



Histadrut Resolution: Peace and Co-operation

The Histadrut and the Peace Process

Since its establishment in 1920, the Histadrut has supported the peace process and promoted co-existence in the region. We strongly support workers across all communities in Israel and fight for their rights. Approximately twenty percent of our members are Israeli Arabs and they are fully represented. We view the workers in our organisation as equal members, regardless of their religion, ethnic origin, or gender. This is our guiding principle.

We strongly believe that a two-state solution, Israel and Palestine, living side by side with secure and recognised borders is the only way to end the ongoing conflict. We urge the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to immediately resume their negotiations in order to reach an agreement based on the Road Map, which was accepted by all sides. Such an agreement would yield an acceptable solution to the core bones of contention.

We understand and are concerned by the effects the restrictions on movement and the security fence/wall can have on the lives of Palestinian workers and their families. We support the decision to remove security checkpoints in the context of the renewed security situation and we call upon the Israeli government to dismantle all illegal outposts. We recognise these problems and steadfastly work with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) to mitigate them whilst negotiations on the wider issues take place.

We call on our government to make concessions and take courageous and concrete steps towards attaining peace. At the same time we expect the PA to show true willingness to negotiate, encourage peace and do its utmost to fight terrorism. Crucially, we call upon the Palestinian leadership to support moderates, such as the PGFTU, who publicly call for peace, co-existence, and reconciliation.

As the representatives of the working people and the families in Israel, we believe that it is our duty to be involved in the peace process and serve as a role-model. We believe that we are able to help bridge the gap between Israelis and Palestinians and this is why, along with the principles of international trade union solidarity, we decided to work with the PGFTU as partners in this endeavour in 1993 after the Oslo peace agreement to build the foundations for peace.

Working with the PGFTU

In 1995 our two organisations signed an unprecedented agreement in which fifty percent of all dues from Palestinians employed by Israeli employers would be remitted to the PGFTU. Unfortunately, the agreement was not fully implemented due to security conditions. However, under the auspices of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), headed by Guy Ryder, we successfully finalised and implemented the agreement in June 2008. As a result, US\$3.6 million has been transferred to the PGFTU, both in arrears and in ongoing payments.

The Histadrut and PGFTU are now co-operating not only on the confederation level, but also at the union level and representatives of both sides meet on a regular basis. In the transport sector, under the auspices of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the Canadian Auto Workers' Union (CAW), we are implementing a telephone "Hotline" project to facilitate communication between Israeli checkpoint guards, Palestinian truck drivers, and the PGFTU. And in July this year, in the framework of deepening the



relationship, our two unions have put in place a joint vocational training seminar for drivers from both Israel and Palestine.

In the construction area, we have agreed joint vocational training courses, with the help of the Builders and Woodworkers International (BWI), for young Palestinians to gain vocational training and work experience in Israel.

Working for Palestinian Workers' Rights

Over 50,000 Palestinians are currently employed by Israeli companies. And while we work towards an independent Palestinian state with a viable economy, we continue to work hard to help protect Palestinians trying to earn a decent living.

We provide legal support for Palestinian workers and encourage participation in educational and vocational training workshops and distribute brochures printed in Arabic to outline their rights.

We also lobby the Israeli government on key issues. Recently, the Israeli government sought to impose a US\$ 330 tax on all Palestinian employees employed by Israeli employers. Shaher Sa'ed, the General Secretary of the PGFTU, asked the Chairman of the Histadrut, Ofer Eini, to help get this plan cancelled. Chairman Eini agreed and took a public stand against the proposal, successfully negotiating to exclude it from draft legislation.

Progress through Co-operation and Practical Solutions

We believe that conflicts are solved by dialogue and negotiations, and not by boycotts. When our two trade union movements in the region have never supported or asked for anyone to initiate a boycott, it is unhelpful for one to be promoted.

Were a boycott to be implemented, the first victims would be Palestinian workers and the West Bank economy. Most importantly, boycotts place additional obstacles between the two peoples and agitate the positive atmosphere which exists between us and the PGFTU.

The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine is very complex and our goal is to reach an understanding and to look for common denominators. We believe that the only way to overcome the hostility is through peace and trust, such as that which exists today between the Histadrut and the PGFTU.

The Histadrut will not cease in its efforts to promote peace and mutual understanding between Israelis and Palestinians.

We call on all trade unions throughout the world to support the Histadrut and the PGFTU in our joint efforts and ventures.