



For the attention of:

**Mrs Sharan Burrow**

**General Secretary**

**International Trade Union Confederation**

11 June 2020

**Ref: Joint Open Letter from European trade unions – Histadrut's discrimination of Palestinian workers**

Dear friends at ITUC,

We would like to express our deep concern about the situation of Palestinian workers in Israel and illegal settlements, which is being exacerbated by the Israeli government and Histadrut's failure to meet their obligations to these workers at this time of pandemic.

While the situation of Palestinian men and women, especially workers, is difficult after decades of Israeli colonization and occupation (1), the Covid-19 pandemic makes it even more acute.

Before the lock-down, nearly 130,000 Palestinian workers in the West Bank were forced to work in Israel or illegal settlements to survive. As in the rest of the world, the pandemic shows that these exploited workers are in fact doing work that the Israeli economy depends on. That is why, despite the current health crisis, the Israeli State has asked 40,000 of them to remain working in Israel, while Israelis remain confined to their homes (2).

While under Israeli law since 1970, Palestinian workers have the same rights as Israeli workers, and since the Oslo Accords of 1993, most Palestinian workers in Israel pay union dues to the Israeli union Histadrut, the latter does not provide them with protection (3).

As a result of the containment measures, the Israeli government has granted unemployment benefits to Israeli workers, excluding Palestinian workers who contribute to Israeli union dues. As pointed out by WAC-MAAN, Kav Laoved and the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Israeli government could also use the Sick Pay Fund that Palestinian workers have contributed to in the past decades, without being able to claim paid sick leave (4). Such discriminations, which contravenes ILO conventions 100 and 111 on equal remuneration and discrimination (5), have in no way been contested by the Histadrut, which should protect and defend their right to such an

allowance.

Confident in the commitment of the International Trade Union Confederation to condemn "all forms of discrimination as an affront to human dignity and to the equality into which each person is born and has the right to live, and pledges to uphold respect for diversity at work and in society"

(6), we demand that the discrimination practised by Histadrut against Palestinian workers forced to work in Israel and illegal settlements be taken into account by all ITUC unions.

In the hope that our request will deepen your commitment to the struggle for the emancipation of workers, please receive our internationalist greetings.

**Signatures:**

1. European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine – Steering Committee,

**BELGIUM**

2. La Centrale Generale-FGTB

3. CNE/CSC (The National Center for Employees and Managers in the Private Sector)

4. ACOD-VRT

5. ABVV-ACOD Cultuur

6. ACOD-LRB Brussel / CGSP-ALR Bruxelles

**FRANCE**

7. Union syndicale Solidaires

**IRELAND:**

8. Unison

9. Craigavon Trades Council

10. Fermanagh Trades Council.

11. Mandate Trade Union

12. Communications Workers Union

**LITHUANIA**

13. Lithuanian Industry Trade Union Federation

**NORWAY**

14. Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (Fagforbundet)

15. Oslo Hospital- and Health workers union (Fagforbundet)

16. Oslo public transport workers union (Fagforbundet)

17. The Norwegian Union of Employees in Commerce and Offices (HK i Norge)

18. The United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet)

19. Jernverksklubben in Mo i Rana (Fellesforbundet)

20. Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions in Trondheim (LO I Trondheim)

21. Norwegian Food and Allied Workers Union dept. 7 (NNN dept 7)

22. Fjellservice Swa (construction and civil engineering company)

23 The Red Party Høyanger (Raudt Høyanger)

**THE NETHERLANDS**

24. The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation

## **PALESTINE**

25. General Federation of Independent Trade Unions

## **SCOTLAND**

26. Dundee Trades Union Council

## **SPANISH STATE**

- 27. Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT)
- 28. Confederación Intersindical Galega (Galicia)
- 29. Confederación Intersindical
- 30. SAT Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores (Andalucia)
- 31. Intersindical Valenciana (Valencia)
- 32. IAC - Intersindical Alternativa de Catalunya (Catalunya)

## **SWITZERLAND**

33. Le Syndicat Autonome des Postiers

### NOTES:

(1) Israel's occupation: Undermining Palestinians' Right to Decent Work

Riya Al'Sanah, European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine, December 2019

<http://www.etun-palestine.org/site/2019/12/17/report-european-complicity-with-israels-occupation-undermining-palestinians-right-to-decent-work/>

(2) Between the rock of the occupation, and the hammer of coronavirus

G. N. Nithya, Socialist Project, 19 April 2020

<https://socialistproject.ca/2020/04/between-rock-of-occupation-and-hammer-of-coronavirus/>

(3) Briefing on Palestinian workers in Israeli Corporations under COVID-19 Pandemic

The Land Defense Coalition, The Palestine New Federation of Trade Unions, the Palestinian Postal Services Workers Union and Human Rights Defenders, April 2020

<http://www.laboursolidarity.org/Briefing-on-Palestinian-workers-in>

(4) Petition to High Court for compensation for Palestinians who lost their jobs in Israel due to Covid-19

<http://eng.wac-maan.org.il/?p=2386>

(5) ILO Conventions and Recommendations

<https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/introduction-to-international-labour-standards/conventions-and-recommendations/lang--en/index.htm>

(6) ITUC Constitution and Standing Orders

<https://www.ituc-csi.org/about-us?lang=en>