



AFL-CIO Statement of Principles: We Want a Just and Decent World

Posted on June 22, 2026 by Alan Singer

Historically, the AFL-CIO has had at best a checkered record with its positions on American foreign policy and its support for broader social justice movements. The history of the AFL-CIO's role as a junior partner in the U.S. government's anti-working class activities during the Cold War is documented in [*Blue-Collar Empire: The Untold Story of US Labor's Global Anticommunist Crusade*](#) by Jeff Schuhrke (Verso, 2024).

Before merging in 1955, both the AFL and CIO [supported](#) purging leftists from the American labor movement and the AFL worked in partnership with the U.S. government's aggressive efforts to undermine leftwing labor movements around the world. After the merger, the federation promoted its model of business unionism in other countries in an effort to suppress worker militancy and support for left-wing movements. During the 1960s the AFL-CIO supported the U.S. War in Vietnam and provided funds and resources to anti-communist labor groups. These activities continued for the rest of the Cold War era.

On the [domestic front](#), under pressure from HUAC, the CIO expelled left-led unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers. While the union movement broadly supported the [African American Civil Rights movement](#) in the 1960s, many unions continued to restrict Black membership and job advancement.

This history makes the decision by delegates to the 2026 AFL-CIO annual convention in Minneapolis to adopt a resolution declaring their support for creation of a “[Just and Peaceful World](#)” even more significant. The labor federation [represents](#) 15 million American workers including teachers, nurses, government employees, firefighters, professional athletes, actors, bus drivers, and postal, electrical, auto, mine, steel, and garment workers. This is the text of the resolution. I thank [Lawrence Wittner](#) for drawing my attention to it. It is not quite as stirring as Zohran Mamdani’s [speech](#) at the New York Knicks’ victory parade, but it is a powerful statement worth reading.

[Text of the Resolution:](#)

Working people everywhere are living through a defining moment in history, shaped by a stark choice about whose interests and values will govern the world.

Across much of the world, a powerful vision is being pushed that concentrates power at the top, treats democracy as an obstacle and reduces workers to costs to be controlled. In this vision, corporations are unaccountable, unions are attacked, migrants are scapegoated, public goods are stripped away and economic growth for the few is celebrated even as most of us, working families, fall further behind. A vision where workers, their families and communities are threatened by violence and war and international law is disregarded. It is a vision promoted by political strongmen, unaccountable billionaires and corporate elites who use race to divide us and seek to enrich themselves through domination, division and fear.

But that is not our vision.

In workplaces, communities and global forums alike, workers and their unions are demanding something different: an economy that rewards work, not rigged systems; democracy that is real, not hollow; and a future shaped through cross-racial solidarity rather than domination. Around the world, working people are pushing back against a failed model and offering an alternative rooted in dignity, fairness and collective power. Workers are demanding an end to war and never-ending conflicts.

Around the world, from Hungary to South Korea, unions are on the front lines of mobilizing for democracy in their countries and defending political, economic and social rights. Their struggles inspire workers everywhere who are fighting for democracy in the workplace and in their countries.

This fight is not theoretical. The International Trade Union Confederation has warned of a “stark and worsening global crisis” for workers’ rights. Its research shows a sharp escalation in violations of fundamental freedoms—in most countries, unions face legal barriers to registration; nearly half the world has seen workers arrested or imprisoned for organizing; and violence, intimidation and blanket bans on union activity are becoming more common, especially in countries where the legacies of colonialism and systemic racism continue to be weaponized against worker organizing.

The goal is familiar: weaken worker power everywhere so big-money corporations and political extremists face less resistance, globally and here in the United States.

Global inequality is not abstract. It is a weapon used against working people in every country. When corporations can crush unions abroad, they use that power to undercut wages, safety and bargaining power at home. When labor rights are ignored in global supply chains, U.S. workers are told to accept concessions or lose their jobs. When democracy is weakened anywhere, corporate power grows everywhere.

The U.S. labor movement understands this because we have lived it. We have seen trade rules written without workers, closing plants and hollowing out communities. We have seen unchecked monopolies use global reach to avoid accountability. And we know that no wall, border or tariff can protect workers if the global rules of the economy are rigged against us.

That is why global solidarity needs to be a strategy. It is who we are. And it is how working people win.

History teaches us that every gain workers have ever made has come when working people stood together across lines meant to divide us. When workers unite across borders, demanding racial and gender equity, we become the most powerful democratic force in the world.

The labor movement knows how to lead us out of peril, because we have always

been on the front lines when rights, freedoms and democracy are under attack. We have fought not just against the injustices of the past, but for a future working people can believe in.

This moment demands that we do so again.

Our Commitments

Global solidarity is our strategy. The rights and bargaining power of workers in one country directly affect workers everywhere. U.S. foreign policy and global engagement must reflect that reality and focus on the interests of working people, not corporate power or geopolitical dominance—both of which are already coordinating globally.

To meet this moment, the AFL-CIO commits to bold, unified and sustained global action to defend workers, democracy and human dignity in the United States and around the world.

Global Solidarity and Worker-Centered Foreign Policy

We will deepen our commitment to a strong global labor solidarity by continuing to support the international trade union movement through the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Trade Union Advisory Committee and the Global Union Federations. Together, these institutions coordinate shared struggles and fight for a global economy that delivers dignity, security, and democratic voice for workers and their communities.

We will stand with and advocate for organizations, including the Solidarity Center, that work side by side with workers around the world who are building independent unions, defending labor and human rights, and protecting democratic space. A race to the bottom has no winners, and lifting standards globally strengthens all workers.

We will fight for a foreign policy that puts workers first and reflects the shared interests of working people across borders, including the respect for international law. We will mobilize our full strength, including our time, organizing capacity,

global relationships, public investment, private philanthropy and member-driven resources, to build durable worker power across borders.

We will engage forcefully in multilateral institutions, including the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the G20 and the G7, and with the Labor 7 and Labor 20 stakeholder groups we will ensure workers' priorities shape global rules, standards and policies.

We will advocate for continued U.S. government and labor engagement in international negotiations on climate, energy and energy jobs, particularly through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement, the International Energy Agency and the ILO.

We will advance an alternative economic vision that puts workers at the center and rejects deregulation and austerity as acceptable trade-offs. We support a renewed global social contract that delivers good, sustainable jobs in the age of climate change and artificial intelligence, fair taxation, strong public services, racial and gender equity, social dialogue and collective bargaining as foundations of shared prosperity.

Trade and the Economy

We will fight for a worker-centered model of trade that raises standards rather than drives them down. Corporations that profit from global trade must be held accountable for respecting workers' rights throughout their supply chains.

We will defend and strengthen labor rights enforcement tools, including facility-specific mechanisms like the USMCA Rapid Response Labor Mechanism, and fight to preserve trade preference programs and Trade Adjustment Assistance so workers are never treated as collateral damage of global economic policy.

We will advance strong labor standards across global supply chains, including critical mineral supply chains inside and outside the United States, and prevent the proliferation of flags of convenience and related labor arbitrage schemes in the maritime and airline industries.

Ensuring that workers and communities have real rights, protections and a voice on

the job is essential to fairness, community safety and preventing unfair competition that undercuts workers everywhere.

We will support strong enforcement of anti-dumping and countervailing duty laws and ensure scrutiny of foreign investments in strategic sectors that threaten workers, communities or national security.

We will confront the unchecked power of tech monopolies and oligarchs who use artificial intelligence and digital platforms to concentrate wealth, control work and undermine democracy. Working with global unions, we will fight for democratic control over technology and worker control over technology in the workplace, and we will support and promote copyright and individual intellectual property protections globally, so innovation strengthens jobs rather than replaces them, and productivity gains are shared with workers and their communities. We will work with our global partners to advocate for a list of global standards for the use of artificial intelligence (AI)—reflective of the AFL-CIO’s AI Principles—to ensure the continuation of human-centric work and a workforce that is a stakeholder in its own dignity and future.

Organizing

We will strengthen transnational organizing strategies that match the global scale of multinational corporations.

We will support global solidarity campaigns that provide concrete assistance to workers organizing and bargaining with multinational corporations.

We will educate our members about how global labor rights violations and declining standards abroad affect wages, safety and bargaining power in our own workplaces and communities.

Peace and Prosperity

We will stand with workers and communities harmed by war, repression, coercion, threats of genocide and to democratic self-determination, including in Greenland, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, Ukraine, Venezuela and elsewhere. We will ensure that the

sovereignty of close allies like Canada is respected. We will advocate for an end to wars that threaten workers' livelihoods, security and rights. Working people must never be treated as pawns in geopolitical power struggles.

In Gaza, we demand an immediate and permanent ceasefire; full, safe and sustained humanitarian access; a halt to arms transfers that may facilitate violations of international law by all parties; and a credible political process grounded in international law and UN resolutions to achieve a just and lasting peace based on a two-state solution.

We will join with pro-democracy labor and social movements globally to resist the consolidation of political and economic power in the hands of authoritarian and oligarchic forces.

Migration

We will reject efforts to divide working people through fear, exclusion and racist anti-migrant rhetoric. Both domestically and in multilateral spaces, we will oppose discriminatory travel bans and migration policies, defend due process and dignity for all workers, and push back against the global trend of closing permanent migration pathways while expanding exploitative guestworker systems that deny rights and lock workers into abuse.

We will denounce the abandonment of refugee and asylum commitments under international law, the termination of vital humanitarian protections such as temporary protected status, and any other policy decisions that would return working people to dangerous situations.

We will demand due process for all, including international workers, students and visitors to the United States, and reject policies that seek to intimidate international travelers and immigrants.

We will seek to mitigate the push factors that drive forced migration by pursuing foreign policies that promote peace and halt support for repressive governments, and by pursuing trade policies that include enforceable mechanisms to ensure that all workers are able to access their fundamental rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, including migrants in our work visa programs.

Democracy

We will confront the global rollback of worker rights and civil liberties, as documented by the ITUC, and stand in solidarity with trade unionists facing harassment, imprisonment, violence or murder for organizing. We will join with pro-democracy labor and social movements around the world to fight for a future where big money and powerful corporations do not get to impose their wealth and influence at the expense of what working people everywhere want and deserve: fair wages for our labor, protections that let us come home safe and healthy, health care and child care, freedom from abuse and exploitation on the job, retirement with dignity, and a real seat at the table when decisions about our jobs, our communities and our lives are made.

Solidarity Is Our Strength

This is our moment. The forces aligned against working people are global, organized and determined. We must be the same. Our solidarity is our strength, and together we will win.”



Representatives of the UE and other unions rallied at the White House December 1

to support hunger strikers demanding a ceasefire. Photo Credit: *UE News*.

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