangerously conflates the right of self-determination for the Israeli-Jews, as a nation, and the current Israeli (i.e. Zionist) state: it asserts that Israeli Jews have a right to their own nation, but ties this right to the maintenance of the Israeli state in its present form — the very state that relies on US imperialist support for its dominance in the region. A reasonable interpretation of this passage is that not only the current Israeli state is the legitimate embodiment of the Israeli Jews's right to their own nation, but that it also cannot be meaningfully challenged because of the might of US imperialism.

4.81. Anyone who doesn't accept the existence of the 'Israeli state' is thus categorised as denying the right of the Israeli-Jews to their own nation. This echoes a typical Zionist rhetorical move to delegitimize anti-Zionist perspectives, by

equating opposition to the current Israeli state with denying Israeli Jews any form of national existence. Since the Israeli Jews already have a state and self-determination today, Marxists, by this logic, must fight to preserve it. We can see how easily such dubious reasoning can slip into a leftwing justification for Zionism.

4.82. A similar logic has resurfaced in more recent discussions, as is apparent in the document *“Political Situation Israel-Palestine”* written by 11 Belgian comrades in response to the resolution recently adopted by the Belgian section’s national congress. The comrades write: *“Obviously, there is no place for the Zionist state in a socialist society. Should we therefore assume the destruction of states as a fundamental demand to profile the ideas of socialism, especially when there is a national conflict? Demanding the death of the state of Israel will never bring about unity in our class. This is an example of what a transitional program is not.”*

4.83. The document employs heavily loaded language— “death of the state of Israel”—to dismiss the idea more forcefully, but its core argument seems to be that calling for the dismantling of the Zionist state is incompatible with a transitional approach, and would undermine class unity. But can we seriously speak of “class unity” with Palestinian workers through equivocations about the nature of a state that is actively engaged in their physical extermination?

4.84. Whether the tearing down of the Israeli state should be posed as a ‘fundamental demand’ is context-dependent. Of course Marxists do not simply issue abstract ultimatums but

intervene in struggles with demands that clarify the road to liberation and resonate with the movement’s dynamics.

4.85. However, in our interventions in the international solidarity movement, in the context of mass global opposition to the genocide in Gaza, a slogan along the lines of ‘Smash the capitalist, Zionist state machine!’ would be politically appropriate and resonate powerfully, as it captures the urgent need to dismantle the institutional and military structure enabling the genocide. This should not be understood as a substitute for explaining how this process can unfold or which social forces can drive it, but as a way to connect the immediate outrage to the deeper, structural realities of oppression.

4.86. At the core of our position should be the rejection of any framework that ties the right to self-determination to the preservation of a capitalist state— especially one predicated on the subjugation, dispossession and genocide of another people. This does not negate our recognition of national consciousness among Israeli Jews, nor our commitment to the principle of self-determination for all peoples. **But we must be clear that genuine self-determination for both the Palestinians and the Israeli-Jews can only emerge through the dismantling of the Zionist state and its replacement with democratic socialist structures built by the working class.** Thus our engagement with Israeli Jewish workers and youth must be grounded in an uncompromising exposure of the Zionist state’s reactionary role —not only in enforcing war, oppression, land dispossession and racist inequality but in sustaining their own exploitation. What we

cannot do is offer ambiguous reassurances about the ‘maintenance’ of a state whose very existence is bound to colonial violence.

Why does this matter?

4.87. This might seem like an exercise in pedantic, conceptual hair-splitting. In reality, it is a litmus test for our political credibility, a ‘make-or-break issue’ if we are to have any hope of building a viable Marxist organisation in the region. Of course, the fate of Marxist organization-building in the region hinges on many other factors —but this one is critical.

4.88. It is worth recalling that the comrades who intervened in Egypt in the first, revolutionary months of 2011 lost dozens of contacts once that specific question came onto the table. We had similar experiences in our attempts to build in Lebanon, then in Tunisia. A facile reading of this would be that we were correct and these contacts and former members were all mistaken. A more convincing and honest explanation is that our organization, heavily shaped by the overriding imperative of “not alienating the Israeli-Jewish working class,” lacked both the theoretical clarity and the lived experience to articulate a program on the national question in Palestine-Israel from the perspective of those ‘on the other side of the fence’. As a result, comrades found themselves ill-equipped to respond when confronted with this reality in more than abstract terms.

4.89. To be clear, this is not just a matter of tactical presentation, but also one of revolutionary principles. There is a reason why Lenin identified the attitude towards

the state as “*the touchstone on which the real understanding and recognition of Marxism should be tested*”. The Israeli state in its present form is a capitalist and colonial state that must be brought down. Any hesitation on this question risks cutting conversations short before they can even begin, signaling to others a failure to understand the stakes involved, or an unwillingness to take a principled stance against the occupation and the genocide.

4.90. This does not mean, of course, that those we engage with will necessarily share our views of what dismantling the Israeli state concretely involves, or how it can be done. Some may harbor problematic views, such as equating all Israeli citizens with Zionism. But my point is that any equivocation on the need to uproot the Israeli State will be a non-starter for the vast majority of those we want to speak to.

4.91. This question has important bearing on how to approach, for example, the debate on ‘normalisation’. In all Arab-majority countries, there is a strong current of opposition to the normalization with the Israeli State which, for all practical purposes, is tantamount to the normalization of the occupation regime and of the national oppression of the Palestinians.

4.92. The genocide over the past year and a half has further intensified these sentiments. The latest [Arab Barometer poll](#) shows a significant decline in popular support for normalization with Israel. This shift is particularly stark in Morocco — which had a relatively ‘high’ level of support compared to other countries— where it has plummeted from 31% in 2022 to just 13% today.

4.93. This is why in many parts of the Middle East and North Africa, the Israeli state is commonly referred to as the “Zionist entity”. This term is not used in a blanket manner across the region, nor do all those who employ it—or oppose normalization—attach the exact same meaning to it. In some instances, the term can carry antisemitic connotations, and reactionary Arab regimes and forces have opportunistically wielded it to serve their own political agendas. Unlike “Zionist state,” the term “entity” does not explicitly differentiate between the ruling class institutions and Israeli citizens, hence should be treated with caution. But these important caveats should not overshadow the fact that for large sections of the population, the rejection of normalisation and the use of such terminology express, at its core, genuine and heartfelt solidarity with the Palestinian masses. In Tunisia, for example, the use of the term “Zionist entity” has a long-standing tradition within the labour movement itself.

4.94. Our experience in the region had already shown years ago that, given this deeply ingrained opposition to the very foundation and ideological premise of the Israeli State, particularly in a context where the meaning of socialism remains poorly understood, any explicit reference to a “socialist Israel” or to the coexistence of two states in a socialist confederation — however well-intentioned— can do more harm than good.

4.95. In the past, we often argued —and I was among those comrades—that this position functioned as a transitional bridge to foster mutual confidence and lay the groundwork for future class unity. Yet, in

practice, there is little evidence that it ever served that purpose for Arab workers and youth. On the contrary, the overwhelming feedback was that this framing clashed sharply with their lived experience and consciousness. It did not open a bridge for discussion—it erected a wall.

4.96. The bitter lessons of the Oslo Accords and their catastrophic fallout, along with the glaring bankruptcy of the two-state framework as championed by imperialism, have only added to the reasons why such formulations risk being perceived as little more than a left-wing façade for legitimizing the continued existence of a Jewish supremacist state, the Zionist-dictated borders, and the colonial land thefts and dispossessions on which they rest.

4.97. Unfortunately, in general the need to learn from our work in the wider region, namely outside of the ‘Green Line’ (within which our main work was concentrated) and to absorb that experience —allowing it to enrich our understanding, refine our program, and adapt our sensitivities and terminology to the regional political realities outside of Israel itself— was not taken seriously enough. As a then CWI member from Lebanon who intervened in Cairo in 2011 commented to me recently, *“The position never considered the Arab views and their perspective.”*

4.98. Yet today, similar conclusions seem to be transpiring from many comrades’ interventions in the global Gaza solidarity movement. The resolution *‘What strategy for the national and social liberation of the Palestinian masses?’* Adopted by the Belgian National Congress —while containing some limitations that hopefully

can be taken up in further discussion and material— rightly states: *“The term ‘socialist Israel’ is inappropriate in particular contexts of genocide, extensive occupation policies such as in the West Bank and total destruction of people and infrastructure in Gaza. Today – and this would probably have been the case for some time before the genocide in Gaza – we need to place more emphasis on how radically different the region would look after a socialist revolution and the overthrow of capitalism. The term ‘Israel’ expresses a continuity of borders that we must avoid.”*

4.99. This is even without addressing the fact that using the term “socialist Israel” can also inadvertently evoke the ideas of the early, arguably ‘left’ Zionist currents, embodied in movements like the Mapai party and figures like David Ben-Gurion, whose ‘socialist’ vision for Israel was deeply intertwined with the colonial project and ultimately served to justify the exclusion and oppression of the Palestinians.

4.100. On top of these political factors, in the region specifically there is the added complication that several Arab countries (Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Algeria) have explicit legislation in place that criminalises normalisation —which in most cases extend to individual contacts with citizens of Israel and in the case of Iraq, is punishable by death or life imprisonment.

4.101. For all these reasons, a less ‘prescriptive’ formulation —centered on the need for the revolutionary overthrow of the Zionist regime and of all reactionary capitalist dictatorships in the Middle East, and pointing towards a voluntary socialist

confederation of the region in which all communities have full equality of rights— is more appropriate.

4.102. Having said this, however flawed our historical position may have been, it had an underlying strength: it refused to ignore, as many on the left do, that Zionism has, through decades of colonization and imperialism-backed state-building, forged a distinct Israeli national identity among millions of Jews living there. To pretend otherwise is to surrender Marxist analysis to wishful thinking. At this stage at least, Israeli Jews are unlikely to simply cast aside this identity of their own accord; in that sense, upholding their right to determine themselves freely in a future socialist context remains valid.

4.103. But again, that is very different from making an explicit call for two socialist states now —which not only erects an artificial barrier to address the most advanced layers of the Palestinian solidarity movement, but is also an unnecessary attempt to rigidly predetermine the precise contours of a future state arrangement.

4.104. In the context of a socialist revolutionary upsurge across the region—a scenario that admittedly appears very distant now, but is the only context in which the formulation of such demands by Marxists would gain mass relevance— the basis for the entrenched mutual distrust that prevail today might be significantly challenged. In such a transformed scenario, the argument for class unity across borders, and even for a joint socialist state, could find a more fertile ground. The right to a hypothetical transitory workers’ state offering Israeli Jews a voluntary step to join

a future socialist confederation might become superfluous. This is of course something Marxists would welcome and encourage; as Lenin explained, other conditions being equal, the working class will always stand for the largest state and the closest possible economic amalgamation of territories.

4.105. Undeniably, as it is, the genocide in Gaza over the past 15 months has made the notion of cohabitation in a single state appear more remote than ever to many Palestinians, and has deepened the schism between the two nationalities. This is shown by [a poll](#) from September 2024, in which 51% of Palestinians (49% in the West Bank and 54% in the Gaza Strip) prefer a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, while 19% (14% in the West Bank and 27% in the Gaza Strip) prefer a confederation between two states, and only 10% (11% in the West Bank and 9% in the Gaza Strip) say they prefer the establishment of a single state with equality between the two sides.

4.106. But we must also recognize that such polls are inevitably shaped by the brutal reality of occupation, the stark power imbalance, and the despair they breed. Many Palestinians may answer with their heads, while their hearts might tell a different story. In the past, similar polls were often used to justify the call for two socialist states—framed as evidence that “Palestinians don’t want to live in the same state as Israelis anyway.”

4.107. But a mass struggle across the region that would pose an existential threat to the Zionist state would lead to completely new openings that are very difficult to predict today and render the

idea of a detailed prescription a largely speculative exercise. Ultimately, the bottom line is not whether the working classes of the region choose one state or two—it is their capacity to construct a voluntary socialist confederation based on their own power, full equality, mutual respect, and the collective ownership and planning of resources. Eventually—if the right of self-determination means anything at all—it will be up to them to decide it.

4.108. The point above also underscores why our program cannot be formulated in isolation from the wider regional dynamic; it must be anchored in an internationalist perspective, addressing not only the Palestinian question but the interconnected struggles against dictatorship, imperialism, and capitalist exploitation across the region. The MENA revolutions, the Kurdish struggle for national rights, the repeated uprisings in Iran, all show the potential for regional upheavals that could shatter the existing regimes. Such upheavals would not leave Palestine-Israel untouched; they can fundamentally alter the balance of forces, breaking the reactionary deadlock that helps sustain the Israeli occupation regime—a regime upheld by a regional and imperialist order that is itself vulnerable to crisis and mass revolt.

4.109. This shifting regional balance is another reason why the form of a future settlement in Palestine-Israel cannot be approached in a rigid manner. The political terrain is not static, and neither can our approach be. Provided that we don’t compromise on matters of principle or overarching strategy, the exact terminology and emphasis we use in our program should be

subjected to a healthy dose of flexibility, shaped by the changing material context and consciousness of the masses. And it is obvious that these forms and emphasis will not be the same in Beirut as in Tel-Aviv.

4.110. Any formulation that could be reasonably understood as denying the Israeli Jewish population their rights, including to self-determination, presents a serious problem, in my view. In that sense, an outright call for a single state on a socialist basis —notwithstanding all qualifications we might give to that idea— is, at this stage, too restrictive, and risks reinforcing nationalist fears of imposition rather than opening a path toward working-class solidarity.

4.111. However, given the legacy of our own current, it is worth stressing **that just as problematic are all the formulations that, in the name of defending the Israeli-Jews’ right to self-determination, could be interpreted as truncating the Palestinians’ own self-determination** by restricting it to those contiguous and overcrowded enclaves where they have been forcibly displaced — i.e., that do not clearly call for a dismantling of the colonial settlements, for the unconditional right of Palestinian refugees to return, for meaningful land restitution and the extension of the territory of Palestine to ensure a viable Palestinian state (rather than a microstate carved out of the pre-67, Zionist-imposed borders), as well as for guaranteed equal rights and freedom of movement for national minorities across a future confederation.

4.112. As stated earlier, any formulation referring to two states in a socialist framework can easily be understood as a

socialist-coloured endorsement of the territorial status quo, and as a lack of wholesome recognition of the historic injustice done to the Palestinians. That is even more so when they lack any of the critical caveats outlined above. Seen in this light, it is my opinion that the way this demand was articulated in the CWI and ISA material was never fully adequate or intelligible to a Palestinian or Arab audience. At its worst, it was a hollow, doctrinaire phrase—[casually tacked onto the end of articles and leaflets](#) with little explanation, and seemingly even less thought.

A problematic approach to the “right of return”

4.113. To finish, I want to zoom in on a specific issue that is illustrative of a problematic approach our current has taken to the national question in the region, and which demands a critical reassessment. I am referring to the aspiration to the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

4.114. A striking observation when revisiting our material is how little has been written on this important topic over the years, despite the voluminous material on Palestine-Israel in general. Given the decades-long centrality of this question to the Palestinian struggle —particularly in countries hosting Palestinian refugees— isn’t this lack of engagement, in itself, an illustration of a troubling imbalance?

4.115. Across the Middle East and North Africa, the right of return is seen as a fundamental aspect of justice for the Palestinians; it is regularly discussed in the media, in public discourse, in political

movements and in society at large. It has been a defining issue in the political consciousness and solidarity movements with Palestinians for generations. The Great March of Return which started in March 2018 and continued on a weekly basis for over a year, mobilising tens of thousands along the Gaza-Israel border, was a landmark movement in the Palestinian struggle.

4.116. Yet not only are there very few articles of the CWI/ISA addressing the right of return; tellingly, those available in English mostly come from international authors. This doesn't mean that our former comrades in Israel never addressed this issue in Hebrew or Arabic, nor that they haven't participated, to a degree or another, in the production or editing of articles authored by other comrades. But based on the above I think it is fair to state that this issue has generally remained underdeveloped and insufficiently incorporated in our program, in both the section and the international.

4.117. In October 2000, the CWI published [Middle East in Flames](#), a 15,282-word statement—likely one of the longest ever produced by the organization on the region—written amid the early months of the Second Intifada. The latter erupted in the wake of the failure of the Camp David Summit in July 2000, a turning point that deepened Palestinian disillusionment and accelerated the collapse of the Oslo process. One of the key issues in the breakdown of negotiations was the right of return for Palestinian refugees, which Israel sought to bury. Palestinian refugee camps played a central role in the Second Intifada, with many of the most active fighters

coming from refugee communities who had the most direct stakes in the struggle for return. Despite this, the CWI's statement was virtually silent on the right of return, mentioning it only in passing in one sentence related to the Camp David talks. It was also absent from the 22 demands listed under "What the CWI stands for" (while the idea of a "socialist Israel" appeared in four of them).

4.118. Even more concerning are some of the most developed comments that have been made on this issue by our organisation which, in my view, often drifted into an 'Israelo-centric' and economist framework. An example: "*One of the knottiest problems is undoubtedly the right of return of the Palestinians. Two or three generations of refugees have now endured the camps, longing for a return to their towns and villages occupied or destroyed by Israel after 1948 and 1967, or more recently. However, not only the Israeli ruling class but a majority of Israeli Jews fear that implementation of such a right would tip the demographic balance decisively against them. Effectively, it would spell the end of a Jewish state and they will not accept it. Some Arab leaders, including some PLO leaders, have flirted with the idea of trading the right of return for compensation for refugees returning to a Palestinian state (not surprisingly, contrasting Israel's refusal to compensate the Palestinian diaspora with the massive reparations paid by West Germany to Israel and Jewish victims of fascism). Arab leaders dare not openly spell out such a proposition, however, as it would provoke fury amongst Palestinians, who would see it as a betrayal of their deepest national*

aspirations. But how can this legitimate demand be satisfied under capitalism? Only socialist states collaborating in a socialist federation, would have the political authority and material resources to resolve the problem.” -‘[Sharon’s brutal war](#)’, Lynn Walsh, 2002 (the parts in bold are my emphasis)

4.119. The article effectively asks the Palestinians to wait for the socialist revolution before they can be afforded the right to return, caving in to a point of fear-mongering propaganda used by the Israeli ruling class to turn its own population against that right. This argument is not only overly abstract and distant from the concrete demands of Palestinians who are struggling with displacement and oppression in the present. It also denies the Palestinians’ agency in exercising *their own right to return to their own land*, postponing that right for ‘when the right conditions are in place’ —i.e. in a distant, socialist future.

4.120. Even worse is this passage, taken from Hannah Sell’s ‘[How Can A Palestinian State Be Achieved?](#)’ already referenced earlier: “...the overthrow of the rotten capitalist regimes and the coming to power of democratic socialist governments would create the basis for genuine negotiations between the two peoples. It would be possible to begin to negotiate a solution to even the most intractable problems. For example, **the right of return is ruled out on a capitalist basis, and, even if it were somehow to be implemented under capitalism, would only be a mirror image of what the Jews did to the Palestinians in 1948.** However, a socialist Middle East could provide the full economic and social

resources to absorb the millions of Palestinians who would be given the right of return and guarantee increased living standards for the whole population.” (my emphasis)

4.121. Aside from the questionable language (“what the Jews did to the Palestinians”), which veers on antisemitism, the article shockingly equates the legitimate demands of the exiled Palestinians to return to their homeland with the Nakba itself! In an effort to tune in their arguments to prejudices among Israeli Jewish workers, both articles appear to be treating Palestinian refugees as a threat, which feeds into harmful stereotypes about refugees in general (an especially egregious framing in this case, as we are discussing people who either lived or whose ancestors lived on the land in question.)

4.122. This is not just a supposition; it was even at times presented so explicitly, such as in this line from Robert Bechert’s ‘[The war and its wider impact](#)’ (2009): “*Only with the national rights of the Palestinians and Israelis resolved would the question of the right to return of those who wish **to not be seen as a threat.***” (my emphasis) This reinforces the Israeli state’s narrative that Palestinian refugees represent a menace to its existence, thereby justifying the continued denial of their right until an undefined future.

4.123. The question of the demographic balance in the organisation’s composition, and the pressures resulting from it, becomes particularly relevant here. I can indeed imagine how, when engaging with the Israeli-Jewish population living within

the 'Green Line', it may be challenging to advocate for the right of Palestinian refugees to return. Nevertheless we are touching here on matters of principle: our responsibility to lead in building solidarity with oppressed Palestinians. What is at stake is the potential damaging of this solidarity and miseducation of our ranks in order to accommodate the layer of the working class most susceptible to the barrage of Zionist propaganda. Had we succeeded in building a strong base of membership among the Palestinian and Arab populations, it is rather unlikely any of these compromises would have even been entertained.

4.124. This said, it is also important to dispute the underlying notion that such compromises are somewhat 'necessary' to gain a hearing within the Jewish population in Israel. Contrary to this assumption, several surveys have revealed a small, but significant, minority supporting the right of Palestinian refugees to return. A [2018 survey conducted by the Geocartography Knowledge Group](#) among 500 Jewish Israelis found that *"quite a few Israeli Jews, or at least many more than one would think, support the right of return of the Palestinian refugees."* Despite the survey explicitly framing the question with the understanding that the recognition of this right could potentially allow over seven million Palestinian refugees to return, 16.2% of respondents still answered that they support that right —including one in four (25.9%) young Israeli Jews aged 18 to 34, as well as higher rates of positive answers among lower-income groups and women. I was unable to locate more recent polling data, and it must be noted that this

survey predates the genocide; but its implications remain powerful. It demonstrates that Israeli Jewish workers and youth are not inherently 'impervious' to the question of Palestinian return.

4.125. By highlighting this, I do not mean to say that addressing the deeply rooted fears and insecurities within the broader Jewish population is not important. Yet, as the CWI quotes above reveal, there are troubling instances where the line between addressing these fears, and capitulating to them, has been dangerously crossed.

4.126. Responding to concerns about displacement, for instance, could begin by explaining that the Palestinians' demand for the right to return is not a call to expel Jewish residents from their homes. [The available data](#) shows that the repopulation of Palestinian villages by the return of the refugees need not involve any major problem of Jewish displacement or 'threat' to Jewish habitation —bar, of course, those in the settlements in the occupied territories. It would, however, require a fundamental restructuring of land ownership and control. While some towns have been built over or repurposed, significant areas remain underutilized or deliberately restricted for Jewish-only settlement and expansion. The core issue is not a lack of space but the political structures that enforce Palestinian dispossession.

4.127. The space and resources necessary to accommodate a return are indeed theoretically available —Israeli Jews currently live in just 6% of the landmass within the 'Green Line', a staggering statistic which highlights the artificial scarcity created by Zionist land policies.

Instead of serving working people's needs, billions are squandered on settlement expansion, fueling Israel's killing machine, and increasing the wealth of the country's richest—all while Palestinian communities are systematically strangled to preserve the Jewish supremacist character of the state.

4.128. These elements point towards the struggle needed to overthrow the Zionist regime, which fiercely opposes any demographic shift that threatens its grip on power, and to break the chokehold of capitalism in the region. Instead of bolstering militarism and the resource-guzzling settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, resources could be reclaimed and collectively utilized to fund a mass public housing program that addresses the urgent needs of displaced Palestinians, while also tackling the housing shortages and soaring prices faced by working-class Israelis.

4.129. Such a transformation would require a revolutionary rupture in which both Palestinian and Jewish workers reject the ruling class's divide-and-rule tactics and fight for a socialist reorganization of society, where land and resources are democratically controlled to serve the needs of all, rather than the interests of capital and settler-colonial domination.

4.130. At first glance, this may seem indistinguishable from the position laid out in the extracts referenced above: that only socialism can provide a lasting solution to this crisis. But the distinction I am drawing is a crucial one. Much of our organization's material on this issue has been shaped by an implicit—and persistent—"stageist" logic: the idea that socialism must come

first, and only then can the right of return be accommodated. This framework turns support for that demand into a passive and conditional stance, rather than fully harnessing its revolutionary potential.

4.131. In [The New Israeli-Arab "Peace Deal"](#) written in October 2020, Shahar Ben Horin from Socialist Struggle Movement argues: *"Only in a context of a struggle for profound, socialist, change in the region it is conceivable to seriously talk about creating the conditions to "peace between peoples". In such a context, it would also be possible to practically achieve a just solution to the refugee question, based on recognition of the historical injustice and an agreed outline that would allow those interested to rebuild their lives in a socialist Palestine and a socialist Israel."*

4.132. This statement typically suggests that the right of return is something to be addressed after socialism is won, rather than a demand to be fought for in the present by the Palestinians and the global solidarity movement. This approach risks separating the fight for socialism from the lived realities of oppressed communities. Revolutionary change is not something that will simply happen tomorrow—it is forged through the struggles of the oppressed today, and the right of return is an integral part of that struggle.

4.133. Similarly, the 2021 article ['Israel-Palestine: how can we fight the occupation?'](#) from Socialist Alternative in EWS explains: *"That is why currently the best solution to put forward is two socialist states, which would respect the right to self-determination of both Palestinians and Israelis, with borders agreed upon by working class communities. This could*

democratically decide and work out issues like the right of return, as part of a voluntary socialist confederation of the Middle East.”

4.134. Again, instead of championing the right of return and using it as *a transitional demand* to explain the need for socialism, the argument is inverted: socialism must first be achieved, and then ‘work out’ how the refugees would be able to return.

4.135. This approach is problematic for another reason: it narrows the issue down to the economic transformation required, as if the issue was simply one of resources. But as evidenced by the lavish expenditures on subsidizing settlements, Israeli capitalism does not oppose the right of return because of resources constraint; while economic concerns certainly play a role in the consciousness of Israeli-Jewish workers and are cynically exploited by the Israeli ruling class, the latter does so in the main for political and ideological considerations, i.e. the Zionist state’s commitment to maintain and enforce a Jewish demographic majority that keeps the Palestinians out.

4.136. To be absolutely clear, I do not dispute the obvious point that a socialist transformation would profoundly alter the material conditions, and secure the basis for making the Palestinians’ prospect to return, and to live in dignity and in harmonious coexistence with all communities, a sustainable one. It is a bitter truth that without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and Zionism in the region, the right of return is unlikely to ever materialise in any meaningful way.

4.137. However, it is wrong for Marxists, in the formulation of demands, to make such

a prospect a *precondition* for the defense and/or the realisation of that right. Not only does this approach alienates us from Arab and pro-Palestinian audiences who see this demand as a cornerstone of the Palestinian people’s decades-long fight for justice— it also deprives us of the ability to agitate for it and to popularise, through it, the need for the socialist revolution itself.

4.138. Incidentally, it also places us to the right of the United Nations, which recognises the *“inalienable right of Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted”*. In a misplaced attempt to avoid alienating workers in the oppressor nation, we run here the serious risk of sidelining (or deferring until socialism) an important and legitimate demand of the working class in the oppressed nation instead.

4.139. If we want to be taken seriously, we need to boldly support the demand for the right of return now, not make it contingent on the future success of socialism in the region. As Trotsky explains, *“the national struggle cannot be suspended by bare reference to the future world revolution”*. Anything less risks sacrificing a key demand of the Palestinians —in the name of a future that cannot materialize without them.

4.140. In 2018, the eruption of the Palestinian masses onto the stage of struggle, with the question of return emerging as a central call in the ‘March of Return’, did seem to have encouraged our former section to produce a more positively engaging, and less conditional, demand on this issue. The statement [‘Gaza Protest Massacre — For Mass Struggle to](#)

[Lift the Siege!](#) published by the Secretariat of the Socialist Struggle Movement included this formulation: *“A just solution for the Palestinian refugees. Recognition of the historical injustice of the Nakba — the destruction of hundreds of communities and the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of residents — and recognition of the right of the refugees who wish so to return, while ensuring a life of welfare and equality for all residents.”*

4.141. To be fair, I must stress that this demand is an improvement compared to the alternatives previously mentioned. It also seems to be the one featured in the section’s [‘What we stand for?’](#) on its website. However, I still have reservations about the phrase “who wish so”, a [longstanding qualifier from the days of Ted Grant](#), who already in 1967 wrote *“the Palestine Arab refugees would have the full right to return to Palestine if they wished.”* In my view, this caveat, along with the ‘recognition’ formulation (recognising a right doesn’t ensure its implementation) imply that we are still somewhat hesitant about that right.

4.142. Based on my interactions with former Israeli comrades, this addendum is based on the fact that decades after the Nakba, many Palestinian refugees no longer wish to return to live in their ancestral homes and lands, now parts of present-day Israel. While this is certainly true, they should still be afforded the same right and freedom to go back as the others. Of course, each refugee should have the autonomy to decide whether to return or not; but framing the right as contingent upon this individual choice risks weakening the broader demand for *the collective right*

of return for all Palestinians. Finally, for those refugees who choose to remain where they are based, this demand should preferably be coupled with calls not just for ‘recognition’ but also for material reparations to address the historical injustices they have suffered.

4.143. More recently, in the context of the genocide, in October of last year, [a leading member of the section wrote an article](#) in which the demand was: *“Realization of a just solution to the refugee question through an agreed outline that would include recognition of the historical injustice and the right of those who wish to return.”* Apart from the issues already outlined above, the main problem with this last phrasing is its vagueness and ambiguity. “Agreed outline” is very non-committal – who is agreeing? Is this an agreement between states, ruling classes, or the masses themselves? Without specifying the forces involved, this phrase leaves too much room for interpretations, which effectively waters the demand down.

4.144. As a final reference, I would like to bring attention to the approach taken by the late Israeli Socialist Organization (also known as Matzpen) on the right of return. I do not share all their positions, nor do I claim that their demand was flawless or comprehensive, but I think we have to humbly accept —without sectarian defensiveness— that as a starting point for a programmatic approach to this issue, their position was sharper and less obfuscatory than anything the CWI or ISA has ever written. [In 1967, they wrote:](#) *“The Palestine Arab refugee problem is the most painful part of the Israeli-Arab dispute. We therefore hold that every refugee who*

wants to return to Israel must be enabled to do so; he should then obtain full economic and social rehabilitation. Those refugees who will freely choose not to be repatriated should be fully compensated for loss of property and for the personal suffering which has been caused to them."

4.145. A genuinely internationalist and revolutionary approach must recognize that the right of return is not an abstract question that can be put on hold while waiting for the socialist package that will be delivered tomorrow, but a burning demand of the Palestinian struggle today—one that must be actively fought for as a constitutive part of the broader struggle for socialism in the region.

Conclusion: towards a deeper reckoning

4.146. As I have tried to outline, our inherited positions, shaped by both historical baggage and the specific composition of our tendency—internationally and in the region—have inevitably influenced our analyses and focus, producing and perpetuating significant blind spots in the process.

4.147. These factors have had a mutually reinforcing interaction: a flawed approach to Palestinian oppression—rooted in a broader tendency within our tradition to place the responsibility for ‘class unity’ on the oppressed—has set us up for failure in changing the demographic, which in turn has reinforced that flawed approach by making it even harder to break from a cycle of political one-sidedness. This has contributed to narrowing our strategic vision, trapping us in a framework that often prioritized the consciousness and

pressures of the Israeli-Jewish working class over a truly internationalist perspective. This tunnel vision became so entrenched that, ironically, over the past year and a half, any criticism of it was dismissed as ‘succumbing to pressures’.

4.148. Recognizing these limitations is not about self-flagellation, nor is it about assigning blame. It does not negate the important insights and interventions that our former organisation has made. But if we are to develop a truly revolutionary approach to the Palestinian struggle—one that is not only theoretically sound but also capable of finding an echo among the masses—we must confront these blind spots head-on. Otherwise, they will continue to obstruct our ability to connect with the forces that will be decisive in the revolutionary transformation of the region.

4.149. This demands more than critically-examining our written material; it requires a serious reassessment of our methods of work, our organizational culture, and our ability to engage with Palestinian and Arab audiences in a meaningful way. It means abandoning rigid formulas from the past in favor of an analysis rooted in the living contradictions of the present—an approach grounded in a profound empathy for the Palestinian struggle, rather than one that seeks to impose preconceived frameworks onto it.

4.150. Let there be no mistake: correcting these imbalances is not about ‘giving up’ on the Israeli-Jewish working class. We have rightly criticised the ISA leadership for fixating only on ‘what is dominant’, failing to see the contradictions in processes, and effectively abandoning a dialectical compass. We should, of course, not fall into

the same pitfall. While Israeli society is overwhelmingly shaped by Zionist ideology, and the working class is deeply embedded in a settler-colonial framework, this does not mean that internal cracks cannot develop —whether due to economic crisis, the deep social inequalities, the contradictions of war and Zionism itself, or the pressures of regional and global struggles, as it happened during the revolutionary uprisings across the wider region in 2011.

4.151. Of course, the existence of such contradictions alone does not translate into solidarity with the Palestinians, to say nothing of a coherent political challenge to Zionism and the capitalist state. In a context where the left in Israel remains extremely weak, economic hardship, for instance, can just as easily be absorbed into reactionary outlets — reinforcing Zionist militarism, chauvinism, and racism rather than breaking with them.

4.152. That is precisely why it would be a dereliction of duty for Marxists not to seek to amplify these fault lines—to expose the false unity imposed by the Israeli ruling class and systematically demonstrate that the long-term interests of Israeli Jewish workers are fundamentally at odds with the colonial project. Our approach must include —but must not be reduced to, nor be held captive by— identifying where and how these internal fractures can be leveraged —however small, limited or imperfect those openings might seem today (or however overstated they might have been by our former comrades)— to help prepare the ground for the revolutionary transformation in the region as a whole.

4.153. However, if our strategy includes the necessity for sections of the Israeli working class to break with Zionism and support the Palestinian struggle, it must be rooted in an unwavering commitment to Palestinian liberation as a central pillar of our politics in the first place. This requires, dialectically, a deep understanding of — and integration into— the realities, struggles, and aspirations of the Palestinian and Arab working class. Without this, our program risks remaining skewed—shaped disproportionately by the outlook of one national community and divorced from the actual movement of the most oppressed— rather than rooted in the full breadth of the region’s struggles.

4.154. Bridging this gap will be a monumental task, requiring more than rhetorical adjustments; it demands a serious political and organizational reorientation—one that I hope this document can help initiate.

The Oslo Accords

Article published by the CWI – 21 September 1993

5.1. The deal has been greeted with great enthusiasm and euphoria on both sides of the national divide. This is no surprise and is understandable; thousands of Palestinians have sacrificed their lives in the struggle for liberation, and increasing numbers of Israeli workers have needlessly died in pursuit of their ruling class' aim to subjugate the Palestinian masses. The majority of workers and youth on both sides of the divide see the deal as a major step towards peace. As socialists we share and echo this desire for an end to bloodshed. However, nothing would be worse than reinforcing illusions among Israelis and Palestinians that will shortly be dashed against the rock of reality.

What processes have led to the deal?

5.2. In the past socialists have explained that the Middle East was a region of vital strategic and economic importance to the two superpowers, mainly due to its oil supplies. There was a constant struggle between US imperialism and the USSR to compete for strategic supremacy in the area.

5.3. Having cynically used the wish of the Jews for a homeland to escape the holocaust and to create a bridgehead for

themselves, Western imperialism has carried out a policy of divide and rule in the region ever since. Despite numerous UN resolutions and criticism of the Israeli government's more outrageous acts of oppression against the Palestinians, imperialism has never been prepared to concede genuine Palestinian national liberation. They feared that the revolutionary aspirations of the Palestinian masses could not be satisfied under an independent state on the basis of capitalism. The fear was that the consequences would be a revolutionary upsurge amongst the Palestinians expressed through the PLO, which in all probability would result in the formation of a state looking to the Stalinist bloc for support. Such a development would have destabilise the region and threaten the fundamental interests of imperialism. .

What has changed to make these momentous events possible?

5.4. Previously the signing of a peace accord between the Israeli government and the PLO would have appeared completely unthinkable.

5.5. The collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union 1989-90 has

had a huge effect on world relations, including the situation in the Middle East. Faced with internal crisis the Soviet Union withdrew political and financial support, including favourable trading agreements, from its client states in the Middle East. The same applied to the PLO as well.

5.6. In this power vacuum, regimes previously hostile to imperialism were forced to look to the West to guarantee their stability. This was graphically shown in the Gulf War where only the PLO, owing to mass pressure from below, came out in support of Iraq.

5.7. While trumpeting its victory during the Gulf war, US imperialism's experience during this conflict demonstrated the extreme instability of the region. It realised the military conflict had solved none of the fundamental problems in the region. Since then US imperialism has viewed the growth in support for Hamas with alarm. A political settlement in the region was seen as a way of cutting across the growth in support for Islamic fundamentalist ideas amongst the Arab masses, especially the youth. Western imperialism therefore still fears the revolutionary potential of the Palestinian masses. They hope to split the Palestinian masses by using the PLO leadership to implement deal.

5.8. US imperialism's economic problems and its growing international responsibilities as the world's major military superpower, have meant that it has increasingly looked to a regional political solution as a basis of reducing its large commitment of aid to the area, especially to Egypt and Israel.

5.9. The collapse of Stalinism has led to a realignment of forces within the Middle

East. In general the majority of Arab states, faced with domestic economic crisis and political instability, have moved into the orbit of influence of US imperialism. All the Arab regimes previously in conflict with Israel, apart from Iran and Iraq, are moving towards signing peace accords. In doing so they hope to ingratiate themselves to Western capitalist powers, leading to political and economic support for their regimes.

5.10. It was regional and international factors which pushed the Israeli ruling class into doing what was previously unthinkable and signing a provisional agreement with the PLO.

5.11. The most far-sighted sections of the Israeli ruling class realised that the Intifada has had a huge effect on Israeli society. They realise it is impossible to crush this six year long uprising by the Palestinian people militarily. Moreover, this realisation, which had begun to take root among wider sections of the Israeli working class, led to an underlying polarisation within Israeli society questioning the idea of a "Greater Israel". Coupled with a war-weariness exacerbated by the Gulf war, a political solution was increasingly sought for. This was under pinned by a feeling that Israel had no strategic advantage in maintaining its occupation of the Gaza, especially since the IDF faced the most implacable opposition in this part of the occupied territories. It was for this reason that the Israeli government felt confident that proposing self-rule for the Gaza would not provoke major opposition from its population. It used the wish of wide sections of the Israeli working class for a lasting peace to end the seemingly never-

ending cycle of violence, as a social battering ram against the reactionary Jewish settlers who totally opposed any concessions to the Palestinians.

5.12. In a sense the Gulf war also exposed the promises of the Zionist Israeli capitalist class: that the Israeli people could be guaranteed that the IDF would protect them from Arab attack. The scud missiles landing on Israeli soil shattered this illusion. While the Israeli bourgeois were convinced that they could win any confrontation with the Arab states in a conventional war, they understood that the increasing nuclearisation of the Middle East could militarily change the balance of forces. This provided further impetus for a political settlement.

5.13. The Israeli ruling class has also realised that since the Gulf war, US imperialism has been looking for other regimes to rest on in order to try to reduce tension in the region. The continuation of the Intifada also laid the basis of a greater questioning, by more advanced layers of the US working class, of the role of US imperialism in supporting a regime that oppressed the Palestinians.

5.14. The long-term difficulties of the Israeli economy, despite its recent upturn, also pushed the Israeli ruling class in the direction of an agreement. For decades the Zionist capitalist governments have been able to guarantee a certain level of health care, education and job security for the Israeli working class. However, the world recession, increasing competition, and the growth of a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy has led to the public sector of the economy being unable to guarantee the living standards of the Israeli workers.

5.15. On top of this has been the arrival of 400,000 Soviet Jews. Initially seen as vital ammunition in the demographic battle against the growing Palestinian population, the Soviet Jews have become a factor of instability. These immigrants in general are economic refugees fleeing the instability that followed the collapse of Stalinism. Most of them were not committed Zionists and were well-trained professionals who on arrival faced either unemployment or what they saw as menial jobs.

5.16. There is no doubt that significant sections of the Israeli capitalist class also see the peace settlement as a means of increasing their profits through the ending of the Arab boycott and through the economic domination of whatever new industry develops in the occupied territories.

5.17. The collapse in support for the PLO in the occupied territories also brought a change in the thinking of the Israeli ruling class. The PLO and its support amongst the Palestinian masses was seen in the past as the main enemy of Israeli capitalism. The recent mushrooming support for groups, such as Hamas, among the Palestinians was seen as a much greater threat, especially given their implacable opposition to Western imperialism and the existence of the Israeli state. These groups have attracted some of the most conscious revolutionary youth, in the absence of any alternative.

5.18. The signing of the agreement by the Israeli ruling class acted to rescue the PLO leadership from certain political obscurity and was seen as a way of beheading the Intifada through marginalising the support of Hamas. The Israeli ruling class used the

weakness of the PLO leadership to sign a deal which granted concessions which were small enough not to provoke a generalised revolt among Israeli Jews, but with enough promises of future concessions for the Palestinians to ensure that Arafat could find points of support in the occupied territories.

5.19. Arafat and those who supported him in the PLO leadership were forced into a deal in a desperate struggle for survival. This can be the only explanation for Arafat signing a deal, since he described concessions previously offered by the Israeli ruling class as "nothing more than a Palestinian bantustan" The crisis in the PLO leadership, which became especially sharp just before the signing of the deal, is a direct result of their mistaken political approach in the past. The collapse of Stalinism has resulted in the growth of the pro-capitalist wing inside the PLO leadership.

5.20. Their policy was a mixture of diplomatic pressure on the Arab regimes and Western imperialism to solve the Palestinian question, and organising armed attacks on Israeli targets. They relegated the Palestinian masses to the role of onlookers on the one hand and rested on the political and financial support of reactionary Arab regimes on the other. The PLO leadership in exile were shocked by the explosion of the Intifada and tried to control the movement from exile without giving full logistical support to the uprising.

5.21. These Arab regimes had no real interest in Palestinian national liberation – they merely used the mantle of fighting for Palestinian rights as a radical cover in the eyes of their own masses. With the

collapse of Stalinism these regimes found even verbal support for an uncompromising struggle for Palestinian statehood a barrier to obtaining support from US imperialism.

5.22. The support of the Palestinian masses for Saddam Hussein during the Gulf war, as a result of his uncompromising stand against imperialism, meant that the PLO leadership had no alternative but to back Iraq in this conflict. After the war the crisis, caused by a lack of a credible strategy from the PLO leadership, was corresponded by the cutting of financial support from the Gulf States. This brought all the accumulated political contradictions within the PLO to the surface and threatened to shatter it as a political force.

5.23. The PLO leadership hope to rely on their previous authority and the war-weariness that exists among older sections of the Palestinian masses to sell the deal in the occupied territories. Arafat and the PLO leadership hope to rescue themselves from oblivion and to portray themselves once again as the leaders of the Palestinian masses. This is not for sentimental reasons; they see the agreement as a way of guaranteeing themselves careers, with accompanying privileges, as part of the new Palestinian self-governing administration.

Our attitude to the deal?

5.24. The consistent analysis of the CWI has been that capitalism has been unable to solve the social and economic problems, as well as the national question in the Middle East, and has in fact exacerbated the situation greatly. We believe that the national aspirations of the Palestinians and

the fear that the Israeli working class have for their security can only be answered on the basis of the overthrow of the reactionary Arab regimes and the capitalist Israeli state.

5.25. Through the revolutionary struggle this would require, the basis for a democratic socialist federation of the Middle East could be built. A revolutionary struggle would also act to raise the consciousness of the Palestinian masses and the Israeli working class to demonstrate that the real enemy was Zionist Israeli capitalism and the reactionary Arab regimes. It would pose sharply to the most conscious Jewish workers and youth that they have no common interests with Zionist Israeli capitalism, and to remain in the camp of their ruling class will result in repeated bloody confrontations. This programme will initially make greater gains among the Palestinian masses; but a dear revolutionary appeal to Israeli workers, which guarantees their rights in a socialist Middle East in the long term, could act to win sections of them over, or at the very least neutralise their support for Zionist Israeli capitalism.

5.26. The enormous resources of the region, now wasted on war and the financing of the corrupt feudal and capitalist elite, would also provide the basis for answering the problems created by the national question.

5.27. Does the present agreement mean that we were mistaken and that because of changed conditions, capitalism and the reactionary Arab regimes can provide a solution to the national question? Can the

agreement even ameliorate the tension in the region?

5.28. In Israel the agreement was greeted with huge support. Israeli workers and young people saw the agreement as the first step to lasting peace in the Middle East. The enormous weight of the constant threat of war and the continuing Intifada appear to be lifted. The right wing reactionary settlers have been marginalised for the moment. In general there appears to be an unstoppable momentum, in the direction of a final settlement. Even among those Israeli workers who have questions about giving land for peace the feeling is that, with the prospect of lasting peace, the problems in the occupied territories will no longer be of concern to Israel and will have to be dealt with by the Palestinians.

5.29. It is also clear that the majority of Palestinians in the occupied territories now support the settlement. The main feeling appears to be: "Give the settlement a chance, maybe we will get a state". This is as a result of a feeling of tiredness among the older sections of the population as a result of six years of Intifada.

5.30. The euphoria is understandable after decades of conflict. However, we have to look beyond this and see whether the deal can be implemented and if it will result in the national liberation of the Palestinian masses, thus solving the contradictions caused by the national question.

5.31. If it were possible for the question of Palestinian statehood to be solved through step-by-step concessions, even if through negotiations between imperialism, the reactionary Arab leaders, the PLO, and the Israeli ruling class, then it

would get widespread and lasting support. If it began to solve the problems of the region such a settlement would make our work far easier in that the complication caused by the national question would no longer exist.

5.32. Looking in detail at the agreement and taking into account the consciousness of sections of the Palestinian masses, unfortunately this outcome seems to be the least likely.

5.33. The deal in essence gives limited aspects of self-rule in Parts of the occupied territories with the promise of future status to be negotiated. Although the Israeli army will be withdrawn to barracks, it will still have access and jurisdiction on the roads in the occupied territories. All indications are that the Israeli police force will remain in place to be joined by the infamous border guards. The Palestinian Police Force (PPF) will not have jurisdiction over the settlements. The questions of Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, and the borders are all to be delayed until the start of negotiations on permanent status.

5.34. It is clear that these concessions do not come anywhere near granting Palestinian national Liberation. There are absolutely no commitments on political prisoners while the Palestinian refugees from 1948 will continue rotting in the refugee camps around the Middle East. The fact that future negotiations will discuss the possibility of the right of return of the 1967 refugees represents a cynical attempt to split the Palestinian population and the refugees.

5.35. What will the role of the PPF be? Despite the large support for the deal

among the Palestinians, it is clear that there is a significant minority who are completely opposed to the deal and see the actions of the PLO leadership as selling out the struggle for Palestinian national liberation for their own ends. These youth will conduct a struggle of bitter opposition to the deal. It is, obvious that the opposition to the agreement has occupied the minds of the PLO leadership, Western imperialism, and the Israeli bourgeois from the very beginning of the negotiations.

5.36. As early as November 1992 a meeting took place between former members of Mossad and representatives of the PLO's internal security service to discuss "Internal security and the role of the Palestinian police force in the interim period". The Israeli representatives described the attitude of the Palestinians as "professional and business-like".

5.37. Throughout the declaration of principles signed by the PLO and the Israeli government there are constant references to the role of the PPF in "guaranteeing public order and internal security" and the need for "a strong police force". These are clear statements that there will be opposition to the deal and that the role of the PPF will be to crush such opposition. This has been confirmed by Abu Bassam Sharif who has recently said: "If there is opposition we will crush their heads". The closer self-administration has come the more this issue has dominated the minds of the PLO leaders. That is why PLO estimates of the numbers required for the PPF have recently increased – from 17,000 to 30,000.

5.38. More worryingly, in article XIII, the agreement states: "Further redeployments

to specified locations will be gradually implemented commensurate with the assumption of responsibility for public order and internal security by the Palestinian police force..." This means that the IDF will only withdraw if the Israeli bourgeois are satisfied that the PPF is clearing out opposition. What they will do if this is not done successfully is not stated.

5.39. The new PLO administration will have a weak basis of support in the territories. All it will be able to rely on is the hope among Palestinians that the agreement is the first step to statehood. Once the PLO administration is in place the euphoria that greeted the agreement will have to be backed up with improvements to match the hopes that the masses have. The PLO leadership will be involved in a desperate race against time. It is for this reason that the PPF will play a very important role in protecting the continued rule of the new administration, in the period when the PLO is attempting to build social forces on which to rest

5.40. Palestinian youth who have no illusions in the deal will correctly portray the PPF as new oppressors to replace the old ones of the IDF. They will point out the failure of the PLO to give full logistical support to the Intifada as well as the lack of democracy in the PLO and the opulent, corrupt lifestyles of their former leaders in exile. The fact that Arafat has already purchased a home for \$3 million will not go unnoticed in the slums and open sewers of Gaza,

5.41. That is why the PLO leadership have made huge efforts to obtain promises of aid to the Gaza and West Bank. Western capitalist powers have offered \$2 billion as

a new "Marshall aid" plan. On the basis of improvement-its in infrastructure and social welfare the new PLO administration hope to undercut the support of the radical Islamic fundamentalist groups. It is likely that they will gain certain points of support as a result. The PLO leadership realise the huge strains they will be put under – leading PLO economists have said that they will need at least \$13 billion – to guarantee stability. The \$2 billion promised will only deal with the basic question of infrastructure. It does not take into account the huge economic strains that the administration will be under if even limited numbers of the 1967 refugees are given the right to return.

5.42. "Marshall aid" was promised in Eastern Europe. Only a fraction of the promised aid has been given mainly because the political instability frightened away capitalist investors and the new regimes of Eastern Europe were not able to fulfil the conditions stipulated by the IMF and World Bank. It is true that the occupied territories are a much smaller area and so even small amounts of aid will have an effect. But the point still applies – for a new "Marshall aid" to work in the long run the situation will have to be a politically stable. This is extremely unlikely.

5.43. In our arguments against those who supported the idea that capitalism could provide a Palestinian state the CWI has stated that Palestinians do not want a state just for democratic rights – they want decent housing, jobs and education. However, this is just one side of the question. The decades long struggle of the Palestinian masses and their oppression by the Arab regimes and Israeli capitalism has

left a burning desire for national liberation which will not be bought off merely by better living conditions.

5.44. The funding to the occupied territories will be used to create a new comprador Palestinian bourgeois. Through these representatives, Israeli capitalism and the Arab regimes will continue their economic exploitation of the Palestinian masses. There will be a polarisation of economic wealth in the territories. The PLO administration will apply the funding in a partisan manner. Aid will be given in return for political support..

5.45. However, this will not stop the Palestinian youth mobilising against the agreement that will portray this defection as yet another section of the leadership who are not prepared to fight for the Palestinians.

5.46. There are many obstacles in the way of further concessions. The Israeli ruling class will find it much more difficult to deal with the 150-170 000 settlers in the Golan and West Bank. Their idea of a Palestinian state in confederation with Jordan is yet another attempts to shift the responsibility for controlling the Palestinian masses to another regime. The Jordanian regime is extremely unlikely to accept this proposal – they have previous experience on the destabilising effect, which large numbers of Palestinians within their borders can have, as the revolutionary uprising in 1970 showed. Palestinians already form a majority of the Jordanian population, and the regime already faces destabilisation caused by the economic and social crisis that has led to the growth in radical Islamic fundamentalism

5.47. In the short term there could be big clashes between the PPF and PLO supporters and those who oppose the deal. These could represent elements of civil war in the situation. The shooting of Hezbollah supporters in the Lebanese refugee camps by PLO militias for demonstrating against the deal shows what is likely to happen at some stage in the occupied territories. Over the long term the deal could be undermined by an open conflict among the Palestinians.

5.48. These events will not be confined to Gaza and the West Bank. Events in the occupied territories will have a direct effect in Israel and will not merely be a problem for the PLO administration to deal with, as some Israeli commentators claim. Palestinian youth will also direct their anger against those they see are the political allies of the new administration – Israel and the West. Unfortunately, given the lack of a revolutionary alternative, the youth will turn to the radical Islamic groups and use the tactics of bombings and killings in Israel proper.

5.49. While the right in Israel is now on the defensive, they will use these attacks to mobilise opposition against further concessions. They will use the settlers in the Golan and West Bank as the basis for their campaign. While there is huge support for the settlement now, there are deep-rooted psychological fears among the Israeli working class which the right will use to destabilise the situation. In the likelihood of Palestinian attacks against Israeli targets the tendency will be for the support for further concessions to be undermined and for the Israeli government

to roll back the concessions that have been made already.

5.50. Looking at all the factors and processes involved therefore, this agreement although it has provided minimum concessions to the Palestinians, will break down over the longer period. Capitalism is still incapable answering the aspirations of the Palestinians, both in the occupied territories and the Diaspora. It is using the agreement to split the Palestinians, to delay further conflict. The agreement will be broken by the inability of its co-signers to solve the contradictions of the region.

5.51. Among some on the left the argument has been raised that even if the agreement is not going to give Palestinian statehood, then it will grant a period of peace in the region. They have also stated that at least the IDF will be withdrawn to barracks.

5.52. The agreement may provide a period of quiet although this is not certain. But any limited stability will be based on the false promise, propagated by Israel and the PLO, that the deal will provide something, which cannot not be given – statehood. This being done on the basis of the PLO's betrayal of the masses. The consequence will be to further complicate the situation by dividing the Palestinians leading to civil war, and further support for Islamic fundamentalist ideas. These complications which are maturing beneath the wave of euphoria will explode to the surface later on with horrific consequences.

5.53. We fully support the withdrawal of the IDF to barracks. This is a by-product of the Intifada, rather than a cosy agreement

between the Israeli ruling class and the PLO. However, we go further and demand the complete withdrawal of all IDF troops from the occupied territories. The CWI points out that under certain circumstances the processes which led to the IDF being withdrawn to barracks could turn into their opposite and lead to their deployment once again.

5.54. It would be wrong to give support to the deal, even critically, because it will give rise to the illusion, under the existing conditions of euphoria, that all problems have been solved. Our explanation that this deal is a poisoned chalice for the Palestinian masses, and will break down, does not mean that somehow we support the status quo.

5.55. The deal will break down because capitalism cannot provide what the Palestinians want. Our programme is for a struggle for a socialist confederation of the Middle East. This means we stand unequivocally for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories, the overthrow of the reactionary Arab regimes and the Israeli capitalist state.

Ceasefire in Gaza: The struggle against Genocide and Occupation isn't over

Article published on the PRMI blog 18 January 2025

“This is a day of happiness, and sadness, a shock and joy, but certainly it is a day we all must cry and cry long because of what we all lost. We did not lose friends, relatives, and homes only, we lost our city, Israel sent us back in history because of its brutal war” (*reaction of a displaced Gazan mother to news of a potential ceasefire, one of more than 1.9 million Palestinian men, women and children displaced since 7 October, 2023*).

6.1. These words provide an insight into the spectrum of emotions gripping the residents of the ravaged Gaza Strip after the news of a ceasefire broke on 15 January. Widely shared videos of jubilant celebrations drove home the sense of relief at the prospect of reprieve from the 15-month genocidal nightmare. A potent display of defiance, they show the determination of Palestinian people to remain on their land in the face of such unimaginable horrors. It also speaks to their broader and unbreakable desire to refuse to abandon their national identity and aspirations that the Zionist project and its imperialist backers have historically sought to destroy, to win their freedom from occupation and apartheid, and for millions of Palestinian refugees to be given the right to return to their historic homeland after 77 years of exile.

6.2. The possibility of receiving aid, medical attention and reuniting with relatives is an enormous source of hope. After 15 months of unimaginably horrific bombardment carried out by the Israeli State, Gaza's population may be afforded a temporary reprieve from the constant fear of death and destruction, and space to mourn. For many, even the opportunity to properly bury the perished is a small but important solace. But with this comes reflection on the sheer scale of the devastation, loss and trauma that will forever change the lives of those who survive the Israeli state's murderous campaign.

Fragile and Tenuous Deal

6.3. Yet, casting a shadow over the cautious optimism is the intensification of the genocide that has killed more than 150 people since the ceasefire's announcement, and the knowledge that hundreds more Palestinians will likely be murdered before the agreement becomes effective on 19 January.

6.4. The parameters of the accepted deal, brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the US, were already laid out by the outgoing Biden administration in May 2024. While the latter claimed that Hamas blocked its implementation, allowing the slaughter to

drag on for a further eight months, this week, in a case of saying the “quiet part loud”, Israeli Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir revealed that it was his party and in turn, the Israeli Government, that prevented a ceasefire from coming into place. This is yet another example of how Biden and his criminal gang have continuously provided cover for the Israeli regime in the context of this genocide.

6.5. The deal will, in theory, be implemented over three phases. In the first 42 days of the ceasefire, 33 hostages will be released in exchange for 737 Palestinian prisoners ; it also stipulates the daily entry of 600 trucks of humanitarian aid and a partial withdrawal from the populated areas of the Strip —although Israeli forces would maintain a so-called ‘buffer zone’ inside Gaza which would take about 60 square kilometers out of the enclave. This could amount to a de facto annexation of Palestinian land, further shrinking the space available for Gaza’s population while allowing Israeli forces to maintain military control deep inside the Strip.

6.6. On the seventh day of this first phase, Palestinians displaced in southern Gaza would allegedly be allowed to return to the north and by the 16th day, negotiations regarding the second phase of the deal are supposed to begin, pertaining to the exchange of the remaining hostages and of further batches of Palestinian prisoners, a “lasting halt” to the fighting, and a supposed total withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Strip.

6.7. A halt to the bombing of Gaza, the release of abductees on both sides and a

scale-up of humanitarian assistance into the Strip will undoubtedly be welcomed by millions; but skepticism about the deal’s implementation and outcomes is more than warranted, and any illusions in the ‘sincerity’ of the bloodthirsty Israeli regime and its accomplices must be cast aside. True to its nature, the risk of the regime exploiting the initial phase of the deal to extract what it can, only to derail the remainder when it no longer serves its interests, is high.

Trump’s Foreign Policy

6.8. Despite attempts to claim credit for the ceasefire, Biden will not shed his rightful title of ‘genocide Joe.’ His unconditional support for U.S. imperialism’s most vital ally in the Middle East has been repeatedly tested by mass opposition in the US and internationally, yet each time he has run roughshod over it. This likely cost the Democrats the presidential election; a [recent survey](#) of 19 million people who voted for Biden in 2020, but did not do so in 2024, identified the ongoing onslaught in Gaza as the top reason for not doing so (above both the economy and immigration).

6.9. But aside from periodic and mealy-mouthed condemnations of Israeli atrocities, claims to “tirelessly” be working for a ceasefire, and frayed relations with Netanyahu, this never translated into real pressure through, for example, the halting of financial and military aid. Biden’s support for Israel remained ironclad. That Trump so easily strong-armed Netanyahu is a massive blow to the prestige of the Democrats, consolidating their image as a party of war and imperialism. The Biden

administration did not ‘fail’ to achieve a ceasefire earlier, nor did it work “tirelessly” to achieve one; it deliberately chose not to leverage its influence, instead actively enabling Netanyahu’s genocidal cabinet to prolong the slaughter for months on end by generously supplying the means to carry it out. The Biden administration also vetoed UN Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza on four separate occasions.

6.10. Trump is taking credit for an “EPIC deal” as he posted on his Truth Social account. Even one Biden official acknowledged that the president-elect’s Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff played “a very important role” in the negotiations. This no doubt came as a surprise to Netanyahu who had hoped for a Trump victory. Surely, the same man who moved the US embassy to Jerusalem, torpedoed the Iran nuclear deal, ordered the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, recognised the occupied Golan Heights as “part of Israel” and stacked his incoming cabinet with extreme pro-Israeli figures (Mike Huckabee, nominee for US ambassador to Israel, for example, is a strong supporter of “Greater Israel” and denies the existence of Palestinians “there is really no such thing as a Palestinian”) would prove a more reliable friend of Israel?

6.11. Of course, Trump’s urgency to secure a ceasefire is not rooted in altruistic motives. A number of factors are at play. Cynically posing as an anti-war candidate in the presidential race, he tapped into an inchoate anger against US ‘forever wars’, promising to put “America first” instead of wasting billions abroad. The lack of a real

left alternative even saw him harness the discontent of some Muslim and Arab Americans who ditched the war-mongering Democrats for their enabling of the genocide. Making good on an election promise even before being sworn in will therefore be a significant boost for the president-elect.

6.12. True, Biden was a more standard representative of the unshakeable alliance between US imperialism and Zionism. Trump may be transactional and less ideologically constrained, but his record shows he’s no friend of the Palestinians or working classes and poor of the Middle East (or in the US).

6.13. His supposed ‘isolationism’ in no way means a less aggressive US imperialism. Recent remarks on Panama and Greenland show the opposite is true, paving the way for a more unstable and dangerous world. Likewise, in the Middle East he will embark on a more aggressive course against Iran. Part of this strategy will mean isolating the Islamic Republic from the oil-rich Gulf states, who in 2023 agreed to restore diplomatic relations with Iran – a political rapprochement sponsored by China that challenged US influence in the region. No doubt, Trump — who oversaw the ‘Abraham Accords’ to normalize relations between Arab and Gulf rulers and the Israeli occupying regime, partly to solidify an alliance against Iran — can see that the longer the genocide in Gaza goes on, the more likely the normalization framework will burst open, potentially pushing the Gulf states closer to US’ imperialist rivals, China and Russia.

Pressure from below grinds gears of genocide machine

6.14. Whereas in the first Trump presidency the craven Gulf state regimes ditched the demand for a Palestinian state in Israeli normalisation agreements, the fury of revulsion that has spread amongst the Arab masses makes the same position politically impossible. In Morocco, the resistance against the normalization agreement has also grown markedly, including among the Amazighs. This is a new political reality that Trump 2.0 has to grapple with in order to get Israel-Saudi normalisation over the line and an important backdrop to the ceasefire. As 39-year-old Saudi ruler Mohammed bin Salman explained to Blinken:

6.15. “Seventy percent of my population is younger than me. For most of them, they never really knew much about the Palestinian issue. And so they’re being introduced to it for the time through this conflict. It’s a huge problem. Do I care personally about the Palestinian issue? I don’t, but my people do, so I need to make sure this is meaningful.”

6.16. These comments highlight the indelible imprint that the Gaza genocide has left in the consciousness of workers, youth and the oppressed masses, not just in the Middle East and North Africa, but across the globe. The ongoing international Gaza solidarity movement has drawn hundreds of millions into the streets against occupation and imperialism, exposing the complicity of the Western ruling classes in the genocide and the role of Arab capitalist regimes in maintaining the subjugation of the

Palestinians. While a superficial analysis might see the deal as a product of mere geopolitical machinations, the ceasefire would be unimaginable without the pressure from a militant movement from below and seismic shifts in mass consciousness.

Netanyahu and political crisis within the Green Line

6.17. Yet the question remains as to why Netanyahu accepted the deal this time round, given his previous intransigence. A significant factor in the continuation of the genocide was to save his own political skin in the face of a deep political crisis within the Green Line. Prior to October 7th a historic mass movement against the far-right government’s reactionary judicial reform shook Israeli society to its foundations.

6.18. But the Hamas attacks granted ‘Bibi’ a lifeline as he leaned into and fanned the unprecedented wave of Zionist reaction that gripped the vast majority of the Israeli Jewish population. While we should be under no illusions that recent protests against the “war” and for the release of the hostages represent a clear opposition to occupation and Palestinian oppression they nevertheless exacerbate built-in contradictions of Israeli capitalism. According to the [December 2024 Israeli Voice Index](#), a majority of Israelis (57.5%) now support a comprehensive deal involving the release of all the hostages in exchange for an end to the “war”. That’s not to mention the small but growing layer of young people that have come out

forthright against the genocide, with some refusing to serve in the Israeli army.

6.19. As a result of this crisis, cracks have emerged within the military establishment. This is also connected to the situation with the Gaza Strip itself where, despite Hamas being significantly weakened after 15 months of relentless Israeli assaults, it has not been defeated let alone destroyed, and the Israeli occupying forces are not having it their way. Retired Israeli brigadier general, Amie Avivi, told the Wall Street Journal that “we are in a situation where the pace at which Hamas is rebuilding itself is higher than the pace that [the Israeli army] is eradicating them.”

6.20. The fact that the first phase of the ceasefire deal includes provisions for displaced Palestinians to return to the northern part of Gaza is also significant. If only on paper at this stage, it represents a departure from the so-called “Generals’ Plan”, aimed at the effective ethnic cleansing of Northern Gaza. This speaks for the Palestinians’ enduring refusal, even in the midst of abominable destruction and loss of lives, to surrender their claim to their homeland.

6.21. Indeed the acceptance of the deal is an expression of the relative impasse of the strategic aims, none of which have been achieved, that Netanyahu’s regime has been trying to enforce through inflicting genocide on the Palestinian people. His efforts to portray the expected release of the hostages as a direct product of the barbaric campaign of death and destruction his government has unleashed over the past 15 months cynically turn the reality on its head. Biden himself is on

record admitting that a deal akin to the current one was on the table since May, laying bare the monstrous futility of the immense suffering inflicted.

6.22. While the regime has pursued a murderous rampage across the region – in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and Iran – in a desperate bid to delay the inevitable, the unequal “war” has hit a deadlock.

6.23. Nevertheless the far-right politicians and their reactionary social base will not take this lying down. Protests erupted on Wednesday and Thursday against the ceasefire. Young Orthodox men chanted “Conquest, expulsion, settlement.” Divisions in the government delayed the vote in the Knesset from Thursday morning to Friday night, as key far right figures offered ultimatums to Netanyahu. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich of the Religious Zionism party said he would offer conditional support to the first phase of the deal on the condition that the “war to eliminate Hamas” would resume immediately after. National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir argued that the deal represents a “complete victory for Hamas” and that if approved, his ‘Jewish Power’ party would leave the coalition.

6.24. However, in order to appease them, Netanyahu told his ministers that Israel had received “definitive guarantees” from both Biden and Trump that “if the negotiations on phase two of the deal fail, and Hamas does not accept our security demands, we will resume intensive fighting with the backing of the United States.” While Netanyahu managed to navigate these internal pressures for now—as the deal is now ratified and Ben Gvir

said he would not bring down the government over it—, these manoeuvres underline the Israeli regime’s readiness to torpedo the deal at its own convenience.

6.25. They show that this ceasefire is not a pathway to lasting peace and relief but a precarious, tactical pause rooted in a broader strategy of continual aggression. An intensification of the Israeli State’s violence and settlement expansion policies in the Occupied West Bank, including possible attempts to annex it in part or fully, will also likely be on the cards, as part of the ‘sweeteners’ given by Netanyahu to the far-right within his coalition in an attempt to keep them on board. Those factions have long been campaigning for Israel to impose “sovereignty” over “Judea and Samaria” and, banking on support from Trump as president, have vowed to make 2025 the year to make it happen.

Continue to Build the Movement against Genocide, Capitalism and Imperialism

6.26. The above reveals the fragile and tenuous nature of the ceasefire. Ongoing massacres in Gaza, continuing deadly raids in the Occupied West Bank and the Israeli regime’s murky record on “honouring” ceasefires — including most recently in Lebanon, where the Israeli regime has violated repeatedly the ceasefire agreement concluded in November last year, notably by launching near-daily airstrikes since the deal took effect — should serve as a bitter warning to the international Gaza solidarity movement to not demobilise but redouble our efforts in

deepening and extending the struggle in our communities, workplaces and universities. This should involve organising protests, boycotts, occupations and strikes that target all companies and institutions that have been complicit in this genocide and the occupation of Palestine.

6.27. Demands could, and should, include a complete and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops from the entire Gaza Strip as well as from Lebanon, Syria, the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, free and unrestricted access across Gaza for its people, the release of “all for all” (including the over 12,000 Palestinians arrested in the Occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem since October 2023), an end to the blockade of Gaza and an immediate opening of all border crossings, and a reversal of the Israeli ban on the UNRWA.

6.28. The UN estimates that it would take 350 years to rebuild Gaza to the desperately impoverished state in which it was prior to 7 October 2023 (if it remains the ‘open air prison’ it was long rendered by the Israeli blockade). This alone shows the need to make the struggle for liberation, justice and peace one also for the socialist transformation of the region and the world. An appropriate start for rebuilding would be to fight for the profits of the arms industry that is dripping with Palestinian blood, from Israel to the EU and the US, to be diverted to Gaza.

6.29. In a poll late last year, 96 percent of children in Gaza expressed that they expected to be killed at any time, and 49 percent said they wished for death. Beyond restoring infrastructure and all physical sources of life – that have been

systematically destroyed by the Israeli military – from drinking water, electricity and sanitation to agriculture, healthcare, education etc, “reconstruction” would be incomplete without recognising the extreme levels of trauma, bound to haunt many generations, and healing them – which is only possible on the basis of a bringing the decades of violent oppression to a permanent end.

6.30. It is high time that international media makes up for its complicity in minimising and justifying the genocide – leaving Gazan journalists and ordinary people, even children, to give first-person accounts of the mass murder, maiming, torture and starvation – by going in to bear witness. These corporate media have however shown they cannot be trusted and the ceasefire should be used to organise mass based investigations, democratically controlled by Gaza’s residents, to make clear the full extent of the atrocities and their impact.

6.31. The need to hold accountable all those responsible for the crimes inflicted on the Palestinians during the genocide will also certainly become an important pillar of the solidarity movement in the period ahead. While such accountability is essential, it must go beyond the exposure and punishment of individuals; it is about deepening the struggle towards the dismantling of the entire machinery of oppression that has sustained the ongoing subjugation of the Palestinian masses.

6.32. Indeed the Gaza genocide is but the latest and most violent stage in the decades long oppression of the Palestinians carried out by the Zionist Project and the State that it spawned in

1948. Far from an aberration, it is the logical continuation of a brutal history of dispossession, ethnic cleansing and vicious dehumanisation — created and maintained by Western imperialist powers.

6.33. It is now correctly and abundantly clear to the Palestinian people themselves and for many of the millions who have stood in solidarity with them that their freedom will never be achieved as long as not only Netanyahu’s war cabinet, but the Israeli State itself, remains in existence. It must be overthrown and smashed. But this question cannot be left there. This state is part and parcel of the system of imperialism and capitalism that has created a prisonhouse of violence, exploitation and oppression for the peoples of the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. The Gaza genocide has posed the urgent necessity for its overthrow, a task for which the working class — both in the region and in the imperialist countries whose governments have enabled these 15 months of horror— has a critical role to play.

6.34. The deep-seated sentiment of solidarity with the Palestinian people across the region, demonstrated once again by the eruptions of celebrations in Jordan, Morocco, Syria and beyond upon hearing of the ceasefire on Wednesday, must also be harnessed into a broader, revolutionary struggle to overthrow all the autocratic and corrupt regimes that have long turned a blind eye to the Israeli state aggression or exploited it to their own ends (including the Palestinian Authority, which has once again with its bloody repression in Jenin shown its character of

middle men and prison wardens for the occupation)

6.35. Their rule must be replaced by revolutionary governments of the working class and poor in the Middle East and North Africa that seize the wealth and resources from the super-rich elites, big business and multinationals who hoard and abuse it. These resources could notably be used to rebuild Gaza, restore its infrastructure and provide for the basic needs of its people. A democratic socialist transformation of this region would mean the creation of a society with justice and equality for all and oppression, exploitation and poverty for none. It would afford both Palestinians and Israeli Jews the right to national self-determination, allow Palestinians the right of return to their historic homeland and for both peoples to live in peace and security.

6.36. This is a prize worth fighting and struggling for—the last 15 months have proven the hellscape that will be created if the existing order remains in place.

Palestinian youth revolt

*Article by Peter Hadden from February 1988
analysing the first Intifada.*

The occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank are in open revolt against Israeli rule. Starting with one incident – the running down of four Palestinians by an Israeli army vehicle – the fighting has spread from Gaza to the West Bank to Jerusalem.

7.1. Apart from the rioting, two general strikes have been called, the second continuing as we go to press. Solidarity strike action has been taken by the 750,000 Arabs living within Israel's pre-1967 boundaries and support has been echoed by demonstrators in Egypt and other Arab states.

7.2. This is the most extensive movement of the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank since these areas were annexed by Israel in 1967 and the biggest movement of the Palestinian people as a whole since the six-month general strike and three year uprising against British rule between 1936–39.

7.3. While the youth of the occupied territories have resisted with barricades and stones, the right-wing led coalition government in Israel has replied with brute repression – arrests, deportations, tear gas rolled in canisters from army vehicles, rubber bullets and lead bullets. There have been reports of Israeli army snipers positioned to pick out and murder

identified targets during rioting. And still, despite these methods, and despite, to date 38 deaths, the revolt has not been contained. Israel has been forced to commit three times as many troops to the task of holding down the people of Gaza as were involved in capturing this area in 1967.

Causes of upheaval

7.4. This upheaval may have been triggered by one incident but it is the underlying problems of poverty and repression which are the real cause. Repression is no new phenomenon. An estimated 200,000 Palestinians have passed through Israeli jails since 1967. Half of the students of the West Bank's leading university, Bir Zeit, are already graduates of prison.

7.6. These territories, particularly ; Gaza, are the Israeli equivalent of South Africa's bantustans. Of Gaza's half million population over 400,000 are refugees, many living in camps which lack proper housing or amenities. Every day 100,000 Palestinians cross into Israel to provide cheap labour. They receive no social security benefits and the only return these areas see for their taxes is in the form of Israeli soldiers.

7.7. When the right-wing Likud came to power in 1977 it stepped up its policy of settlement of Gaza and the West Bank by Jews, switching resources from the development of the Negev region to the detriment of those Jews who had been encouraged to settle there. So extensive has been this policy of annexation by settlement that 36% of the available land in Gaza has been given to 2,500 settlers , while 50% of the West Bank is either for military use or in the hands of 65,000 settlers.

7.8. Add to all this the extreme youthfulness of the Palestinian population, 60% of Gazans are under 20 years of age and the real causes of the discontent and the revolt are established. The historical roots of this conflict lie first in the divide and rule policies by which British imperialism maintained their grip on Palestine, and second in the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. Israel's foundation led to the expulsion of some 900,000 Palestinians to the West Bank, Gaza and surrounding Arab states. In the main these people and their descendants remain today as refugees.

7.9. On the other side the Israeli state has been consolidated. Its population was quickly swollen by an influx of Jews fleeing persecution in Europe and by Jews driven out in reprisals from Arab states. Iraq for example expelled the greater part of its Jewish population. Within three years of its birth the population of Israel had doubled. After almost 40 years these people, their descendants and the immigrants who came after, see Israel as their home and have nowhere else to go.

7.10. Today, the destruction of Israel and the creation of an even bigger Jewish refugee problem is no answer to give to the problems of homeless and stateless Palestinians. So there is no capitalist answer, only more instability and worsening conflict. The present situation is intolerable for the Arabs and untenable in the long term for the Jews. The promised land of milk and honey has not materialised. Instead the Israeli state is a state under permanent siege, the youth are forced to take to arms, military expenditure eats up 20% of GNP, and its survival depends on hand outs from US imperialism.

7.11. Israel is surrounded by 100 million Arabs. Its 3.5 million Jews co-exist within Israel with 750,000 Arabs and directly rule a further 1.5 million in the occupied territories. By the end of this century the Jews will be in a minority within the post-1967 state.

Choices of regime

7.12. To contain the situation the regime has to choose from the cleft stick of concession or repression. Rule by repression points towards a South African scenario of virtual apartheid with all the explosive consequences. But there is a limit to the concessions they can grant. They cannot withdraw from the occupied areas and allow the establishment of genuinely independent Palestinian state. They fear this would be a radical state, that it would radicalise the Arab population, within Israel and be used as a base for PLO attacks.

7.13. Ultimately they will be driven more and more to military methods, continuing the pattern of the past 40 years and of the

current disorder. Nor is there a capitalist way out for the Palestinians. The policy of the PLO majority, particularly of Arafat, of wheeling and dealing with the reactionary Arab regimes and attempting to court the major imperialist powers has been and will be a recipe for disorder.

7.14. Arafat's proposals to resolve the present crisis show how out of touch he is from the real demands and aspirations of the Palestinian youth. In an interview with Newsweek (January 14th) he states: "In my opinion the only way, if our friends (*sic*) will help us, is for the occupied territories to be under UN control for a certain period of time, until we arrive at a final comprehensive solution by the international conference or by any means." Arafat's recent statements also represent a turn-about on the part of the PLO majority in that they now explicitly recognise the existence of Israel.

7.15. His proposals are a thousand light years away from reality. The dis-United Nations will no more solve the problem of Gaza or the West Bank than they have achieved peace in Lebanon. The conference he proposes is between the Israelis, the leaders of Arab states, such as Jordan, and the PLO, with imperialism breathing down the necks of all participants of course.

7.16. This could not bring a solution. As already stated the Israelis would not tolerate a genuinely independent Palestinian state in the occupied areas. Not would Jordan or Egypt, both of whom fear the development of proletarian bonapartism, i.e. wholesale nationalisation of the economy, as in Syria. Neither Egypt or Jordan wishes to have direct control over

the areas. In the case of Jordan the Palestinians would become the majority of the population and would threaten the regime. Joint control would be unworkable in the long run. It would be the problems of the Anglo-Irish Agreement magnified one hundred fold.

Survey

7.17. In any case none of these options would satisfy the aspirations of the Palestinian youth. A survey carried out in the occupied territories and published last year in the Arab magazine, Al Fazr, gave the following responses. Less than 40% favoured Jordanian or Egyptian rule. Only 17% favoured a state based solely in Gaza and the West Bank while 78% were for a state comprising the whole of what is now Israel.

7.18. Rule by Jordan or Egypt would mean swopping one oppressor for another. Arafat's 'friend' Hussein in Jordan was responsible for butchering between 10,000–17,000 Palestinians between 1970–71. Egypt formerly ruled the Gaza strip and did nothing to improve conditions in the camps. Significantly the Egyptian government has recently banned demonstrations of solidarity with Gazans and West Bankers among its Palestinian refugee population in camps in Sinai.

7.19. A state comprising of the existing occupied territories is seen as unviable. So long as poverty and oppression remain the lot of the Palestinians, so long will they retain the aspiration of their own homeland.

7.20. Only on a socialist basis can the conflicting aspirations of Arab and Jew be solved and a democratic settlement be

reached. The only answer is the setting up of a socialist federation of the Middle East. This would allow the development of the economy of the region and lead to the ending of poverty which is endemic under this system.

7.21. A socialist federation would recognise the right of the Jews to retain their own state but cater also for the right of any minority within it. It would also acknowledge the historic right of the Palestinians to a homeland. A certain redrawing of boundaries to this could be achieved. It may be that many Palestinians with their lot improved in the areas where they now live and, in most cases, have always lived, would prefer to remain where they are.

7.22. On a capitalist basis such a settlement is impossible, but because socialism offers the development of production and of rising living standards, and involves no coercion, the problem could be democratically resolved.

7.23. Capitalist diplomacy by the PLO has led the Palestinians into a blind alley. Despite the heroism of their fighters they have suffered persecution and defeat. Likewise, the methods of individual terrorism practised at various times by all the main groups within the PLO, has proved disastrous. It has reinforced the siege mentality within Israel, driving Jews behind the Likud and provoking retaliation. Similarly with the Arab states, it was the hijacking of three planes in 1970 which provided Hussein with the justification to launch his military offensive against the Palestinian camps.

7.24. Instinctively the youth of Gaza and the West Bank have now turned to other

and better methods. The mass protests and strikes have shaken the Israeli state to a degree which 25 years of PLO terrorism has failed to do. The way forward for the Palestinians is to work out a socialist programme and socialist perspective. Such a programme could be the basis of an appeal to the Jewish working class in Israel, attempting to convince them that their future lies in a joint struggle with the Arab workers, not in supporting their own exploiters. It would also allow the Palestinians to appeal directly to the discontented masses in Egypt, Jordan and other Arab states, thereby accelerating the process of revolution in these countries.

Marxist leadership

7.25. What is necessary is the building of a Marxist leadership among the Palestinians so that a programme and strategy can be put forward. In this way the Palestinians could act as the vanguard of the socialist revolution in the entire region.

7.26. But there are dangers if such a leadership is not built. There are similarities between what is taking place in this area now and events in Northern Ireland in 1968–69. Then a tremendous opportunity existed to develop a mass united socialist movement. However, because no leadership existed capable of directing events in such a direction, the anger of the Catholic youth instead turned into the blind alleys of individual terrorism and nationalism. It is possible, in the absence of a class leadership, that the ideas of Islamic fundamentalism and support for new terror campaigns against Israel could gain an echo in the Palestinian camps.

7.27. Already there are signs that discontent with the moderate PLO leadership is turning a section of the youth to such ideas. Should organisations like the Islamic Jihad gain a firm base it would represent a set back for the socialist movement and would be a hugely complicating factor in the situation.

7.28. The choice is stark. Either the Palestinian masses will carry forward the struggle they have started by developing a socialist leadership or else events will ultimately take a turn towards a worsening Arab-Jewish conflict from which both the Arab and Jewish working classes will be the losers.

Letter by Nof to the Workgroup preparing the meeting on 22 March sent 20/02/25

Hi comrades,

Please circulate this letter in the International Bulletin (Nof, 20/2/25)

8.1. After thinking over this for the last few days, I have decided to withdraw from the 'discussion on Palestine liberation' working group, as I believe the approach taken to the question of 'review' is not the type of review that I believe we need. Any review would need patient and structured discussions, starting with analysis, and including a serious balance sheet and a scientific assessment of different formulations and programmatic points, on what premises they are built, how they evolved over time and around what circumstances, what discussions took place, the conditions and experience on the ground. Rather than a patient approach, there is a focus on difficulties in building and interventions and a rush to drop our programme and approach for that reason. This shouldn't be the first conclusion that we draw when dealing with difficulties.

8.2. In reality, the 'review' already includes quite advanced revisions and a conscious turn away from our approach in different entities before the discussion has even begun internationally. Not to mention that some comrades in the Project originally from Israel-Palestine, who have consistently raised concerns

and questions about the approach taken, have been completely sidelined from these discussions and reading about these revisions after they have already taken place.

8.3. A similar approach has been taken not just towards the 'review'. Throughout the last 16 months there has been growing tensions around a variety of questions in regards to public material on Gaza. Rather than these being discussed out, members originally from Israel-Palestine and comrades who were raising concerns and questions about the approach taken, were sidelined from any consultation on material produced by the Project which could have clarified at least some of the issues. There is a growing sentiment that comrades who have raised concerns are seen more as a burden if not outright reactionary rather than comrades who could potentially contribute useful insights to these discussions.

8.4. For all these reasons I am not going to sign my name to this approach. To clarify, I'm not in principle against the idea of a review but against the approach taken.

What should have been the approach taken?

8.5. In the couple of meetings I've taken part in, I highlighted the need to

take as a starting point for this discussion a serious engagement with one of the most important world events, a historic shift that has evolved over the last 16 months (but has much deeper roots). The urgency of this discussion is being demonstrated every day with the recent announcement by Trump of his ethnic cleansing plan, the constant violation of the ceasefire deal by the Israeli regime and the continuation of the genocidal conditions on the ground. We have also seen the elements of 'Gazafication' of the occupied West Bank, where the Israeli military has launched its biggest crackdown 'operation' since the crushing of the Second Intifada. This should be the basis for any discussion on our programme to avoid an abstract and over-generalising approach that discusses the 'conclusions' before assessing whether we have a similar collective understanding of the issue itself.

8.6. Comrades have raised many other questions that of course should also be discussed but we need to be prepared to have a series of structured discussions including a more historic review of the programme, how it evolved and other questions I raised at the start of the letter. I believe this should be done in the context of a balance sheet.

8.7. One problem is that the discussion has developed in such an uneven way, where different entities have had their discussions whilst there was almost no discussion taking place on the international level. The discussion was sidelined throughout the debate in ISA but the substantial differences that

are raised now could have been brought up more openly at least in the Belgium school in July 2024 and could have been discussed more seriously throughout the Project since.

8.8. Considering the historic genocidal onslaught on Gaza has been such a pivotal development in global capitalism, presenting the revolutionary party with challenging questions in analysis as well as in intervention on the ground, including new debates, it is detrimental that since the Project was founded there hasn't been a single discussion which focused on this question. In the last Project meeting, Gaza was mentioned for five minutes in the introduction on the Middle East and in the discussion itself I cannot remember contributions that focused on this question beside my own. Different entities however have had quite advanced discussions in the meantime that were concluded with revision of our programme, from my understanding due to apparent difficulties in interventions and building.

8.9. The Project was founded with the promise to hold patient and nuanced discussions that we didn't have the chance to have in ISA. It was presented not as an organisation but a process of discussion with the aim to reach political clarity and agreement around forming a new international organisation. In practice, the Project is rushing to commit to writing public positions on different questions from Gaza to the split in ISA, before members across the Project had the chance to take part in any of these 'review' discussions. The Project is in

fact shaping into an organisation where comrades rather than having the opportunity to shape and formulate views, are in fact having to choose between 'accepting' the new positions that are presented publicly, or it's their responsibility to retrospectively challenge them.

Disagreements over a variety of questions

8.10. I waited for us, first as a faction and now in the project, to have a serious discussion about disagreements that have developed throughout the course of the last 16 months. Initially these disagreements were more apparent around the approach to 7th October, difference in understanding of the use of the term genocide, the approach taken towards ICJ and ICC, the adoption of uncritical approach towards blanket boycotts and our role as Marxists in the broader movement. However as time has passed, there are much more apparent disagreements in regards to a variety of issues around analysis and programme, including shifting away from what I see as fundamentals of our approach (for example some poor formulations over the question of military confrontation and the ambiguous and contradictory way the right for self determination is explained in Project material).

8.11. The document written by the Belgian comrades and agreed at their recent congress shows there is a conscious turn away from positions in regards to fundamental questions. Just

to mention a few, the abandoning of the right for self-determination for both national groups; uncritical support of any form of resistance 'even if its violent' (which in the context of the region would mean support of indiscriminate attacks on civilians within the Green Line); This is followed by a demand on Israeli-Jewish workers to 'assist it'. In addition, the resolution decides to oppose protests by ordinary Israelis unless they have drawn far reaching conclusions on the question of Palestinian liberation. Isn't it the task of Marxists to engage in the movement to accelerate the process of drawing such conclusions rather than abstain from it?

8.12. In the last Project meeting, in response to questions around the review on this issue, comrades talked about the need to update our programme in response to such dramatic events. I absolutely agree with the need to constantly update, refine, and think of how we can make formulations more accessible and that comrades have attempted to do so. It would be useful if comrades can point out any concrete points that they think would require more substantial changes and updates. However, as explained earlier, I think there are enough indications that it's the entirety of the programme and approach that are under revision and therefore I would urge taking a more serious approach to how we structure this discussion.

Misrepresentation of comrades' position

8.13. Finally, I would like to highlight a feature I've seen in many different discussions which is the misrepresentation of our original approach. This included references to abstract slogans such as 'unity' and 'two socialist states'. Something that was also referred to as 'the two socialist states solution', a formulation that was never used. Even before an organisation in Israel-Palestine was founded, the CWI's position was very clearly to object to the Oslo Accords and any so-called capitalist 'peace' agreements including the 'two state solution'. The experience of Oslo really demonstrated how in fact it was used to reorganise the occupation and continue the 'status quo' by other means. This also confirmed the position our forerunners took, in contrast with large sections of the left who failed to warn of the predictable implications of the Oslo Accords.

8.14. When challenging these types of formulations, comrades say that 'socialist Palestine' and 'Socialist Israel' were used in the past. Whilst there are differences in the way demands are posed now, the discussion in my opinion is not about how to make our position towards the question of the right for self-determination more accessible but about a conscious turn away from this approach (at least amongst a layer of comrades as demonstrated in the Belgian document). The approach to this programmatic point, similarly to the question of terminology, is approached

in an abstract way and detached from the political context to which it is explained. Our programme is not a demand at the end of an article or a leaflet, but ideas that should be explained and elaborated in the material/content itself. I am yet to see how the explanation of the socialist transformation of the region that is being put forward by our former comrades in I-P can be understood as supporting the continuation of the current power dynamics of occupation, dispossession, subjugation of Palestinian lives and dominance by the Israeli ruling class. Unfortunately, in arguing these points in discussions comrades did not engage with the actual written material and approach of the former comrades in I-P.

8.15. We also shouldn't illusion ourselves that any solution can be in the context of Palestine- Israel only. The question of liberation has to be rooted in the revolutionary process across the Middle East and North Africa, which as we know is not an abstract question but a living process of revolution and counter-revolution, that at different points (such as the revolutionary wave in 2011) inspired the masses in Palestine-Israel from all national groups.

8.16. I urge members to read historical material written by our forerunner organisations (such as the material written about the Oslo Accords); to read historical articles that were written by Trotskyists in Palestine-Israel at different stages and material that was produced by our former members in Israel-Palestine, to get a real assessment of what approach did Marxists put forward

at different times and how it has evolved. When I raised that in the working group meeting about the idea of including some articles by comrades from I-P, I was told by a Project fulltimer there should be only one article because their material is 'too long'. This approach would have meant that comrades are hearing serious criticisms of our position, without even being able to read the material so they can judge for themselves.

8.17. I have written this letter with the purpose for comrades to put a brake on the rush to revise our approach before seriously engaging with it. I am happy to discuss with any individual to elaborate on any of the points I raised here and hope we will have productive discussions on this question.

In solidarity,

Nof

Reply to Nof's letter written by Serge Jordon and Valery

9.1. First, we want to sincerely thank Nof for her letter and express our regret over her decision to step away from the workgroup. We recognize that she has differences in approach regarding how this review should be conducted, which makes her departure all the more unfortunate, and we truly wish she had stayed engaged. Nof's insights on the issues at the heart of this review is something we value and want to benefit from, not sideline. We genuinely hope that she will continue contributing to these political discussions as the process unfolds.

9.2. That being said, we feel the need to clarify a few points raised in her letter. We do not share the characterization of this process as "rushed"—if anything, it is long overdue. For some of the comrades in the workgroup, the review contains issues that they have been trying to raise concerns about for many years, even before the split in the CWI in 2019.

9.3. We understand that some comrades originally from Israel-Palestine have concerns and questions about the political approach taken by the Project on these issues. These concerns need to be taken seriously and engaged with in depth. In that sense, it is unfortunate that Nof did not take the opportunity in our three workgroup meetings to clarify more concretely what these political concerns

are, and that, having withdrawn from the workgroup, she will not be able to do so.

9.4. Although Nof notes the limited nature of the discussion on Gaza at the last 'delegate' meeting in December —at which the main political discussion covered many aspects of the consequences of Trump's election victory, we do not recall in her welcome contribution Nof raising differences and concerns either. It is precisely because of the need for a fuller discussion that the political agenda at the next delegate meeting is devoted to the Palestine question.

9.5. But there is another level of concerns that we believe Nof significantly underestimates: for the past year and a half especially, many current PRMI comrades across multiple sections and entities have raised serious questions, doubts and criticisms about public materials, aspects of analysis, and programmatic positions from ISA and our former section in Israel-Palestine — including during last year's July school. Reducing these concerns to mere "misrepresentations", as abstract, or as stemming from a lack of proper reading of historical material, risks oversimplifying or diminishing the issues raised, and could come across as somewhat patronizing.

9.6. These concerns have come, first and foremost, from the layer of young comrades who have been the most

intensively active in the global Gaza solidarity movement —hence for whom the need for a review has been felt in the most direct and urgent way. This is part of reckoning with the last 16 months of escalation to genocide and how that qualitative shift put our historic analysis and programme to the test. Understanding the discussions that have begun in sections/groups and internationally as merely “due to apparent difficulties in interventions and building” is mistaken or at the very least extremely reductive, as it runs the danger of sidestepping broader political questions, including whether past analyses, perspectives and program have been sufficient or if they require changes in light of the dramatic developments that have taken place on the ground.

9.7. We of course agree that all comrades should strive to avoid misrepresentations in the course of these unfolding debates. However, we believe Nof may have misinterpreted certain comrades’ positions herself—for instance, when she claims that the Belgian Congress resolution advocates “abandoning the right of self-determination for both national groups.”

9.8. It is not the task of this reply to defend in its entirety the resolution passed by the Belgian Congress, but if the review is to be of use, we have to reject the inaccurate representation of a position in order to raise false arguments against it.

9.9. Nowhere in the Belgian resolution does it advocate “abandoning the right of self-determination for both national groups.” On the contrary paragraph 74 explicitly states *“a revolutionary force in Israelshould propose a revolutionary*

conference with democratically elected representatives of Palestinian workers and oppressed people - from all over historic Palestine, including, for example, elected representatives of Palestinian refugees from other countries - to discuss the right to self-determination of Palestinian workers and their families and, at the same time, that of the Israeli working class.”

9.10. Nof also suggests that the Belgian resolution gives “uncritical support to any form of resistance”, even though the resolution calls *“to postpone the analysis of a Marxist approach to guerrilla warfare and the Palestinian resistance until the next session of the congress. To tackle this question, it will be crucial to restore the historical complexity of the Palestinian resistance.”* Nor does the resolution, as Nof claims, call for opposition to “protests by ordinary Israelis unless they have reached far-reaching conclusions on the question of Palestine liberation”.

9.11. Nof rightly states that the PRMI was never presented as an organization but rather as a process of discussion. We completely agree and remain committed to that approach. Yet, throughout her letter, she refers to “our” approach, “our” program, and “our” position. This raises the question: who does “our” then refer to? The CWI? The ISA? Our former section in Israel-Palestine? This framing risks creating an impression that our former organization’s position should be the default position of the PRMI, and that any critique of it is a deviation from the same. Yet if today, a thorough review is necessary, it is precisely because many comrades across the PRMI believe that we cannot simply transfer the program and approach

of our former international into the foundations of the new Project. Truth be told, the PRMI, at this stage, does not have yet a unified, “our” position. That can only be the outcome of the review process — not its starting point.

9.12. For example, Nof argues that the discussion is not about how to make our position on the right to self-determination more accessible but about a “conscious turn away from this approach.” In reality, there are different shades of opinion on this inside the PRMI, and these need to be voiced and properly discussed. Similarly, she expresses concern that some comrades seem to be shifting away from “fundamentals.” That is a political opinion to which she is fully entitled—just as comrades who allegedly want to push the discussion in this direction are. If we are serious about an open and honest debate, the parameters of the discussion cannot be arbitrarily limited in advance.

9.13. This does not mean, of course, that the PRMI should remain silent on Palestine-Israel until the review reaches comprehensive conclusions. Nof says that we are “rushing” to take public positions on Gaza. However, we do not believe that PRMI failing to write anything about the ceasefire, for instance—the most significant turning point after 15 months of genocide—or on Trump’s shock announcement of a plan for the full ethnic cleansing of the Strip, would have been a sustainable or responsible approach.

9.14. From the outset, it was understood and agreed that while a period focusing on internal discussion and review would be necessary, this could not come at the expense of continuing public-facing activity

and the production of public material. Naturally, this creates challenges—like on many other issues, not every article produced will fully satisfy every comrade, as we navigate this transitional period, before arriving at formally agreed political conclusions. However, the claim that some comrades have been intentionally “sidelined” in this process is different in nature, and we do not believe it is based on anything concrete. We want to take this opportunity to reaffirm that we genuinely welcome constructive criticism and input on the material being produced, as critical discussion can only help refine and sharpen our collective approach. Unfortunately, no such feedback has ever been brought to our knowledge.

9.15. We would also wonder whether Nof’s suggestion that the articles recently published reflect some fundamentally “new positions” forced upon comrades is really fair and proportionate. One criticism raised is that the PRMI’s articulation of the right of self-determination is “ambiguous and contradictory”. Below are, for reference, the way this right is formulated in the three articles on Palestine-Israel published on the PRMI blog so far:

9.16. *“Only through a socialist program striving for collective ownership and control, and championing the rights of all national and religious communities to full equality and self-determination, can we lay the foundations for a future where peace, safety, and prosperity are guaranteed for all people.”*

9.17. *“A democratic socialist transformation of this region would mean the creation of a society with justice and equality for all and oppression, exploitation*

and poverty for none. It would afford both Palestinians and Israeli Jews the right to national self-determination, allow Palestinians the right of return to their historic homeland and for both peoples to live in peace and security.”

9.18. *“Within this [socialist] framework, through democracy and solidarity in the interests of all working-class and oppressed people, Palestinians and Israelis could live in complete equality from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea, including the equal rights of both people to national self-determination.”*

9.19. We would welcome further discussion as to why Nof thinks this is ambiguous or contradictory.

9.20. Of course, the tension between the need for the PRMI and its entities to continue with their public interventions and the need for internal review discussions is real. This also relates to another point raised by Nof: the fact that some PRMI entities are already undergoing advanced revisions before the international discussions formally begin. However, it is unrealistic to expect all national entities to simply hold on to the positions of an international that is no longer theirs—especially when a majority of members, as in Belgium, believe those positions to be inadequate for intervening in today’s movement.

9.21. The urgency to start this international review stems, in large part, from the fact that the entities themselves have demanded it. While we are working to provide an international framework, preventing this process from unfolding organically within the entities themselves, or asking them to ‘freeze’ it until the

international review has drawn developed conclusions, would be overly formalistic and top-down—and could even undermine the international review itself.

9.22. In fact, we believe it is welcomed and encouraging that members and entities take initiatives to discuss various political issues (as opposed to passively awaiting some “central” plan). This, for us, is a key part of restoring genuine democratic centralism in our organisation, based not on the leadership defining a position and handing it down, but on having the maximum possible involvement of members in decision-making.

9.23. Nof suggests that we need a series of structured discussions, including a historical review of our program and its evolution. We completely agree. In fact, several of us in the workgroup explicitly raised these points during our meetings. Yet, in those discussions, it was our impression that Nof was the comrade most insistent on narrowing the focus to our current analysis and perspectives—at one point even expressing surprise at the very idea of conducting a broader review, or having an analysis of the historical development of the Palestine question.

9.24. As for the circulation of material in the bulletin, there seems to be a misunderstanding about its purpose. Nof warns that comrades might hear criticisms of our former position without access to the original material to judge for themselves. However, there is a key difference between internal contributions from current PRMI members and articles written by former comrades: all of the latter’s material is readily accessible in the public domain already, and further links to

additional material can easily be provided. Moreover, the former comrades' material being proposed for inclusion in the bulletin is not a mere "article" but a 6,500-word theoretical document on the national question adopted by their NC in 2016.

9.25. Given that we proposed including this resolution in the bulletin, we are somewhat confused by Nof's claim that in the historical position of the former IP section, "the two socialist states solution" [is] "a formulation that was never used". While it is true that in the above-mentioned document the explanation is quite nuanced, it nevertheless clearly says that the programme "*will include recognition of an equal right for existence and self-determination, which will be expressed in two socialist states*". This is not an isolated quote. Peter Taaffe, in his very bad 2014 article, wrote explicitly that "*the CWI has consistently advanced the long term solution of two states - a socialist Palestine and a socialist Israel - with possibly a shared capital.*" In its statement of November 2023, the SSM states quite clearly that Socialist Struggle Movement is fighting "*for the establishment of a democratic, socialist, state of Palestine with full equal rights, alongside a democratic, socialist Israel, with two capitals in Jerusalem and full equality for minorities, as part of a socialist regional confederation.*" The ISA in its MayDay 2024 statement simply called for "*a socialist free Palestine and socialist transformation in Israel.*" The article published by Socialist Alternative in England and Wales in August 2021, presumably with Nof's involvement, argued that "*the best solution to put forward is two socialist states*".

9.26. It is simply not credible to claim that the formulation was never used; it would be far more constructive to engage with the reasons why comrades in other countries have struggled to engage with Palestinians precisely because it was used.

9.27. In conclusion, we want to emphasize that our intention in this discussion is not to sideline anyone but to facilitate the most open review, without pre-determined conclusions or artificial constraints. We deeply regret that Nof has chosen to step back from the workgroup and sincerely hope that she will remain engaged in these debates, as we collectively work toward a stronger and clearer political foundation for our project.