



February 7, 2026

To: Executive Committee of the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)

From: Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists (PUSWP)

Subject: Special General Meeting 2026, to look in the Formal Request for Strict Disciplinary Measures of the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW) from IFSW

Dear Members,

The Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists (PUSWP) respectfully submits this formal request to the IFSW Executive Committee, urging the immediate expulsion of the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW) from the Federation. This request is based on the continuous and systematic involvement of the Israeli union in supporting the policies and practices of the State of Israel, which constitute a colonial system characterized by apartheid and ongoing crimes against humanity against the Palestinian people.

First of all, the claims that the Israeli union has used to justify its members' continued participation within the occupation system in their response on 14.2.2025 were completely disgraceful. The conflation of "mandatory military service" with "international legal legitimacy" is fundamentally misleading. Compulsory enlistment within the occupying power does not confer legality on the actions of the Israeli military. Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter explicitly prohibits the use of international force except in cases of self-defense or under Security Council authorization. In an occupation context, the rules governing the use of force do not grant the occupying power unlimited authority, and occupation does not automatically confer legal annexation or absolute power. International humanitarian law imposes strict limits on the use of force under occupation and holds individuals accountable for violations of these rules; "following orders" is not an absolute defense. Moreover, Article 16 of the Fourth Geneva Convention mandates that humanitarian services must be provided "without discrimination" and "for the protection of civilians," and professionals, including social workers and medical personnel, may not apply their skills in support of military objectives of the occupying authority.

IFSW Code of Ethics, specifically Article 9.3, obliges social workers not to use their knowledge or skills to support military activities or as instruments of domination. In the context of the prolonged military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, where policies of house demolition, residency revocation, and restrictions on movement and services are systematically applied, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has affirmed that Israel's ongoing occupation is unlawful and violates the Geneva Conventions, including prohibitions on population transfer and infringements on the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Accordingly, social workers operating within the occupation cannot be equated with peers in democratic states that do not practice colonial or settler policies. The principle of equality before international law does not negate

the contextual considerations that render professional conduct under such conditions morally and legally complex.

Nevertheless, the claim that holding Israeli social workers accountable for their professional conduct under occupation constitutes “antisemitism” is a distortion of reality. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition is not legally binding under international law and cannot be used to suppress rights-based criticism or evade professional responsibility. Rejecting colonial practices or scrutinizing human rights violations is not antisemitism but rather an adherence to principles of justice and equality enshrined in international treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

Social work in the context of settler-colonial occupation is inherently political. Israeli social workers are sometimes employed within state apparatuses that oversee the forcible removal of Palestinian children from their families or within civil-military coordination units that control licensing and services under occupation. Any discourse of “mutual peace” without acknowledging these power asymmetries denies the very structures of oppression. Refusal by the Palestinian union to engage in such dialogue is not a rejection of understanding but a refusal to legitimize colonialism. Dialogue that does not recognize Palestinian rights and hold Israel accountable for the occupation is unethical and instrumentals the profession to normalize injustice.

Thus, the responsibility of social workers transcends national allegiance. All professionals must refrain from activities that violate human dignity or contribute to structural harm. This obligation includes Israeli social workers serving in the military or collaborating with occupation institutions, as such actions contravene Article 9.3’s principle of “not using professional knowledge for inhumane purposes.”

Attempts by the Israeli union to reinterpret Articles 9.1 and 9.3 to justify member participation in the occupation, or to blame Palestinians for acts of violence, constitute an effort to whitewash ongoing violations. International law does not permit any state or institution to justify systematic harm to civilians under the pretext of security. Continuous occupation, forced displacement, demolitions, racial discrimination, and control over social services are clear breaches of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. Claims linking the October 7 attacks as a starting point ignore seventy-seven years of exile, displacement, killings, and destruction endured by Palestinians since the Nakba of 1948, and do not absolve Israel of ongoing responsibilities as the occupying power.

Ethically, Article 9.3 clarifies that self-defense in the face of direct attacks on social workers does not absolve them from professional responsibility; participation in military activities or support of the occupying military contravenes international humanitarian law. Furthermore, any “professional

dialogue” that ignores Palestinian rights cannot build trust but only legitimizes continued repression and control.

All Israeli Union claims are biased and serve to obscure the continuous responsibility of the occupation. Holding the Israeli union accountable is neither discrimination nor antisemitism; it is a precise application of international humanitarian law and professional ethics. Peace cannot be conditional on ignoring daily violations; genuine peace begins with ending occupation and ensuring fundamental Palestinian rights, acknowledging Israel’s legal and political responsibility for ongoing oppression, demolitions, and blockades. The IFSW must uphold its members’ ethical and professional obligations in all contexts, taking into account occupation and systematic violations without bias.

The conduct of the Israeli union constitutes a clear breach of Article 9.3 of the IFSW Constitution, which mandates that all member organizations respect, promote, and protect human rights and social justice. By directly collaborating with state institutions and remaining silent in the face of grave human rights violations, the Israeli union has violated the ethical and legal foundations of the Federation.

Since October 2023, Israel has committed genocide in the Gaza Strip, deliberately destroying civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and homes, constituting war crimes and crimes against humanity under the Fourth Geneva Convention (Articles 27, 47, 49) and Articles 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. These are not isolated events but part of a decades-long colonial project of control, forced displacement, and apartheid, in direct violation of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973).

The Israeli union has not condemned these systematic violations and has taken no professional stance against the state-perpetrated crimes. On the contrary, its members continue to serve in government institutions, including the Ministry of Social Welfare and military-affiliated social units, that directly participate in family separations, administrative detention of children, and denial of basic services to Palestinians.

Through ongoing collaboration with colonial state institutions, the Israeli union is a direct participant in mechanisms of oppression and apartheid, violating the global standards of social work, which define the role of the social worker as “promoting social change, development, empowerment, and liberation.” Silence in the face of genocide and apartheid is not professional neutrality but active complicity.

International law clearly establishes that direct participation in, or failure to condemn, serious crimes constitutes complicity. The Israeli union’s conduct undermines the ethical integrity of the Federation and diminishes its credibility as an organization claiming to defend justice and human rights. To



preserve the Federation's standing and moral credibility, disciplinary measures must extend beyond suspension to full expulsion.

Accordingly, our union urges the Executive Committee to:

1. Expel the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW) from the IFSW, in accordance with Article 9.3 of the Constitution and the Federation's ethical code;
2. Issue a public statement affirming that the IFSW will not tolerate any organization involved in colonial, racist, or internationally unlawful practices;
3. Establish a permanent ethical oversight mechanism within the Federation to ensure all member unions comply with international law and uphold justice, equality, and human liberation.

The Palestinian social workers and psychologists affirm that neutrality in the face of injustice is not professionalism but participation in violence. The IFSW must not serve as a cover for colonial practices but as a platform for defending freedom and human dignity. We trust the Committee to take the correct decision to restore the ethical and professional course of our sacred profession. A decisive expulsion of the Israeli union is the only way to reaffirm the Federation's credibility and commitment to the principles for which it was established.

Respectfully,

Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists (PUSWP)