



NASW Opposes Motion to Expel the Israeli Union of Social Workers from the International Federation of Social Workers

The Code of Ethics Calls for Us to Maintain Relationships, Foster Open Communication

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) strongly opposes the motion to expel the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW) from the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), urging all 68 voting member associations to uphold the profession's core values of unity, dialogue, and compassion.

Background and Context

IFSW stands as the global body for the social work profession, uniting regions across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and North America. IFSW and its national members are dedicated to advancing social justice, human rights, and inclusive, sustainable social development through best practices and international cooperation. The organization's current theme, "Co-building Hope and Harmony – a Harambee call to Unite a Divided Society," underscores its commitment to unity and healing.

On February 18, IFSW will convene a Special General Election to vote on a motion - proposed by Ireland and seconded by Greece and Spain - to expel or suspend the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW). This motion, by its very nature, stands in stark contrast to the values and goals that IFSW claims to promote.

NASW's Position

NASW unequivocally opposes the motion to expel the IUSW. We are deeply surprised and disappointed that our European colleagues, who have not experienced circumstances comparable to those faced by their Israeli counterparts, are now seeking to judge and exclude them. We hope that, should they ever face similar challenges, they are met with the compassion, understanding, and empathy that they are currently denying to their Israeli colleagues.

Ethical Foundations and Professional Values

At the heart of social work lies a commitment to dialogue, relationship-building, and the pursuit of understanding - even in the face of profound disagreement or conflict. The NASW Code of Ethics compels us to maintain relationships and foster open communication, upholding the dignity and worth of every individual and community. Expulsion, as proposed, is antithetical to these ethical imperatives and undermines the very foundation of our profession.

Contradiction with IFSW's Mission and Values

The motion to expel the IUSW directly contradicts IFSW's mission of promoting international cooperation, unity, and constructive engagement. Rather than fostering hope and harmony, expulsion would sow division and disharmony, eroding the trust and solidarity that are essential to our global community.

Stakeholder Impact and Harmful Consequences

Israeli and Palestinian Social Workers: The proposed expulsion would not only harm Israeli social workers but also undermine the efforts of Palestinian social workers and all those striving for peace and understanding in the region.

Global Social Work Community: Such a move would send a discouraging message to social workers worldwide, potentially deterring future professionals and diminishing the appeal and integrity of our field.

IFSW's Credibility: Setting a precedent for expulsion based on political or regional conflict risks weakening IFSW, fostering an environment of fear and distrust, and diminishing its effectiveness as a unifying global body.

Precedent and Organizational Integrity

Expulsion from IFSW is an extraordinary measure, previously enacted only once - against South Africa during Apartheid. To invoke such a measure now, in a context vastly different and without the same moral clarity, would set a dangerous precedent. It threatens to erode the organization's credibility and its ability to serve as a voice for reason, compassion, and peace. Furthermore, when reviewing the IFSW Global Statement of Ethical Principles, we want to draw your attention specifically to section 3.4 which states that "Social workers should challenge unjust policies and practices." Given IFSW's lack of consistency in applying such a measure, this potentially calls into question whether this attempt by IFSW applies "policies and practices are oppressive, unfair, or harmful."

Call to Action

Key Finding:

NASW calls on all IFSW member associations to reject the motion to expel the IUSW and to reaffirm our shared commitment to dialogue, inclusion, and social justice.

We urge our colleagues to resist efforts that promote divisiveness or exclusion. Instead, let us embody the values of compassion, unity, and healing that define our profession. Let us focus on constructive engagement, mutual understanding, and the co-creation of solutions that honor the dignity and humanity of all.

Conclusion:

In these challenging times, the global social work community must stand together, guided by our ethical principles and our shared vision for a more just and inclusive world. NASW remains steadfast in its commitment to healing-centered leadership, adaptive solutions, and the advancement of social work ethics. We call on IFSW and all its members to join us in upholding these values and building a future rooted in hope, harmony, and solidarity.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in Washington, DC, is the largest membership organization of professional social workers. It promotes, develops, and protects the practice of social work and social workers. NASW also seeks to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through its advocacy.