

9.2.2026

The Position of the Israeli Union of Social Workers Ahead of the SGM Scheduled for 18.2.26

Let us begin from the end: **If we believed that removing the Israeli Union of Social Workers from the IFSW would promote peace, guarantee the rights and security of both nations—we ourselves would vote in favor. This is a noble goal. However, this is not the case. Therefore, we call upon the IFSW members to vote against the suspension or expulsion of the Israel Union of Social Workers. which would create further harm, isolation, and injustice, and, instead, choose measures that promote dialogue and partnership. In the following document, we will explain why.**

Let us begin by clarifying the position of the Israeli Union of Social Workers. While the *Report on the Special General Meeting* presents a comprehensive description of events, it blurs our position. Therefore, we wish to present our position clearly:

- The Israeli Union has consistently supported – and continues to support – peace, human rights, and ensuring the security of both the Palestinian people and the Israeli people. The Histadrut, the umbrella organization of which the Israeli Union is a part, supports the two-state solution (i.e., establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel). We oppose all forms of violence and believe that the role of social workers is to work toward peace and rehabilitation.
- We stand 100% behind the statement we published in 2014, including the call to rebuild the damaged infrastructure, to rehabilitate the lives of all those displaced during the fighting. In addition, Israeli and Palestinian political leaders need to reach a peace agreement that would advance democratic processes in the region, enabling Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace, freedom, and dignity.¹
- We stand by our chairperson's statement, in 2018, at the General Meeting in Dublin. She said, "I could stand here and deliver a speech about scorched fields and rockets fired by Hamas at kindergartens in the western Negev. But since I believe in peace and fraternity among nations, I insist on not being drawn into the easiest and most convenient place of nationalism... The path of the Israeli Union of Social Workers will always be one of dialogue and communication,

¹ <https://www.ifsw.org/statement-of-the-israeli-union-of-social-workers-histadrut-on-the-situation-in-gaza/>

regardless of the background of the social worker standing before us or under which regime and country they live.”²

- As we stated in 2022, it is our position that: “The Israeli Union of Social Workers supports the full and equal rights of both Palestinians and Israelis. It respects and promotes the right to self-determination for all peoples. Our members desire a just end to the conflict and a life where no one feels threatened or has their right to security undermined.”³
- Unfortunately, since then the reality in the region has become increasingly bloody and dangerous.

In the Gaza Strip, a humanitarian crisis and destruction now prevail. After more than two years of bloody war, the residents of Gaza are paying a heavy price that no one should ever have to pay.

In Israel, people are trying to recover from the trauma of the October 7 massacre⁴ and the ongoing multi-front war. The events of October 7—murders in homes and shelters, and the kidnappings—were, for many, experienced as a reenactment of the Holocaust of the 1940s, which remains deeply etched in Israeli heritage and identity. Since the events of October 7, the war has expanded to include Lebanon, Yemen, and Iran. There have been frequent missile attacks resulting in the displacement of tens of thousands of Israelis.

There is no need to compare pain to pain or suffering to suffering. The suffering of the Palestinian people is immense and must be stopped immediately. Alongside this, it does not negate the suffering of the Israeli people. Only by recognizing the traumas and pains of each other can we enable a solution to the conflict. We believe this is essential because only a political—not military—solution will end the suffering of both sides.

And yet, even within this harsh reality, the Israeli Union of Social Workers continues to call for peace and an end to the fighting, as we have done throughout the last two years. We chose to do so first and foremost in Hebrew, for the Israeli public—the society in which we operate and

2

³ <https://www.ifsw.org/israeli-union-of-social-workers-invites-palestinian-union-to-build-communication-and-cooperation/>

⁴ During the 7/10 massacre, approximately 1,200 people were murdered inside Israeli territory by Hamas, the vast majority of them civilians in their homes or at a party. Only recently, the body of the last Israeli hostage was returned. 250 men, women, and children were kidnapped that day (the youngest of them was 10 months old). 90% of the hostages were civilians, not soldiers, and all were abducted from within Israel's internationally recognized borders.

where we aim to make an impact. These messages were posted on the Union's Facebook page, sent in letters to Union members, spoken at demonstrations against government actions, and at other public events. The Histadrut, our umbrella organization, continually calls for a two-state solution, for the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and for diplomatic – not military – solutions.

During 2024-2025, on two separate occasions, we called for participation in strikes demanding an immediate ceasefire and the release of the Israeli hostages. Attached in the appendix are examples of some of these statements.

In addition, we ask you to consider several additional points:

1. The Union of Social Workers is not the Netanyahu government. In fact, we are often perceived as an opposition to this government. We do our utmost to influence policy, but we do not have the power to determine it. The Netanyahu government – now in its third consecutive year – has advanced policies that often aim to weaken labor unions. Isolating us from the global social work community would serve that effort. It would deprive us of the solidarity and collective power of social workers worldwide. This would weaken our ability to influence Israeli society and to advance peace.

2. The Israeli Union includes diverse social workers. Jewish Israeli citizens, Palestinian Israeli citizens (about 20% of Israeli citizens are Palestinians with Israeli citizenship who reside within Israel's recognized 1948 borders) and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Our members have a wide range of political and religious views, including those who support the government and those who oppose it.

Our activities aim to work together with all Union members toward the rehabilitation required after the war.

However, in practice, expelling or suspending a social workers' union will not promote change—rather, it will promote polarization and radicalization, which arise in situations of isolation or perceived threat. In our reality, this means that expulsion or suspension would hinder our ability to promote dialogue with our neighbors or with other countries. Those who oppose shared life between Israelis and Palestinians would welcome such an outcome. It would serve as an excuse to maintain extreme positions and continue fighting.

3. Ethics cannot be evaluated in laboratory conditions. We must understand them in the context of the culture in which they operate. As stated in the IFSW Statement of Ethical Principles:

9.1 It is the responsibility of national associations and organizations to develop and regularly update their own codes of ethics or ethical guidelines, to be consistent with this Statement, **considering local situations.**

The demand, directed at us, to request an exemption from combat service for social workers might sound reasonable in some countries, but it is entirely unimaginable within Israeli society.

The Israeli army is a relatively small permanent army. Israeli law requires mandatory military service for both men and women. At age 18, citizens are obligated to serve for 2–3 years – long before studying social work. Upon discharge from mandatory service, most are required to serve in the army reserves until the age of 45. Their assignment to combat or other units is determined by the army. They are called to reserve duty as citizens – not as social workers.

Likewise, other professionals, such as doctors, also serve, in combat units. Demanding that social workers, specifically, be exempt from a universal obligation is inconceivable to the Israeli public. It would create the impression that social workers view themselves as elitist, and such a demand – perceived as unreasonable in Israeli ears – would mark our union as illegitimate in the eyes of both the government and the public. This would harm our ability to continue advocating for peace and ending the fighting.

In fact, around the world, dozens of countries have mandatory military service, many with reserve duty obligations until an advanced age.⁵ It is unlikely that social workers in all these countries are exempt.

Demanding that *specifically during wartime* (a war Israel did not initiate) social workers receive different treatment is not feasible in a society where military service is a universal civic duty.

4. Expelling the Israeli Union would require the IFSW to act similarly toward other organizations. To our knowledge, not only would expelling an organization from the IFSW be unprecedented, but even discussing such a measure is unprecedented. As stated, we do not minimize the severity of the war in Gaza and Israel; however, we believe it is problematic that this is the only situation in which such demands and threats have been raised.

Many unions and organizations worldwide operate in regions of conflict or complex political arenas, including those involving human rights violations. If the IFSW begins by expelling the

⁵ . According to the [World Population Review](#), 68 countries currently have mandatory military service

Israeli Union, it will gradually be required to take similar actions against additional organizations. This is not the nature of social work.

Instead, we request:

- **That the IFSW avoid suspending or expelling any organization**, including the Israeli Union of Social Workers or any other member. The strength of the global social work community lies in its ability to work together on necessary processes of change. This is the reason we exist.
- **We see the Federation as playing an important role in connecting social workers' organizations.** We ask again that it assist us in creating a platform for dialogue between the Israeli and Palestinian unions and in building paths through which social workers can promote peace and prevent violence. We have called for this for many years; until now, our neighbors have chosen not to accept these invitations, but our hand remains extended. Without dialogue, there will be no healing.
- As noted, the Israeli Union includes diverse social workers—Jewish Israeli citizens, Palestinian Israeli citizens, and Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. Our social workers have a wide range of political and religious beliefs. Naturally, issues related to the ongoing conflict evoke political disagreement. We propose creating a shared learning process within the IFSW, allowing organizations to share how they navigate internal diversity without compromising their missions.

We know that these issues are of great significance not only to us but also to other organizations within the IFSW.

We invite any organization interested to engage with us directly, raise concerns, and learn about our perspectives.

Inbal Hermoni, MSW
Chairperson of the Union of Social Workers



For inquiries and additional information:

Brian Auslander – bauslander@gmail.com

Efrat Rotem – efratr@histadrut.org.il

Appendix: Examples of Statements by the Israeli Union of Social Workers and the Histadrut Regarding the War

1. Statements made at demonstrations by the Chairperson of the Union

- For example, at a demonstration in Kfar Saba—approximately 20 km north of Tel Aviv—on 16.8.25:

“This is a moment of decision regarding the character of the State of Israel and the lives of the hostages, the soldiers, and tens of thousands of innocent Gazans... At such a moment, it is my duty—our duty—to use every non-violent means to stop!! the nightmare we have been living through for the past two years. The war in Gaza has gone on too long, with no horizon for its end! While abandoning the hostages to their fate! With no exit strategy and no political horizon!! All of this intentionally!! Not a mistake—this is policy!... October 7 will be remembered forever as a terrible day of disaster, when Hamas terrorists murdered, raped, killed, kidnapped, and wounded thousands of Israelis. The killing, bloodshed, and inhumanity of the attackers cannot under any circumstances be used as justification for the killing of tens of thousands in Gaza, for creating conditions of hunger, thirst, lack of medicine, and the death of infants from starvation and heat. Vengeance has never brought peace or calm! Harming the innocent has never advanced humanity! A cycle of blood always feeds itself. Israeli society must decide: Do we want to live in a country focused on revenge instead of rehabilitation?! On killing instead of healing!! On occupation instead of building!! On harming innocents instead of saving hostages??!”⁶

- In another example, at a demonstration in Rehovot—about 30 km south of Tel Aviv—on 5.1.25:

“This is the 456th evening since October 7. I stand before you as a citizen, as a social worker, and as a union leader, ashamed and distressed. I ask forgiveness from the 100 hostages, only some of whom are still alive... And it’s not that nothing could have been done. It was a matter of decision. A government that intentionally left these people behind—whether due to political considerations, ‘base’ interests, or messianic fantasies... True, we Israelis did not choose this war. But what might have been justified as necessity a year and two months ago is no longer relevant today. We have turned Gaza into ruins; the IDF has captured parts of the Strip more than twice; we are in a loop, stagnating—and all because military tactics cannot replace political vision. They cannot replace a national strategy for how to move from war to an agreement.”⁷

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1329071168636641&rdid=md2YZdFN5tKQmGWV>

⁷

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=8961801107251543&id=100002652278165&rdid=EY Zagod3jVemzw9u#

2. Statements by the Histadrut, the Union's umbrella organization

- The Histadrut has repeatedly called for humanitarian aid to enter Gaza, including food and medical supplies for civilians, for dialogue, and for an immediate ceasefire. For example, on 26.5 it stated:

“The Histadrut welcomes the renewed entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. It is vital that food, medical supplies, and other essential goods reach the civilian population without delay.”⁸

- Throughout the years—before the war and during it despite the difficulties—the Histadrut continued to support the two-state solution, establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. For example, on 12.9.25 it stated: *“...this is the fairest, most practical, and most sustainable solution. Such an agreement must be based on principles of mutual respect, recognition of national aspirations, and protection of human rights.”⁹*

3. On several occasions we called on social workers to strike, demanding a ceasefire and the release of the hostages

- On 2.9, together with the Histadrut, we called for a nationwide shutdown—including social work services—as a form of protest.¹⁰
- On 17.8 we called on social workers to join a civilian protest strike organized by protest groups and families of hostages, calling for a ceasefire and a hostage-release agreement. In the letter we sent to Union members we wrote: *“This is a moment of decision regarding the character of the State of Israel and the lives of the hostages, and it is my duty to present my perspective on the dangerous situation we are in. Sunday, 17.8, is planned as a national protest shutdown, with protests across the country throughout the day and night. The protest is for ending the war in order to reach an immediate agreement to release the hostages...”*

⁸ <https://global.histadrut.org.il/resource/histadrut-welcomes-gaza-aid-entry-urges-hostage-release-and-political-resolution/>

⁹ [The Pursuit of Peace Between Israel and the Palestinians - Working for the workers of Israel](#)

¹⁰ [Court shuts down Histadrut strike, accepting government claim it was political | The Times of Israel](#)

יום חמישי ב' אב תשפ"ה

14/08/2025

עו"ס יקרים/ים,

זהו מכתב אישי ממי אילין/ם. חלקן תהיו מושכות מהתוכן שבו וולקן תכנסו ותתקוממו. אם מבדת את סלפ', וכי שעשיתי עד כה בקרוב ל-8-שנות הngegti, אמשיך ליצג את כל הע"ס והפרופסיה ללא תלות בעמדות פוליטיות באלו ואחרות. לצד זאת, זהה שעה של הכרעה באשר לדמותה של מדינת ישראל ובאשר לח"י החטופים ומחובטי לשטוח את תפישתי לגבי המצב המשוכן בו אנחנו נמצאים ב-zAהה.

יום ראשון, 17.8, מתחנן להיות יום השבתה אוזחי, כולל מנוחות בכל הארץ לאורך כל היום והليلה. המנוחה היא למען פסקת המלחמה ב כדי להגיע לעסקה מיידית שתחרור את החטופים וב כדי לעצור את קטל חיל צה"ל, בסיור ובמיילואים, במלחמה בשזה. אני קוראת לכל מי שמחודה עם מטרות ההשבתת או חלקן, לחתום יומן כופש, בקבוק מים וככע ויצאת לחוגבות.

בעוד ממשלה ישראל מנהלת מלחמה ממושכת ללא מטרות ברורות, עם מחיר בלתי נתפס של חי אדם משני צדי הלחימה, תוך כדי הפקרת החטופים לאזרם ולא כל אופק מדינתי, אנו נמצאים במצב של התפרקות מוסדות ומערכות המדינה. הפירוק הזה לא חול בשבעה באוקטובר וגם לא בминистр הרכחות. ייחד עם זאת, אין חולק, כי בשתיים

4. On various occasions we make sure to call for peace or an end to the war, incorporating this message throughout the Union's activities

- For example, on 5.6.25, during a ceremony signing a collective wage agreement for social workers, Union Chairperson Inbal Hermoni said: *"I pray for the end of the war. May there be peace and security here."*¹¹
- Most recently, with the return of the last fallen hostage, we published a statement on our Facebook page noting: *"With Ran's return home, we hope and wish for healing and peace, in Israel and in Gaza."*¹²

<https://www.youtube.com/live/lyGyCD85N08> ¹¹

[סוף סוף זה נגמר ברגשות... - איגוד העובדות והעובדים הסוציאליים](https://www.facebook.com/sof.sof.7) ¹²