

**WE BELIEVE
IN ISRAEL**

Trade Unions in Israel

ABOUT ISRAELI TRADE UNIONISM

- The General Federation of Labour in Israel (The Histadrut) is the largest labour union and voluntary organisation in the country. Founded in 1920, the Histadrut is the most important economic and social body in the state and its activities extend beyond the traditional concerns of trade unions.
- It wields enormous influence on the government's wage policy, labour legislation, working conditions in the private sector, and is influential in political, social, and cultural spheres. Although it sold most of its holdings to private investors before the mid-1990s it is still the owner, or joint owner, of a wide range of industries and is one of the largest employers in Israel, currently accounting for more than 20 percent of the national income.
- The Histadrut unites thousands of union members in one organisation regardless of religion, race or gender. Arab workers have been admitted to the organisation with full membership since 1960 and it currently has over 200,000 Arab members.
- The Histadrut maintains a good relationship with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), as well as labour movements in other countries, and is affiliated to the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU).

THE HISTADRUT AND THE PGFTU

- In a landmark agreement, the Histadrut (Israeli TUC) and the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) signed an agreement in August 2008 to base future relations on negotiation, dialogue and joint initiatives to advance "fraternity and co-existence."
- An example of cooperation between the Histadrut and PGFTU was in October 2007 when the Histadrut successfully petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice for Israeli labour law to be applied in the occupied territories, something they were previously denied. Nine judges ruled that Palestinians working for Israeli employers in West Bank settlements should be given the same work benefits provided by Israeli law. The ruling set an important precedent that benefits thousands of Palestinians working for Israelis and Israeli companies throughout the West Bank.
- Cooperation between the PGFTU and the Histadrut is now better than ever. The 2008 agreement defends the rights of Palestinian workers; 'led to improvements in their day-to-day lives and paved the way. All financial issues have been settled, and as well as providing Palestinian workers with trade union services and representation fees, the new agreement encourages participation in educational and vocational training workshops.

TRADE UNION BOYCOTTS WEAKEN THE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE

Calling for boycotts of Israel is not the right approach for trade unions for a number of important reasons:

- The economic relationship between the Palestinian and Israeli economies is vitally important to the peace process: economic boycotts against Israel can only damage this.
- Both the Histadrut (Israeli TUC) and the PGFTU (Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions) do not want boycotts but want to continue working together for peace. Trade unionists have a duty to support them; to show solidarity with their positive efforts rather than call for disruptive boycotts.
- Simplistic and non-constructive efforts in the form of misguided resolutions is not the right approach for trade unions to help, especially when there are a number of positive measures that can express practical solidarity without calling for a boycott.
- Advocates of the boycott of Israel repeatedly invoke the boycott of South Africa. The parallel they draw between Israel and apartheid South Africa is false and a misrepresentation of the facts.

Rather than divestment from Israel, we believe that investment of time, energy and material aid in the peace process is the way to meaningful progress towards achieving a lasting settlement.

Further information:

TUFI (Trade Union Friends of Israel):
<http://www.tufi.org.uk/>

TULIP (Trade Unions Linking Israel and Palestine):
<http://www.tuliponline.org/>

TUFI

Promoting Israeli-Palestinian Trade Union Co-operation



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