



Membership of the Israeli Union of Social Workers in the International Federation of Social Workers

Historical Background, Ethical Concerns, and Procedural Basis for the Special General Meeting

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To:
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Executive Summary

This report provides IFSW member organisations with a shared factual, ethical, and procedural basis for engaging in the forthcoming Special General Meeting concerning the membership of the Israeli Union of Social Workers within the International Federation of Social Workers.

The issue has evolved over more than a decade and reflects enduring tensions about the ethical responsibilities of social work in contexts of armed conflict. Since 2009, IFSW has issued a limited number of recurring types of statements in relation to Israel and Palestine. These have primarily fallen into four strands. First, statements addressed to IFSW member organisations, reaffirming ethical commitments to the social work profession, and encouraging dialogue, cooperation, and the pursuit of peaceful approaches to the conflict grounded in social work values and practice. Second, statements directed to the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, calling for ceasefire, access to humanitarian assistance, the release of hostages, and renewed dialogue and diplomatic engagement. Third, statements addressed to the international community and actors with influence over the warring parties, urging leadership and action to halt the war. Fourth, statements calling for the recognition of a two-state solution. Taken together, these strands form the ethical and policy context within which member conduct is considered.

The Israeli Union of Social Workers has been a long-standing member of IFSW and has, at times, demonstrated principled leadership, notably through its 2014 public statement calling for a two-state solution, reconstruction of Gaza, and dignity and self-determination for Palestinians and Israelis alike. That statement has been repeatedly recognised within the Federation as an example of ethical courage under conditions of conflict.

At the same time, serious concerns have arisen regarding alignment with IFSW's Global Statement of Ethical Principles. In 2018, the IFSW Executive issued a first censure against the Israeli Union for failing to act as an independent professional voice on issues of occupation and Palestinian rights. That censure was lifted in 2022 following sustained dialogue and a formal commitment by the Israeli Union to uphold equal rights and self-determination for all peoples.

In January 2025, the Executive issued a renewed censure after extensive engagement revealed that members of the Israeli Union were serving in active combat roles under mandatory conscription, and that the Union declined to request exemptions from combat roles or to issue a public call for peace. The Executive concluded that this position conflicted with the profession's ethical commitments to peace, non-violence, dignity, and human rights. As with the earlier censure, this action did not suspend rights or impose sanctions, but formally registered ethical concern.

Both the Israeli Union of Social Workers and the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists submitted formal responses to the 2025 censure. The Israeli Union rejected the censure as discriminatory and politically one sided, while reaffirming its support for peace and dialogue. The Palestinian Union, by contrast, argued that the censure was insufficient given the scale of suffering in Gaza and called for stronger action grounded in international law and professional ethics. These opposing responses illustrate the depth of disagreement now present within the Federation.

The January 2025 censure did not resolve these tensions. Instead, debate intensified, culminating in formal motions at regional level, particularly within IFSW Europe, calling for a Special General Meeting to consider suspension or expulsion of the Israeli Union of Social Workers.

Under the IFSW Constitution, the Executive has no authority to suspend or expel a member organisation. Such decisions can only be taken by the General Meeting with a 75 percent majority of members present and voting. Given the accumulation of complaints, repeated censures, unresolved ethical disagreement, and a formal regional request, a Special General Meeting is now constitutionally required.

The purpose of the Special General Meeting is to determine the membership status of the Israeli Union of Social Workers. The Secretariat remains committed to ensuring that this process is conducted with integrity, fairness, and full adherence to the Federation's Constitution and By-Laws.

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1. Purpose and Context of this Report

This report is issued to ensure that all member organisations are in a position to engage in the forthcoming Special General Meeting with a shared factual basis, a clear understanding of the historical trajectory of the issue, and a precise overview of the constitutional and procedural framework that governs the Federation's actions.

The matter before the Federation is neither new nor sudden. It has evolved over more than a decade through statements, dialogue, formal complaints, censures, and growing divergence among members regarding the ethical obligations of social work in situations of armed conflict. The calling of a Special General Meeting represents the point at which these unresolved questions must, under the Constitution, be considered collectively by the membership.

2. Membership History of the Israeli Union of Social Workers

The Israeli Union of Social Workers has been a member of the International Federation of Social Workers for many decades. During this time, the Union and its members have participated in a range of IFSW activities, including international exchanges, policy discussions, and professional development initiatives, in line with the Federation's structures and processes.

It is also important to acknowledge that there is no single social work position within Israel. Israeli social workers, like social workers in other national contexts, hold a diversity of views and perspectives. Their professional practice spans a range of fields and settings, including work with marginalised populations, reflecting the plural and contested environments in which social work operates.

3. Early Engagement and the 2014 Statement of the Israeli Union of Social Workers

In August 2014, during a previous escalation of violence in Gaza, the Israeli Union of Social Workers issued a public declaration expressing deep concern over the humanitarian impact of the war in Gaza and affirming that war is inherently destructive for all involved. It emphasised that social workers do not create conflicts but respond to human suffering, noting that social workers in Israel and Gaza were working intensively to support civilians affected by violence and displacement.

The statement highlighted the professional role of social workers in promoting resilience, addressing trauma, and helping individuals and communities regain stability once hostilities cease. Referring to an emerging ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, the Union expressed hope that negotiations would lead to a lasting ceasefire, reconstruction of infrastructure, the return of displaced people, and long-term economic recovery for both Palestinians and Israelis.

The Union reaffirmed its support for a comprehensive peace based on mutual recognition of rights, a two-state solution, and the principles of dignity and self-determination for all peoples. It stressed that achieving peace requires trust, mutual respect, and acceptance of negotiated solutions.

Finally, the statement called on the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists to initiate professional dialogue aimed at building grassroots trust and understanding, and urged Israeli and Palestinian political leaders to reach a peace agreement that enables democracy, freedom, and dignity for all citizens in the region.

In that statement, the Union affirmed:

- support for a two-state solution
- the reconstruction of Gaza and the return of displaced Palestinians
- the right of Palestinian people to live a self-determined life in dignity
- the ethical duty of social workers to oppose dehumanisation and collective punishment

This statement was widely recognised within IFSW as an example of professional leadership grounded in social work values, particularly given the domestic pressures and risks associated with taking such a position. It has repeatedly been referenced by members as evidence that principled ethical stances are possible even under conditions of conflict.

Link to the statement: <https://www.ifsw.org/statement-of-the-israeli-union-of-social-workers-histadrut-on-the-situation-in-gaza/>

4. IFSW Statements on Israel and Palestine

Over many years, IFSW has issued a series of statements addressing the Israel Palestine situation. These statements provide essential context for understanding the ethical expectations applied to all member organisations.

Key statements include:

2009, January 14: **IFSW Statement on the Gaza conflict**, <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-statement-on-the-gaza-conflict/>

2014, July 28: **IFSW supports UN call for an immediate ceasefire and recommencing of negotiations of a peace settlement that removes the blockade of Gaza and the occupation of all Palestine**, <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-supports-un-call-for-an-immediate-cease-fire-and-recommencing-of-negotiations-of-a-peace-settlement-that-removes-the-blockade-of-gaza-and-the-occupation-of-all-palestine/>

2014, August 2: **Social Work for Peace and Self-determination in Palestine and Israel**, <https://www.ifsw.org/social-work-for-peace-and-self-determination-in-palestine-and-israel/>. This statement was supported by further statements from all IFSW Regions as well as a number four IFSW member organisations.

2015, September 6: **Statement by IFSW Against Administrative Detention of our Social Work Colleagues in Israeli Prisons**, <https://www.ifsw.org/statement-by-ifsw-against-administrative-detention-of-our-social-work-colleagues-in-israeli-prisons/>

2018, January 14: **Freedom For Munther Amira: Reflections From The Social Work**, <https://www.ifsw.org/freedom-for-munther-amira-reflections-from-the-social-work/>

2019, November 28: **IFSW Statement on International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**, <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-statement-on-international-day-of-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people/>

2021, May 11: **Starting a conversation to build peace: IFSW Secretary-General reflects on Palestine and Israel**, <https://www.ifsw.org/starting-a-conversation-to-build-peace-ifsw-secretary-general-reflects-on-palestine-and-israel/>

2021, May 17: **Terror in Gaza: Requires Solutions that Address the Underlying Problems**, <https://www.ifsw.org/terror-in-gaza-requires-solutions-that-address-the-underlying-problems/>

2022, August 9: **Israeli Union of Social Workers Invites Palestinian Union to build communication and cooperation**, <https://www.ifsw.org/israeli-union-of-social-workers-invites-palestinian-union-to-build-communication-and-cooperation/>

2023, February 2: **Towards Peace and Self-determination in Israel and Palestine: A Statement from IFSW**, <https://www.ifsw.org/towards-peace-and-self-determination-in-israel-and-palestine-a-statement-from-ifsw/>

2023, October 30 : **Israel / Palestine: IFSW calls for immediate ceasefire and to address the root causes of the conflict**, <https://www.ifsw.org/israel-palestine-ifsw-calls-for-immediate-ceasefire-and-to-address-the-root-causes-of-the-conflict/>

2024, February 27: **IFSW Supports Global Statement of Humanitarian Leaders Calling For An Immediate Ceasefire In Gaza**, <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-supports-global-statement-of-humanitarian-leaders-calling-for-an-immediate-ceasefire-in-gaza/>

2024, March 8: **Unconditional humanitarian aid to Gaza Now**, <https://www.ifsw.org/unconditional-humanitarian-aid-to-gaza-now/>

These statements collectively cover IFSW's evolving public positions on Israel and Palestine from 2014 to 2024, with a consistent focus on ceasefire, human rights, and the role of social work in peacebuilding:

- **Ceasefire and political settlement:** Repeated calls for an immediate ceasefire, renewed negotiations, and addressing structural drivers of violence, including blockade, occupation, and root causes.
- **Peace, rights, and self-determination:** Framing the conflict through social work ethics, insisting on equal rights, dignity, and self-determination for all peoples, and encouraging conditions for long term peace.
- **Protection of social workers and professional solidarity:** Advocacy on specific human rights concerns affecting social workers, including opposition to administrative detention of Palestinian social work colleagues and solidarity actions linked to named cases.
- **Humanitarian access and aid:** Calls for immediate, unconditional humanitarian assistance to Gaza and support for wider humanitarian leaders' appeals for ceasefire to enable life saving response.
- **Dialogue and relationship building:** Efforts to encourage professional dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian social work organisations as part of trust building and conflict transformation.

5. Censure as a Governance Instrument

5.1 Nature of censure

Censure is a formal expression of concern available to the Executive Committee under the IFSW By Laws. It does not suspend rights, impose sanctions, or alter membership status. Its purpose is to signal that an organisation's actions or positions raise serious ethical or constitutional concerns that require attention.

In IFSW governance, as set out in By Law 4(d) and established practice,

a censure is a formal action by the IFSW Executive Committee expressing concern that a member organisation's actions:

- a) violate the IFSW Constitution or By Laws, or
- b) in any form or manner counteract the basic interests, aims, or policies of IFSW or its membership.

The issuing of a censure does not affect a member organisation's rights to speak or vote in IFSW forums or meetings. Rather, it constitutes a formal and public acknowledgement of concern by the Federation and is intended to encourage dialogue and corrective action.

Within IFSW's system of measures, censure occupies a position between informal or private feedback and more consequential measures such as suspension or expulsion.

5.2 First censure in 2018

On 29 March 2018, the IFSW Executive formally censured the Israeli Union of Social Workers for failing to act as an independent professional voice in line with IFSW policies and ethical standards. The censure followed statements by the Israeli Union asserting that the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the occupation were not social work issues.

IFSW reaffirmed that social workers have a responsibility to promote peace and, where it is safe to do so, to advocate for the rights of all peoples. The Executive found that the position taken by the Israeli Union was inconsistent with the [Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles](#), particularly the principle of respecting and promoting the right to self-determination.

The censure was issued under IFSW By Law 4(d) on 26 March 2018 and remained in force until July 2018, when the matter was scheduled for discussion at the IFSW General Assembly. While censured, the Israeli Union retained full membership rights, including participation, speaking, and voting, with the censure serving as a public acknowledgement that its actions fell short of the expectations of IFSW membership.

Link: <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-executive-censures-the-israeli-union-of-social-workers/>

The 2018 General Meeting confirmed the censure. The following motions were discussed and voted upon (extract from the 2018 General Meeting minutes):

5.2.1 Motion Palestine

*The IFSW General Meeting delegates are concerned with the inaction of the Israeli Union of Social Workers with regards to Human Rights violations in the Palestinian Occupied Territories and their disregard of the Federation's Code of Ethics. During the General Meeting our Israeli colleagues provided no evidence that they have or are willing to address the issues raised by the EC Statement. Therefore, we move a motion **for the continuation of the Censure**.*

Proposer: Palestine

Seconded: Greece

- 29 votes for the motion.
- 24 votes against the motion
- 13 Abstentions

Motion passed.

5.2.2 Motion UK and Austria

This motion notes the censure against the Israeli Union of Social Workers made by the IFSW Executive on 26th March 2018 in accordance with the IFSW By-law 4, (d) highlighting that in relation to Palestinian people the Union is not meeting its obligation as described in the Statement of Ethical Principles: "Social workers should respect and promote people's right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others."

This censure came to an end at the beginning of the agenda item on this matter at the 2018 IFSW global delegates meeting on 1st July 2018. The IFSW Executive believes that any calls for further action should be ratified by the General Meeting.

This motion recognises the importance of upholding social work ethical principles and proposes there is continued meaningful and timely dialogue between the Israeli Union, the European Region, the Palestinian Association, the Asia-Pacific Region, the Human Rights Commission and the Ethic commission, that this is a transparent process

Proposer: UK and Austria

Seconded: Germany

The motion was passed unanimously

5.2.3 Motion Israel

Israel proposes that, with the end of the executive censure, the situation return to the status quo that existed before the censure. Amendment to the Swiss proposal: Israel supports the Swiss proposal to clarify the procedures of the constitution regarding censure but proposes that it be carried out by a working group outside of the global executive.

Proposer: Israel

Seconded: Austria

Sweden called a pointed of order "the motion should not go to a vote and this should be the end of the discussion as the proposal was already discussed under the motion of Palestine"

Proposer: Sweden

Seconded: Norway

Motion carried

5.2.3 Motion Switzerland

The motion of Switzerland is that IFSW board establish a concrete process on how IFSW handle the censure process. Furthermore, the IFSW shall develop a process to improve the communication and flow of information of the IFSW board to members and vice versa.

Proposer: Switzerland

Seconded: Germany

Carried unanimously

5.2.4 Motion Israel

Israel proposed a new motion to vote. The group created to review the procedures of the constitution regarding censure must not be shaped by Executives

Proposer: Israel

Seconded: United States

- 30 votes for the motion.
- 39 votes against the motion
- 0 Abstentions

The amended motion was defeated.

Link to the full minutes: <https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/GM2018Minutes.pdf>

5.3 Lifting of censure in 2022

On 25 May 2022, IFSW announced the withdrawal of the executive censure previously placed on the Israeli Union of Social Workers. The withdrawal was confirmed as part of the 2022 IFSW General Meeting and followed the Israeli Union's agreement to align with IFSW human rights principles.

The original censure, supported by the General Meeting in 2018, had been issued due to concerns that the Israeli Union was not acting in accordance with the Federation's policies, particularly its human rights framework. Over several years, extensive dialogue took place between the Federation and the Israeli Union to find a constructive way forward in a highly complex and conflict affected context.

IFSW emphasised its role in supporting members operating under challenging conditions, noting that the Israeli Union remained engaged throughout the process, continued to participate in Federation activities, and maintained its membership. On 24 April 2022, the Israeli Union formally affirmed its support for equal rights for Palestinians and Israelis, respect for the right to self-determination for all peoples, and a just end to the conflict that ensures security for everyone.

The Executive welcomed this commitment and noted the need for continued engagement to translate these principles into practice, with follow up work to be led by the Secretary General.

Link: <https://www.ifsw.org/executive-censure-of-the-israeli-union-of-social-workers-with-drawn/>

5.4 Renewed censure in January 2025

On 9 January 2025, the IFSW Executive issued a censure, by majority decision, against the Israeli Union of Social Workers for *"for not upholding the Federation's ethical principles of supporting peace and non-violence"*.

The decision followed a series of exchanges that began in mid-2024 after the International Federation of Social Workers received written communications from several member organisations, including the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists, requesting that the Executive Committee consider the suspension or expulsion of the Israeli Union of Social Workers. These communications alleged that some members of the Israeli Union were engaged in military combat during the current Gaza conflict and raised concerns regarding compliance with IFSW's Statement of Ethical Principles.

In response to these submissions, the IFSW Executive Committee initiated an inquiry and requested clarification from its member organisations in Israel and Palestine regarding adherence to the Statement of Ethical Principles, in particular the obligations relating to peace, non-violence, human dignity, and self-determination. In its response, the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists stated that its members are not engaged in military combat.

The Israeli Union of Social Workers indicated that some of its members serve in combat roles as a result of mandatory military conscription.

Following the receipt of formal complaints and subsequent exchanges, IFSW requested that the Israeli Union of Social Workers consider whether it would be willing to ask its government to exempt social workers from active combat roles.

The Israeli Union of Social Workers indicated that it was not prepared to make such a request or to issue a public statement calling for peace. In its response, the Union referred to security considerations, the events of 7 October 2023, and the absence of sufficient internal consensus among its membership. The Union also expressed the view that it was being treated differently from social work organisations in other conflict affected contexts where social workers may also serve in military roles.

As part of the due process, the IFSW Executive Committee appointed a three-member engagement team consisting of the IFSW President, the IFSW Europe President, and the Secretary General. This team met with representatives of the Israeli Union of Social Workers on several occasions. The engagement team clarified that the Federation's involvement arose from the receipt of a formal complaint and that, where comparable concerns are raised regarding other member organisations, similar inquiries and engagement would be undertaken.

Following these exchanges, the Executive Committee formed the view that the Israeli Union of Social Workers, as an independent professional body, had declined to align its public position with the Federation's expectations regarding the promotion of peace and non-participation in combat roles. On this basis, and acting within the scope of the IFSW Constitution and By Laws, including By Law 4 on censure, suspension, or expulsion from membership, the Executive Committee decided to issue a censure.

This decision reflected the Executive's assessment of compliance with IFSW's ethical framework and governance responsibilities, rather than a determination of political intent or national policy positions. The Executive stated that the censure may be lifted at any time by majority decision and confirmed its intention to continue dialogue with the Israeli Union. It further stated that if no resolution is reached, the matter will be referred to the IFSW General Meeting.

Link: <https://www.ifsw.org/ifsw-executive-issues-censure-against-the-israeli-union-of-social-workers-for-not-acting-to-promote-peace/>

5.5 Responses to the current censure

Both the Israeli Union of Social Workers and the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists have responded to the Censure.

5.5.1 Response from the Israeli Union of Social Workers

In its formal response dated 14 February 2025, the Israeli Union of Social Workers strongly rejected the censure issued by the International Federation of Social Workers on 9 January 2025, describing the decision as misleading, discriminatory, and politically one sided. The Israeli Union reaffirmed that it has consistently supported a just peace based on mutual recognition, equal rights, and self-determination for both Israelis and Palestinians, and stated that it has repeatedly sought dialogue with Palestinian counterparts, without success.

The response argued that the application of IFSW's ethical principle on peace and non-violence, particularly clause 9.3, was selectively enforced against Israel. The Israeli Union emphasised that military conscription is a legal requirement in Israel and contended that demanding an exemption for social workers only in Israel constituted a double standard, noting that social workers serve in military or reserve roles in many other countries without similar action

from IFSW. The Union also raised concerns about the lack of clarity in the ethical principles, particularly regarding self-defence and the realities of war.

The statement further accused IFSW of singling out the Israeli Union in a manner it characterised as antisemitic, arguing that no equivalent action had been taken against other member organisations in comparable contexts. It criticised IFSW for failing over many years to facilitate dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian social work organisations and stated that the censure deepened division rather than contributing to peacebuilding.

Finally, the Israeli Union highlighted the impact of the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks on Israeli civilians and social workers, expressing deep disappointment that IFSW had not publicly acknowledged these events. It reaffirmed its commitment to healing communities, supporting social workers under extreme conditions, and engaging in global dialogue, while calling on IFSW to reconsider its approach and pursue actions that genuinely promote peace rather than further polarisation.

Link to the full response: <https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/response-of-IUSW-2025.pdf>

5.5.2 Response from the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists

In its response dated 27 January 2025, the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists expressed strong dissatisfaction with the International Federation of Social Workers statement concerning the censure of the Israeli Union of Social Workers. While acknowledging that the censure recognised ethical breaches, the Palestinian Union argued that it fell far short of the decisive ethical action required in the context of war, occupation, and large-scale civilian suffering.

The statement criticised IFSW for what it described as inconsistent application of its Ethical Principles, particularly regarding peace, nonviolence, and human dignity. It argued that the Federation failed to clearly condemn actions it characterised as genocide and forced displacement, and that the use of restrained language undermined IFSW's moral authority. The Palestinian Union further highlighted that a second censure, following an earlier one in 2018, amounted to a symbolic measure rather than a meaningful response to ongoing violations.

A central concern raised was the omission of the lived realities of Palestinian social workers, including killings, detention, displacement, and the destruction of professional and community infrastructure, especially in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. The statement argued that ignoring these conditions weakens the credibility of IFSW's ethical stance and overlooks the severe constraints placed on Palestinian social workers' ability to serve their communities.

The Palestinian Union also accused IFSW of bias and double standards, asserting that the Federation showed leniency towards the Israeli Union despite acknowledged participation of some of its members in combat roles. This, they argued, contradicts the core social work commitment to peace and non-violence and reflects a failure to uphold Clause 9.3 of the Ethical Principles in practice.

The statement concluded with a call for IFSW to move beyond censures and take concrete action, including demanding accountability for ethical breaches, publicly recognising violations of international law, protecting Palestinian social workers, opposing systems of oppression, and taking an unequivocal stand aligned with the profession's values of justice, peace, and human dignity.

Link to the full response: https://www.ifsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Response_to_the_IFSW_Statement1.pdf

6. Escalation of the Issue Within the Federation

6.1 Introduction

The January 2025 censure did not resolve the underlying disagreement within the Federation. Instead, it intensified debate among members. Some associations argued that censure was insufficient given the gravity of the situation in Gaza and the ethical implications of social workers participating in combat. Others warned against collective punishment, politicisation of professional membership, and the erosion of dialogue.

This divergence became formalised through motions adopted at regional level, most notably by IFSW Europe in October 2025. That motion explicitly called for a Special General Meeting to consider suspension or expulsion of the Israeli Union of Social Workers:

6.2 Motion to hold a Special General Meeting

A motion moved at the IFSW (Europe) Delegates Meeting in October 2025 by the Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW) and seconded by the Consejo General del Trabajo Social (CGTS, Spain) and the Hellenic Association of Social Workers (HASW) in relation to the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW) silence on the genocide in Gaza.

IASW, CGTS and HASW condemn all attacks on civilians and hostage-taking, which are prohibited under international humanitarian law. We reaffirm the right of people to self-determination and our profession's duty to protect civilians, uphold human rights and oppose collective punishment. The United Nation's Independent International Commission of Inquiry's conclusion on 16 September 2025 has affirmed that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, and Amnesty International, Doctors without Borders and The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention and Human Security, among others, have all previously acknowledged this.

As Social Workers it is essential that we uphold the values of human rights, social justice and the protection of a marginalised society. The IASW, the CGTS and HASW continue to express solidarity with the Palestinians in their struggle for freedom, justice and statehood. We condemn Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza and the illegal harassment, and occupation caused by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. We cannot, as Social Workers, remain silent and complicit to ongoing war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Israel Union of Social Workers (IUSW) was censured by IFSW in 2018 and again on 9 January 2025 for failing to uphold the Federation's Ethical Principles, including support for peace and non-violence. IFSW has stated that censure registers concern but carries no sanctions, leaving full participation and voting intact.

In 2025, following exchanges with the Executive, IUSW confirmed members are in combat roles, refused to request combat exemptions for social workers, and refused to make any statement calling for peace. These positions conflict with social work's commitments to human rights, social justice, peace and non-violence.

Accordingly, the Delegates' Meeting resolves to vote to two issues:

Vote item A – Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank

The Delegates' Meeting resolves to:

A1) Condemn the genocide in Gaza and grave breaches including starvation, collective punishment and obstruction of relief.

A2) We urgently call for an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the protection of all civilians without distinction, the unconditional release of all Israeli hostages, the right of all Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need, and robust support for accountability measures consistent with international law.

A3) Reaffirm the IFSW Global Statement of Ethical Principles and express solidarity with the Palestinian people; note the UN COI genocide finding (A/HRC/60/CRP.3) and condemn on-going settler violence and unlawful settlement expansion in the West Bank.

A4) Call on IFSW to urge EU institutions to consider suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement under its human-rights clause, and to consider further measures consistent with international law.

A5) Immediate suspension of cooperation with Israeli state, professional, and academic institutions operating in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including Ariel University.

B1: Call on the IFSW President and Executive to hold IUSW to account for continuing breaches of IFSW's Global Ethical Principles (by confirming the legitimacy of their members' combat roles, refusing to request non-combat exemptions and not standing for peace and universal human rights of Palestinians) by calling a Special General Meeting (online) to propose suspension and/or expulsion of IUSW from IFSW.

B2: Call on IFSW members to urgently request the IFSW Global Executive calls for such a Special General meeting

Proposed by: Irish Association of Social Workers

Seconded: Consejo Gral. Trabajo Social (Spain) and Hellenic Association of Social Workers

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165856>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>

<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/our-response-israel-gaza-war>

<https://www.lemkininstitute.com/statements-new-page/four-facts-about-israel%E2%80%99s-genocide>

<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/commission-of-inquiry-report-genocide-in-gaza-a-hrc-60-crp-3/>

7. Why a Special General Meeting is now Required

Under the IFSW Constitution, the Executive Committee does not have the authority to suspend or expel a member organisation for ethical violations. Such decisions can only be taken by the General Meeting with a qualified majority.

The accumulation of formal complaints, repeated censures, unresolved ethical disagreement, and a formal request from a regional body means that the matter can no longer be managed through Executive level instruments alone. A Special General Meeting is therefore the appropriate and constitutionally required forum for collective decision making.

8. Constitutional and Procedural Framework

8.1 Calling the Special General Meeting

A Special General Meeting may be called either by the President with the direction of the Executive Committee or upon written request by at least one fifth of member organisations in good standing. Notice must be circulated with a preliminary agenda within the timeframes specified in the Constitution.

8.2 Scope and limitations

The agenda of the Special General Meeting must be clearly defined. Deliberations and decisions are limited to the matters notified in advance, ensuring procedural fairness and predictability.

8.3 Decision thresholds

Any proposal to suspend or expel a member organisation for ethical or constitutional violations requires a seventy five percent majority of members present and voting. Abstentions are not counted as votes cast.

The General Meeting must also be satisfied that the organisation concerned has been given a reasonable opportunity to present its explanation or defence.

8.4 Reinstatement

Suspension or expulsion does not preclude future reinstatement. Reinstatement is condition based rather than time based and requires evidence that the grounds for the original decision no longer apply.

9. Concluding Reflections

The matter before the Federation concerns the membership status of a member organisation and raises broader questions regarding the application of IFSW's ethical framework in situations of armed conflict.

The Special General Meeting provides the forum for the collective membership to consider these issues and to determine how the Federation's ethical principles are to be interpreted and applied in this context.

The Secretariat remains committed to supporting this process in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of IFSW, and to ensuring that the meeting is conducted with due process and respect.

Sincerely,

Pascal Rudin

IFSW Interim Secretary-General