

7 February 2024

PCS supports Day of Action for Gaza

PCS today supported workplace protests and meetings to show solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza and elsewhere and to demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire.

In October, our [national executive committee \(NEC\) issued a statement on Israel and Gaza](#), calling for all sides, and the international community, to work to end the conflict.

PCS is affiliated to both the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and the Stop the War Coalition (STW) and has supported and spoken at recent demonstrations held across the UK, encouraging members to attend demonstrations when and where they can.

At the time of writing, almost 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza. On average, 247 Palestinians are being killed and are at risk of being killed each day. This includes 48 mothers each day, two every hour and more than 117 children each day.

As part of the [Stop the War Coalition's Workplace Day of Action to Stand with Gaza](#), PCS members attended workplace protests and the PCS National Black Members Committee (NBMC) organised an online meeting called 'Palestine and Israel - Navigating the issues'.

At a protest and vigil in Whitehall in central London, where members were encouraged to attend in their own free time, Fran Heathcote explained that "PCS have been long-standing supporters of the cause for Palestinian freedom....That's why PCS is supporting events taking place across the country today and no matter how big or small, each event adds to the chorus of voices calling for a ceasefire and an end to the killing in Gaza."

Why do we advocate for Palestine?

In an online meeting attended by more than 150 members, Mohammed Shafiq, chair of the PCS NBMC, told the meeting that he was currently dealing with personal cases in workplaces where members had said they were being targeted

or published for advocating for Palestine in some way, encouraging all members to urgently contact him or their local union rep directly if they faced similar issues.

But why, he asked, are many PCS members at the meeting and advocating for Palestine?

"It's because it's a cause that is dear to many of our hearts. It's not a Muslim or a Christian or a Jewish issue – it's a humanitarian crisis that requires humanity to stand with Palestine."

He said it was the duty of the trade union movement to stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine, and also pointed to the inaction and double-standards of the international community and the UK government.

It's "deplorable", he said, "that both the Conservative party and the Labour party have refused to support an immediate ceasefire that would stop the killing and see all hostages and Palestinian prisoners released."

"As much as some people would like us to think that this started on 7 October [the date of the Hamas attack on Israel], it didn't," he added. "It started back in 1948 with the first Nakba [known in English as 'the catastrophe'], when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were kicked out of their homes and became refugees."

What can members do?

Louise Regan, vice chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and an activist in the National Education Union, thanked PCS and members for organising events up and down the country to mark this day of action.

She pointed out that Palestinian trade unionists have continually called for trade unions around the world to take action in "support of their cause for justice".

She told the meeting that members can contact their MP to call for a permanent ceasefire, attend the various PSC and STW demonstrations that are taking place nationally and locally, donate to organisations and charities that are supporting Palestinians, and support the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement where possible.

Highlighting the fact that she was previously a PCS member when she worked as a civil servant, Terina Hine, a national officer from Stop the War Coalition,

explained why the war in Gaza is a trade union issue, and why solidarity matters.

“We hear all the time that unions should stick to their bread and butter concerns, about their pay and conditions. People who say this seem to forget completely about the history of solidarity and internationalism in the trade union movement.”

She gave some historical and contemporary examples of trade unions “standing up for what is right in their own workplaces and on the international stage”, including the role of international trade unions in helping to end the apartheid regime in South Africa.

More recently, she reminded the meeting, workers in London's Apollo Theatre forced the cancellation of an event titled Standing with Israel that was intended to fundraise for the Israeli army, the IDF, by refusing to work the event – even for triple pay.

Can PCS members speak out?

John Moloney, PCS Assistant General Secretary, said that civil servants are allowed to have political opinions (with the exception of the small ‘politically restricted’ group).

“The main restriction is around self-identification. If you identify yourself as a civil servant and then say I oppose a government policy, that’s where, potentially, you might fall foul of the rules,” he said.

“Our general view is that people should attend demonstrations but that the best protection is being a member of the PCS union and joining PCS events...”

“If you are in a workplace and want to get active around Palestine, then please contact your local branch,” he added.