



Position Statement of the Colegio de Profesionales del Trabajo Social de Puerto Rico (CPTSPR) on the Status of the Union of Israeli Social Workers (UITS) regarding the Conflict in Gaza and International Humanitarian Law

The Colegio de Profesionales del Trabajo Social de Puerto Rico (CPTSPR) bases this position on the inalienable principles of social justice and human rights that govern our profession globally.

The CPTSPR condemns the genocide that the State of Israel has been carrying out against the Palestinian people since October 2023. To date, this campaign has claimed the lives of more than 72,000 people, 70% of whom are women and children. This violence is the culmination of decades of illegal occupation of Palestinian territory. Reports from the UN Commission of Inquiry and Amnesty International (2025) confirm that Israeli forces have committed acts constituting genocide, including subjecting the civilian population to conditions of existence intended to bring about their physical destruction.

We also condemn the attacks of October 7, 2023, committed by Hamas, in which approximately 1,200 people were killed in Israel, including more than 800 civilians and 36 children, acts that constitute serious violations of international law.

However, while the Union of Israeli Social Workers (UITS) advocates for dialogue, the pursuit of peace and security for both peoples, respect for self-determination, and the resolution of the conflict through the recognition of two states, we find its position that “there is no need to compare pain with pain or suffering with suffering” ethically unacceptable. In social work, neutrality in the face of an asymmetry of power where a state uses its military machinery to exterminate a people is not empathy, it is complicity. Pain is not comparable when one side has the power to perpetrate genocide.

The CPTSPR supports the approval of a Defined Term Suspension for the Israeli Union of Social Workers (UITS) under the following conditions:

1. **Suspension Period:** A term of four (4) months is established, starting from the approval of this motion.
2. **Mandate for Action:** During this period, the UITS must formally request that its government exempt social workers from active combat duties, demanding their strict classification as “non-combat personnel,” for which it may count on the support of the FITS.
3. **Consequence:** At the end of the term, if the UITS presents evidence of this action and its commitment to International Humanitarian Law, it may be reinstated. Otherwise, proceed with its final and definitive expulsion from the FITS.

Our support for a defined term suspension is based on the following:

- **Basis in International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** According to *Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions (Art. 8)*, social workers in welfare and mental health functions have protected non-combatant status, as they are equated with health personnel. Although military service is compulsory in 68 countries, medical personnel, as well as personnel in mental health and social welfare units, must be considered non-combatants. The UITES has a duty to demand that its members not be called up for offensive combat. Far from being judged as an “elitist” privilege, it is an ethical safeguard that makes them defenders of peace and role models for other health professions.
- **Overcoming ethical relativism:** It is an ontological inconsistency to uphold a discourse of peace while actively participating in genocide. While we recognize the right to self-defense, social work cannot condone participation in actions intended to destroy a national or ethnic group. Ethics is not an elastic concept: recognition of context cannot be used as a license for moral relativism. Understanding the circumstances of a country does not justify acting in direct contradiction to the supreme value of life; otherwise, professional ethics would lose its normative character and become a mere tool of political justification.
- **Global standard:** This Assembly urges any FITS member association in countries with compulsory military service to take immediate steps to ensure that social work is recognized as an exclusively non-combatant profession, guaranteeing that our profession is always an instrument of life and never of war.

FOR ALL OF THE ABOVE REASONS, although we recognize that dialogue with the UITES has already taken place, we believe in the opportunity to reflect and act decisively, ensuring that the practice of social work at the international level is consistent with the protection of our humanity and ethical coherence.



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