

The CGT must give unambiguous support to the Palestinian people

This letter was initially sent to the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), France's main Trade Union, as an internal email with 59 signatures (2 sections and 57 CGT leaders & activists from all over France), without receiving any meaningful response. It has therefore been updated with the most recent declarations of the CGT Confederation and transformed into an open letter published on [Mediapart](#).

It is also published on change.org/petition-cgt-palestine, where it gathered more than 700 signatures.

In the list of signatures below, the non-CGT signatories are indicated by an indent.



We, local leaders, activists, union members and/or simple supporters of the CGT, wish to express our frustration at the ambiguous positions taken by the national instances of the CGT and its representatives on the situation in Gaza and the West Bank since October 7, 2023. In particular, we deplore statements likely to obscure the martyrdom of the Palestinian people, who have been the victim and not the executioner since 1948, and permeability to pro-Israeli propaganda, which tends to establish equivalence between the occupier and the occupied, or even to reverse the roles between aggressor and victim.

CGT statements

The Confederal Communiqué of October 9, entitled “[For a fair and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine](#)”, denounced a Hamas offensive “of unprecedented violence, targeting a large number of civilians”, condemned “this escalation which puts millions of Israeli and Palestinian civilians into

mourning and serves the Palestinian cause”, and expressed “its full support for the Israeli and Palestinian victims and their families”.

The Confederal Communiqué of October 18, entitled “[Stop the bloodbath in Gaza immediately](#)”, at a time when the Palestinian death toll was already in the thousands, devoted its entire first paragraph to condemning Hamas: It spoke of “terrible strikes in retaliation for the acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas” and condemned “this policy of the worst that serves the Palestinian cause”, accusing this movement “which has been violating women’s rights and multiplying arbitrary arrests for almost 20 years” of imposing “a double penalty on the enclave”. Further on, after referring to the “displacement of a million people” in Gaza, he called for “the generosity and exceptional measures (notably temporary protection) rightly used to welcome Ukrainians fleeing the war [to be] extended to the Palestinians”. In conclusion, the CGT expressed “its full support for the thousands of Israeli and Palestinian victims and their families, and demands the release of all hostages and persons unjustly detained”.

In a [speech on November 9, 2023](#), at the commemoration of Kristallnacht organized by the RAAR (Action network against anti-Semitism and all forms of racism), Sophie Binet [CGT Secretary General] stated that she “clearly condemns Hamas terrorism and the murder of 1,400 Israeli civilians, and calls for the immediate release of the 220 hostages”.

The CGT monthly *Ensemble, la Vie Ouvrière* No. 19 for November denounced the “despicable action” of Hamas on October 7, which constituted a targeting “by religious fanaticism [of] youth and [the] expression of freedom”, “a turning point in horror” and an “action unprecedented in its scale and barbarity”, the victims of which were “overwhelmingly civilians”. On the subject of the Nova rave party, it was stated that “at least 260 people were killed, by bullets or explosives, because they were Jewish”.

In January 2024, while the inhabitants of Gaza have been killed by the tens of thousands (70% of the victims being women and children), displaced by the millions and subjected to a humanitarian crisis of biblical proportions, while more than a thousand Palestinian children have had to undergo amputations without anesthesia (and the same goes for many caesarean deliveries), the January 9 “[Update on CGT initiatives concerning the situation in the Middle East](#)” once again denounces, on the Palestinian side, the “acts of terror by Hamas” of October 7, and on the Israeli side, “the deluge of fire that Israel is provoking in return against the Gaza Strip”. At a time when Israel is being [indicted for the crime of genocide at the International Court of Justice](#), thanks to an initiative by South Africa supported by some fifty countries, and which the CGT would be honored to uphold, this Update does not use the term “genocide” or even “terrorism” against Israel. And while it states that the November 24 truce “enabled the release of 110 of the 240 Israeli hostages”, it says nothing about the dozens of Palestinian women and children who were also freed under the agreement between Hamas and Israel.

Finally, *Ensemble, la Vie Ouvrière* No. 21 of January 2024 again stresses that “The CGT immediately condemned ‘the acts of terror perpetrated by Hamas on October 7’ and the ‘terrible strikes in

retaliation' carried out by the Israeli army on the population of Gaza"; and in an interview with Clémence Bectarte, a lawyer specializing in criminal and international law, entitled "In the conduct of war, not everything is permissible", in which she states, without being corrected, on the subject of the "siege suffered by Gaza since October 9" (*sic*), that "The siege of a territory is not as such prohibited by international humanitarian law. However, depriving a civilian population of access to water, gas, electricity, adequate medical care and food leads to violations of the law" (emphasis added).

These recurring talking points are problematic in more ways than one.

A few necessary reminders

First of all, it should be remembered that the events did not begin on October 7, 2023, but date back more than 75 years. The 2.3 million inhabitants of Gaza, half of whom are children, are mostly refugees from the ethnic cleansing of 1948 and 1967 and their descendants, and have been subjected for decades to the horrors of occupation, murder, regular massacres and apartheid, as well as to a ruthless blockade for over 15 years that constitutes a war crime and possibly a crime against humanity. Both the occupation and the blockade constitute an act of aggression, the supreme crime according to the Nuremberg Tribunal, against which the Palestinians have the right to defend themselves, including through armed resistance.

The latest incendiary "escalation" is not that of Hamas, but that of the formation of Netanyahu's far-right government, allied with religious fanatics, and all the supremacist policies it has put in place to liquidate the Palestinian cause once and for all, including massive colonization in the West Bank, the persecution of political prisoners, repeated provocations at the Al-Aqsa mosque and the tightening of the noose on Gaza.

It is not acceptable to pit a colonial power enjoying the full support of the US superpower and imperialist capitals, as well as their formidable propaganda machine, against an oppressed and defenseless people struggling to assert their right to self-determination, security and dignity.

It is not acceptable to mourn Israeli victims before Palestinian ones, and to hold Hamas, the legitimate and democratically elected¹ representative of the Palestinian population in Gaza, responsible for the millions of Palestinian – and only *Palestinian* – lives that are endangered daily by unprecedented Israeli strikes against the population of the Gaza concentration camp. The conflict is asymmetrical, and the Palestinian armed movements are in no position to place the Israeli population in such danger. Holding Hamas responsible for Israel's massacres in Gaza would be like holding the French Resistance responsible for the Nazi occupier's reprisals against civilians. All the more so since the October 7 operation was conceived and carried out on the initiative of Hamas, but with the direct participation of all the components of the Palestinian Resistance in Gaza, including Marxist-Leninist

¹ Hamas won the legislative elections held in Gaza in 2006. Former US President Jimmy Carter was present as an observer, and described the electoral process as "honest" and "fair". Source : <https://www.cartercenter.org/news/documents/doc2287.html>

organizations such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP, of which the dean of European political prisoners, Georges Abdallah, was a member) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

It is not acceptable to condemn the “artisanal” violence of Palestinian resistance factions with the same firmness, if not more, as the far more considerable, recurrent and systemic “industrial” violence of the occupation, nor to reverse the logical, chronological, legal and moral ground between oppressor and oppressed, aggressor and aggressed, colonist and colonized, occupier and occupied. When the crimes committed by both sides are incommensurable, the language must not be equivalent, still less condemn more severely the more righteous party.

It is not acceptable to call all Israelis, including occupation soldiers captured by the Palestinian resistance, “hostages”, and to speak of “detainees” for the more than ten thousand Palestinians. now imprisoned by Israel (the number has doubled since October 7, with thousands of additional Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank having been arbitrarily arrested or even subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment). Hundreds of Palestinian women and children are among these “prisoners”, and thousands of them are under “administrative detention”, a regime without charge, extrajudicial and indefinitely renewable.

It is not acceptable to claim that Israelis are victims of Palestinian anti-Semitism, and are targeted because they are Jews. They are targeted because they are seen as occupiers, depriving the indigenous people of their most basic rights. Nothing must be done that might appear to support the assimilation of anti-Zionism to a form of anti-Semitism, the odious blackmail that allows [French Prime Minister] Darmanin, for example, to consider the simple act of waving a Palestinian flag and showing support for this cause as an anti-Semitic and illegal act.

It is not acceptable to repeat Israel’s genocidal propaganda about “atrocious acts of terror by Hamas” on October 7, which deliberately caused the deaths of “1,400 civilians” (the number of Israeli victims has since been reduced to around 1,200). In the absence of the results of a commission of inquiry, which can only take place after the ongoing conflict, and in view of the total military censorship imposed on all media in Israel even in times of peace, statements by the terrorist Israeli army and its fascist government accusing Hamas of deliberate mass murder must be treated with the same circumspection as statements by Hamas itself, which claims that it only wanted to capture as many Israelis as possible in order to free its own prisoners, and blames any crimes committed on other Palestinian sub-groups or individuals who have stepped into the breach, or on Israel’s application of the famous “Hannibal procedure”, according to which prisoners must be prevented from falling alive into the hands of Hamas at all costs, even if this means eliminating both kidnapers and hostages. If we look at the list of victims published by the *Haaretz* newspaper², we see that several hundred were soldiers (not to mention militiamen and the fact that the settlers are notoriously armed), a ratio

² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-19/ty-article-magazine/israels-dead-the-names-of-those-killed-in-hamas-massacres-and-the-israel-hamas-war/0000018b-325c-d450-a3af-7b5cf0210000>

inconceivable for the massacres perpetrated by Israel, where hundreds of Palestinian civilians are decimated for every combatant killed. Already, investigative reports and survivor testimonies, which have been circulating publicly since mid-October, accuse the Israeli army of having killed its own civilians through the use of heavy weapons (tanks, Apache helicopters, etc.) during the intense fighting at the Nova rave party and in the kibbutz where Hamas fighters were entrenched with their hostages³.

It is not acceptable to dictate to the Palestinian people what they should do to free themselves from the yoke of oppression and occupation. While certain acts certainly cannot be condoned, it is not appropriate to condemn them by repeating the racist Israeli rhetoric that distorts the facts, dehumanizes the Palestinians and aims to justify every conceivable reprisal against them, especially in these circumstances, when international solidarity and opposition to the planned deportation of the inhabitants of Gaza – which the CGT seems to want to facilitate by calling on other countries to welcome them as they welcomed the Ukrainians, instead of categorically opposing it – are crucial to defeating the Netanyahu government’s plans for a “final solution”.

Let’s not forget that, under international law, there is an occupier, Israel, and an occupied, Palestine. The Palestinian people have the right to use all means to obtain their liberation, including the use of

³ An [article in L’Humanité](#) on November 21, entitled “***They eliminated everyone, including the hostages: were Israeli civilians killed by their army?***” reports: “On October 20, a journalist from the Israeli daily Haaretz visited Kibbutz Be’eri, one of those attacked by Hamas. There he met Tuval Escapa. He had set up a telephone hotline to maintain a link between residents and the army, in the event of an attack... As the daily reports, ‘despair set in when commanders on the ground took difficult decisions – Including bombing houses on their occupants in order to eliminate the terrorists, as well as the hostages’.

This is confirmed by Yasmin Porat, who survived having been captured with other Israelis in a house where she had taken refuge. The Israeli civilians were ‘undoubtedly’ killed by their own security forces, she asserted. ‘They eliminated everyone, including the hostages. There was very, very heavy crossfire’ and even from tanks.

This happened when alerted Israeli forces engaged in fierce battles with Palestinian attackers from the Be’eri kibbutz and fired indiscriminately at the fighters and their Israeli prisoners.

An I24 News journalist, who cannot be accused of anti-Israeli tropism, reported, during a visit to the same Be’eri kibbutz a few days later, ‘picturesque little houses (that) have been bombed or destroyed’ and ‘well-kept lawns (that) have been torn up by the tracks of an armored vehicle, perhaps a tank’.

‘Extremely difficult to distinguish a terrorist from a soldier or civilian’

Haaretz also published reports that the Israeli army had been ‘forced to call for an air strike’ against the Erez terminal (the crossing point between Israel and Gaza) ‘in order to repel the terrorists’ who had taken control of it. This base was filled with officers and soldiers of the Israeli civil administration at the time.

On October 15, Israel’s largest daily, Yedioth Aharanoth, reported that the Apache helicopter pilots who intervened ‘realized that it was extremely difficult to distinguish, in the occupied outposts and settlements, who was a terrorist and who was a soldier or civilian... The rate of fire against the thousands of terrorists was enormous at first, and only at a certain point did the pilots begin to slow down the attacks and carefully select the targets’. But, for Yedioth, the fault lay with the Palestinians, who were allegedly ordered to blend in with the crowd of young rave party attendees fleeing the horror.” Source : <https://www.humanite.fr/monde/armee-israelienne/ils-ont-elimine-tout-le-monde-y-compris-les-otages-des-civils-israeliens-ont-ils-ete-tues-par-leur-armee>

armed force⁴. As for Israel, as an occupying power faced with non-state actors, according to the International Court of Justice, it cannot invoke the right to self-defense⁵. Both Gaza and the West Bank are occupied territories under international conventions and UN resolutions.

The CGT must revive its anti-colonial past

The CGT is honored to have once supported the struggle for liberation of the Algerian people and the FLN (National Liberation Front), at a time when it risked not only the charge of apology for terrorism, which notably struck several of our comrades, but that of participation in a terrorist enterprise and undermining state security.

Today, the CGT must adopt the same position of genuine support for Palestine, especially at a time when Gaza is being subjected to a veritable war of extermination and an overt plan to deport over two million people to the Sinai desert. These facts are far more deserving of being denounced with the withering, emotionally-charged epithets so far largely reserved for denouncing Hamas.

While dozens of premature babies died in Gaza as a result of deliberate power cuts that interrupted the supply to their incubators at al-Shifa hospital, a very real crime as opposed to the macabre fable of the “40 decapitated babies”, or the “Kuwait incubators” that were used to justify the first Gulf War (not to mention Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction, so many lies that called for circumspection), the CGT must distance itself from the warlike and genocidal propaganda spread by Israel and its media echo chambers, reject all political pressure and judicial intimidation, and place itself resolutely on the side of international law, justice and morality. To fail to take a clear stand and merely condemn “war crimes” on both sides is to play into the hands of the strongest warring party.

The CGT must unreservedly affirm its firm and unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, totally banishing any language that might establish any equivalence between the two sides, and serve as justification or cover for the ongoing bloodbath against Gaza.

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⁴ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2621 (XXV) of December 12, 1970 “Declares the further continuation of colonialism in all its forms and manifestations a crime which constitutes a violation of the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the principles of international law” and **“Reaffirms the inherent right of colonial peoples to struggle by all necessary means at their disposal against colonial Powers which suppress their aspiration for freedom and independence”**. Source : <https://daccess-ods.un.org/tmp/505807.32524395.html>

⁵ Request for an advisory opinion from the United Nations General Assembly to the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: “As regards the question of whether cross-border attacks by irregular forces can be interpreted as armed attack justifying a claim of self-defence, the ICJ found in the *Nicaragua* case (ICJ Reports 1986 (Merits) 14) that acts by ‘armed bands, groups, irregular or mercenaries’ which carry out acts of armed force, may amount to armed attack, provided that it is of such a gravity that it amounts to an actual armed attack by regular forces, and that such forces must be sent by or act on behalf of a state. This is not the case in the Palestine conflict.” Source: https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2004/01/bd8f70d1b759de1585256eb6006b60a3_South%20Africa.pdf

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164. Dominique LLOYD, member of the CGT retirees section of the Tarbes territorials
165. Salima MERLEAU, Deputy Secretary of the CGT union at Novo Hospital, Beaumont 95 site
166. Fernando PINTADO, retired from the civil service, Isère
167. Ludovic NOBREGA, retired CGT Auch railway worker
168. Christian ROZE, retired, Montigny-le-Bretonneux
169. Jordi GRAU, professor in Moselle, union activist (SNES)
170. Serge ERMISSE, Unionized teacher in Sud, Department 57
171. Claude K., retired, 78

172. Dominique LACOMBE, retired CGT from the Post Office, Laon (02)
173. Dominique SCELLIER, retired CGT from the Post Office, Laon (02)
174. Bernard BARRÉ, member of the AFPS, CNT trade unionist, Drôme
175. Pierre STAMBUL, FSU trade unionist, spokesperson for the UJFP (French Jewish Union for Peace)
176. Michel OUAKNINE, engineer, member of the French Jewish Union for Peace and the Movement Against Racism and for Peace, Paris
177. Gilles ROTILLON, economist, Professor Emeritus at Paris-Nanterre University
178. Gérard COUCHOUD, SNES-FSU trade unionist, member of MRAP, ATTAC and UJFP, Palaiseau (91)
179. Jacques VAN RILLAER, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Louvain, Brussels
180. Ugo LEMAIRE, Civic Service, CGT Amiens
181. Jean-Pierre BOUCHÉ, BDS activist
182. JF Clopeau, retired from National Education, Sarcelles (95)
183. Louis PHAN, treasurer of the CGT ASE 75
184. Cécile PILLARD, SGPA CGT archaeology, 54
185. Jean-Pierre DUMARTIN, retired CGT FNME, activist at UL CGT Mont-de-Marsan and INDECOSACGT40
186. Eric FUSS, retired from education and member of various CGT structures
187. Alain ROUSSARD, retired teacher, Craon
188. Gilles HELLIER, Member of the federal leadership of the FNIC-CGT
189. Elliott L., sailor, Alpes-Maritimes
190. Mireille SENAMAUD, retired teacher, Vienne (86)
- 191. CGT Energie Paris union, via Cédric LIECHTI, General Secretary, and Arnaud BARET, Union delegate (unanimous vote of the EC)**
192. Vincent BABINEAU, CGT trainer and leader of CSD 17, General Secretary of the Territorials union of Lagord, member of the FSM

193. Barbara CASTANDET, CGT union Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations
194. Pierre-Sélim LEBRUN, worker-agro-economist, Caen-Ifs (Calvados)
195. Bernard GENET, host of Comaguer, Anti-imperialist Committee (13)
- 196. CGT local union of Lannion, via Erwan TREZEGUET, Secretary**
197. Léo MIRA, former journalist unionized with the SNJ then with the CGT journalists, now retired (Toulouse)
198. Bernard CHOLET, retired railway worker CGT Toulouse
199. Guy CAUWENBERGH, retired, former analyst-programmer, Hayange (57)
200. Marie-Paule FRISTOT, retired from national education, member of Attac 57, MAN 57 and BDS 57, Metz
201. André ROUSSEAU, retired researcher, CGT FERC-Sup union member, University of Bordeaux
202. Georges AUSPITZ, member of the coordination of the UJFP (French Jewish Union for Peace)
203. Armand AJZENBERG, technician in industry, CGT retirees (77)
204. Alberte BONNET (44)
205. Hamid MORSI, retired, Montrouge (92120)
206. Richard BORENSTEIN, retired, CGT union member, member of the CE of the UL-CGT of Fontenay-sous-Bois / Le Perreux / Nogent
207. Missfaff, Mediapart subscriber
208. K. Bernard, Mediapart subscriber, Martinique
209. Babette GRIVINCI, writer-biographer-proofreader, Saint-Cyr-sur-Loire
210. Marie-Luce BONFANTI, actress, author, translator (93)
211. François BEAUNE, writer, Marseille
212. UneVoix.Info, Mediapart subscriber
213. Thierry JACQUOT, retired, Corrèze
214. Thierry LOUCHON, member of the EC of USR 13, leader of the Retired Collective of the Martigues region

215. West Palestine Solidarity Collective Étang de Berre

216. Palestine13 — Bouches-du-Rhône local group of the France Palestine Solidarity Association (AFPS)

217. Bernard FAVIER, Bouches-du-Rhône, BDS Provence

218. Esra CAN, President of AFPS Roanne

219. Élen QUEMENER, elected CGT PJJ Grand Ouest

220. Marc TERTRE, retired CGT, popular education activist

221. B. GIRARD, teacher

222. Anne MOREL, retired teacher, 78

223. Tchibo, Retired professor, Var (83)

224. Serge KOULBERG, amateur writer, Grambois (84)

225. CGT FERC Sup of Paris 8 University

226. Jean-Pierre GAILLET, former CGT Thomson CSF delegate

227. Marie-Eve CALVÈS, retired nurse, ex-CGT du Gers, official NPA activist

228. Grégoire CHARLOT, CGT union member University of Grenoble, FERC Sup.

229. Gérard BURTIN, retired CGT Educ'action 71

230. Louis TOMEI, Secretary of the CGT urban community union of Bastia

231. Pierre MANTOVANI, Secretary of the CGT Committee of Precarious and Deprived of Employment Workers of Toulon and its surroundings (UL de Toulon) and of the Palestine Toulon association - FTP (Federation of Football Tournaments for Palestine), editor of the La Sartan Roujo review

232. Philippe LE CLERRE, former CGT activist, Co-secretary of the Peace and Disarmament Commission – EELV

233. Claude BOUCHER, Human Rights activist, Paris