

Economic & Social Policy and International Affairs #1

Subject: SEIU 503 Resources and Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and Crimes against Humanity

Authored by: Steven Demarest

Submitted by: Retiree Local (sublocal 001)

WHEREAS, as James Baldwin said, “The children are always ours, every single one of them, all over the globe;” and

WHEREAS, at its base, a labor union rests on the concept of siblinghood, and a union’s existential and essential goal is the betterment of humanity, and

WHEREAS, ultimately, protecting and lifting up some people, including some workers, will be fraught if all people, including all workers, are not protected and lifted up, and

WHEREAS, history has shown that human rights issues are workers issues, and that a nation or a people cannot wall itself off forever from the impacts of distress or inhumanity outside its borders, and

WHEREAS, it is therefore against the principles and interests of SEIU Local 503, OPEU to support, to tolerate, or to assent by silence, genocide, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity wherever they occur, and

WHEREAS, deploying and utilizing the resources of the Union and its members should be determined by the principles and interests of the Union and its members, and,

WHEREAS, we are the inheritors of the universal solidarity demonstrated by the Manchester cotton workers who refused to process any slave-grown cotton during the American Civil War, of the British trade unions’ blocking of trade with Chilean fascists after the Pinochet coup, and of the US labor solidarity against apartheid in South Africa,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, it is the policy of SEIU Local 503, OPEU that the resources of the Union and its members, including, but not limited to, political funding, endorsements, funding of community groups, people power, and members’ publicly held retirement funds, shall not be expended on people, businesses, or groups who have taken a position advocating, denying, or remaining neutral on extant genocide, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity, or, in the case of political candidates, have accepted money from donors who have done so, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, if the Board of Directors or Oregon State Council endorse a candidate who subsequently advocates, denies, or remains neutral on extant genocide, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity, or accepts money from donors who have done so, it is the policy of SEIU Local 503, OPEU to factor that in when deploying campaign support.

IMPACT STATEMENTS

Financial: No fiscal impact

Equity: This resolution would have a positive impact as it aligns SEIU503 values with human rights values and ensures protections for all workers.

Legal: Generally no legal impact, though we note that the language related to political candidates accepting money from donors may have been intended to mean donors known to do so.

Political: This resolution would require the union to establish a process for determining whether a candidate has been supported by donors who hold the positions outlined in the resolution, and whether the candidate has taken — or declined to take — those same positions. It would also require CAPE, our union's Political Action Committee, to incorporate this criteria into its endorsement process. Some work would be needed to clarify what "remaining neutral on genocide, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity" means in this context, and which offices it would apply to, so that the standard can be applied consistently and fairly. It's also worth noting that the union already advocates for Economic, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing principles as they relate to our members' pensions, and we're glad to expand that advocacy in line with this resolution's goals.