



THE NEW HISTADRUT

Peace, Social Justice
and the Israeli Trade Unions

Alan Johnson

TRADE
UNION
FRIENDS
of ISRAEL

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Cover images: Demonstrators outside the National Labor Court in Jerusalem February 9, 2012. The Histadrut-led general strike won new rights for contract workers. The banner reads 'Contract Workers = Modern Slavery'. Photo by Kobi Gideon/Flash90.

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The rights of Palestinian workers have been strengthened over the last two years with increased cooperation between the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and the Histadrut.

– **Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group** 2010 report 'Palestinian Workers Rights'. The PHRMG was founded in December 1996 by a group of well-established Palestinians, including Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) members, newspaper editors, journalists, a union leader, veteran human rights activists and religious leaders.

All the organisations we met during the delegation including the Palestine General Federation of Trades Union (PGFTU), [none] of them call on UNISON to sever its relations with the Histadrut, in fact the opposite. **The PGFTU in particular said that UNISON should maintain links with the Histadrut** so that we could specifically put pressure on them to take a more vocal public stance against the occupation and the settlements. [The other independent Israeli pro-labour organisations] Kav laOved, Koach laOvdim and WAC/ Ma'an **all felt that international trade union influence on the Histadrut was essential** in moving it towards more progressive policies in relation to migrant workers and discrimination against Palestinian Israeli workers.

– **REPORT OF THE UNISON DELEGATION TO PALESTINE AND ISRAEL**
27 November – 3 December, 2010. Approved by Unison International Committee on 26 January 2011 and endorsed by National Executive Committee, February 2011.

If the UK unions break links with the Histadrut the long term damage will be to the peace camp. It would be a step away from the constructive work trade unions can do – bridge-building, encouraging constructive dialogue – in favour of an act that will polarise the situation. Whatever the intentions, breaking links will only encourage the extremists on both sides. It will push peace further away. And it will have a big effect on public opinion in Israel – but the very *opposite* from the one intended. Anyone wanting to help the peace should oppose the proposal to break links with the Histadrut because we are the most important and influential organisation in the State of Israel who still strives to do joint ventures with the Palestinians.

– **Avital Shapira-Shabirow**, is the Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut, the Israeli TUC. (March 2012).

The whole global trade union movement needs to provide strong support for the PGFTU and to the Histadrut which are both independent trade union organisations which do not speak for their governments. We need to show that practical union cooperation is the right way forward.

– **International Transport Federation General Secretary David Cockcroft**, 23 December 2009.

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Preface

by Michael J. Leahy OBE, General Secretary of Community Union



I am delighted to welcome this publication. I would urge you to take some time to read it.

For many of you this will be your introduction to the Histadrut (the Israeli equivalent of the TUC). For others who have had more exposure to debates about the organisation, this pamphlet will give you a deep insight into the industrial work of the Histadrut, its progressive aims and values, and its cooperation with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU).

The Histadrut has a proud record of representing workers across the State of Israel. Professor Johnson details the origins of the Jewish labour organisation, its role in the foundation of the State of Israel, the subsequent creation of an Arab workers section, through to the emergence of a New Histadrut in the 1990s.

The pamphlet shows the New Histadrut is inclusive, often militant, and a powerful champion of the vulnerable worker. In 2012, for example, the Histadrut organised a successful general strike in support of private sector contracted workers and secured better wages, better conditions and, for many, permanent employment. That is the spirit of the New Histadrut.

It also may come as some surprise that the Histadrut have a formal working relationship with their Palestinian counterparts, the PGFTU. This cooperation is supported by the TUC, the ILO and the ITUC. General Secretary Guy Ryder helped to facilitate the 2008 agreement between the Histadrut and the PGFTU.

This agreement should be fully supported by the UK trade union because it benefits Palestinian and Israeli workers. It is internationally recognised as a ray of hope pointing us towards the future peace settlement that we all want. This publication examines the background to the agreement and urges us to build on it.

This is a critical time for the relationship between the British and Israeli trade unions.

In recent years some have proposed that UK unions break their links with the Histadrut. This idea is misguided. Our support for the Palestinian people's legitimate aspiration for a state of their own is to our credit as a movement, but breaking links with the Histadrut would be wrong in principle and counterproductive. Unions should be supporting their international brothers and sisters in their day to day struggles not breaking links.

The pamphlet outlines why boycotts damage Palestinian workers, set back peace, and risk isolating British trade unions from the international trade union movement – after all, not a single Global Federation supports breaking links with the Histadrut.

Breaking links with the Israeli trade union movement would be a radical departure from the best internationalist traditions of our movement. Progressive voices in the British trade union movement have traditionally refused to boycott other free trade unions because of what their governments do. We have not gone in for gesture politics. We have preferred engagement, worker-to-worker links, practical solidarity and, yes, a critical dialogue. Those traditions have served us well. We should stick to them.

I would like to thank Professor Alan Johnson and Trade Union Friends of Israel for taking the time to produce this excellent pamphlet. I hope it gives the reader a better understanding of the Histadrut and determination to build not break links with both our Israeli and our Palestinian colleagues.

Introduction: The Histadrut is the Israeli TUC

- The Histadrut is the Israeli TUC. It leads the fight for workers' rights and job security in Israel.
- The Histadrut unites over 700,000 union members in one organisation regardless of religion, race or gender.
- The Histadrut has organised Arab workers with full membership since 1959.
- The Histadrut signed a landmark agreement with the Palestinian national trade union centre, the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) in 2008 under the auspices of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).
- The 2008 Histadrut-PGFTU Agreement was hailed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for offering 'hope on the way to peace' between Israel and the Palestinians.
- The Histadrut supports a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- The Histadrut supported Israel's 2012 mass street protests for social justice.¹
- The Histadrut organised a successful General Strike in 2012 in solidarity with Israel's most vulnerable contract workers.



Ashdod Port Shop Stewards meet with TUC leadership delegation 2011.

In 2011 the TUC Conference invited all unions 'to review their bilateral relations with all Israeli organisations, including Histadrut.'²

Some rank and file trade unionists may be tempted to break links with the Histadrut because they want to do something – anything – to help the Palestinians. In fact breaking links with the Israeli TUC would be counter-productive, harming Palestinian workers and setting back hopes for mutual recognition and peace.

This pamphlet presents the case for UK unions to **build not break** their links with the Histadrut and the PGFTU. The internationalist traditions of the British trade union movement have been all about engagement, building bridges, forging worker-to-worker links, delivering practical solidarity, and offering comradely criticism when it is due.

To break links with our colleagues in the Histadrut would be a giant step towards a very different kind of 'internationalism' – one that is alien to the British trade unions, that demonises one party, glamorises the other, stokes divisions on the ground, and isolates the TUC from the constructive work of its global partners and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

The TUC has worked over decades with both the Histadrut and the PGFTU to achieve a two-state solution in Israel / Palestine.

The ITUC's 'Workers Pact for Peace and Justice for Palestinians and Israel' in February 2011 committed all ITUC affiliates to 'support and encourage action by the PGFTU Palestine and Histadrut Israel for peace, justice and workers' rights.'

This pamphlet looks back at the early history of the Histadrut but is much more interested in the present. It charts the emergence of a New Histadrut – inclusive, worker-centred and in full support of the two-state solution. It makes the case against breaking links with the Histadrut and proposes a constructive alternative.



2011 TUC Trade Union Leaders Delegation meet British Ambassador Matthew Gould.

1. See Greene, Johnson and Leshem 2012.
2. TUC 2011.

1. The Histadrut's History

In 1917 Britain captured Palestine from the Ottoman Empire, and in 1922 it was granted a mandate over Palestine by the League of Nations with the mission of establishing a Jewish national home, without prejudicing the rights of Palestine's other inhabitants. The General Federation of Labour in Israel (The Histadrut) was founded in 1920, and by 1927 it organised 75 per cent of the Jewish workforce in Mandatory Palestine. As the Histadrut took on new responsibilities – absorbing Jewish immigrants and organising agricultural settlement, defence and expansion into new areas of production – it became an integral part of 'a state in the making'.

After the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 the Histadrut became a major employer, controlling at one point around a third of the economy and employing over three-quarters of workers. It was also central to the provision of pensions and health services through the General Health Fund.

Prior to 1948 the Jewish and Arab labour movements competed and cooperated.

An academic study, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish workers in Palestine, 1906–1948* by Zachary Lockman argues that the early Labour-Zionists were trying to do two things: first, promote a Jewish homeland, a refuge in a world ablaze with anti-Semitism; and second, promote working class solidarity between Jews and Arabs in a capitalist world. So they organised Kibbutzim and local Jewish industries, but they also 'organize[d] Arab workers so wages and working conditions would not be so atrocious.'

Lockman notes that, 'From a strictly trade union angle, the Histadrut-sponsored Arab unions were attractive to Arab workers since they had considerable experience in organising [and] offered a dense net of social services.' He adds, 'Bulus Farah, the Palestinian communist and nationalist

union leader [said] that "the Jewish workers regarded their Arab co-workers with considerable respect."

But these two goals – creating a homeland for a persecuted Jewish people, and forging workers unity in Palestine – were in tension.

The old Histadrut was shaped by that tension. To advance the goal of creating a homeland for the Jewish people it decided as early as the 1920s to remain an exclusively Jewish organisation.

The union also adopted a policy of *kibbush ha'avodah*, literally 'conquest of labour.' This policy is often misunderstood. The motivation for the policy among the pioneering Labour Zionists was the belief that Jews must not be exploiters of Arab workers but must rather return to manual and agricultural work. The aim was to create a Jewish proletariat to fight for socialism. To that end Jewish workers were preferred over Arabs on Jewish farms and industries in Palestine. The policy was also based on the need to find work for the large number of Jewish immigrants arriving in Palestine. As the first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion explained: 'We do not want to create a situation like that which exists in South Africa, where the whites are the owners and rulers, and the blacks are the workers. If we do not do all kinds of work, easy and hard, skilled and unskilled, if we become merely landlords, then this will not be our homeland.'³

Without question, the desire to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine caused conflict between the Histadrut and the Palestinian trade unions. For instance during the 1936 Jaffa Dockers Strike, the Jewish workers established Tel Aviv as an alternative port to Jaffa. But this was no ordinary 'strike' and no ordinary 'scabbing'. The Palestinian Arabs were not striking for wages, but for the prohibition of Jewish immigration and the prohibition of the transfer of

Arab land to Jews. In 1936, with Hitler already in power, and with almost all countries, including the United States, closing their doors to Jewish refugees, the Jews of Palestine defended their aspiration to create a refuge-state.

The historians will debate the past. The truth is that many trades unions can look back with some regret on policies they adopted during the age of imperialism. In the UK, for example, the trade unions supported the Aliens Act of 1905 which limited Jewish immigration to Britain. Passed by a Tory government, enforced by a Liberal government, according to the late anti-

racist writer Steve Cohen, the Act was also 'the result of nearly twenty years of agitation by the English working class.' The TUC was then committed to the exclusion of Jews and included a question about immigration control in a list asked of all Parliamentary candidates. The English socialist newspaper *The Clarion* referred to Jews simply as 'The Nose.'⁴

What matters most when judging whether to build or break links with the Histadrut is not its history but its present: what does the union stand for today?

1. Construction workers in Tel Aviv, 1922.
2. May Day March in Tel Aviv, 1937.
3. The Red House. The Workers House with the excavations for the Workers Theatre, 1925.

Photos courtesy of the Lavon Institute. Must not be reproduced without permission.

4. Cohen 1984.

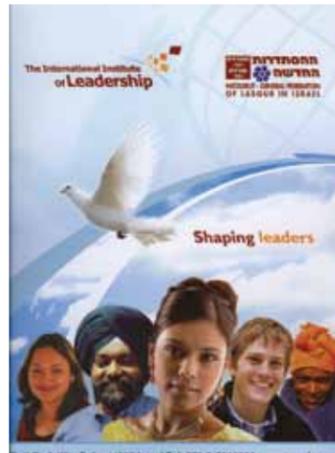


3. Quoted in Teveth (1985).

2. The Emergence of the 'New Histadrut' as a force for social justice



Supporting Decent Work.
A Booklet for Chinese
Migratory Workers



International Institute
of Leadership brochure

The Histadrut has moved on. The union is now inclusive, worker-centred and a real champion of the vulnerable worker, whether Jew or Arab.

(i) An inclusive trade union

Including Israeli Arabs

In 1959 Arab citizens of Israel were welcomed into the Histadrut and in 1966 the word 'Hebrew' was dropped from the federation's title. Today, the Histadrut has many Arab members who are leading at every level of the union. According to Uri Davis, a critic of Israel, 'the opening of the gates of membership of the Histadrut ... to Arab workers who were citizens of Israel did contribute significantly to the progressive empowerment of the Palestinian-Arab community inside the governing institutions of the Histadrut as well as outside.'⁵

In 2010 a UNISON delegation to Israel and Palestine reported that 'it is clear that the Histadrut has a sizeable Palestinian Israeli membership and that they hold positions throughout the structure of the Histadrut'.⁶

Minorities in every country, including the UK, suffer discrimination and exclusion. Israel is no exception. However, the Histadrut has been a force for the inclusion of Israel's Arab citizens, through the youth movement Hanoar HaOved Ve Halomed, the Arab-Jewish Institute of the Histadrut, and through its legal services which are provided to both Israelis (Jews and non-Jews), Palestinians and migrant workers.

By agreement with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip cannot join the Histadrut. The Histadrut argues that to recruit West Bank Palestinians would lead it into competition for members with the PGFTU.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, October 2009. Israeli Labour court rejects railway job criteria as discriminatory toward Israeli-Arabs

An Israeli court has barred Israel Railways from dismissing Arab employees who don't meet certain new criteria. The court rejected new criteria which the company had proposed following a court petition challenging a requirement that employees must have served in the army. The new criterion does not contain the army service provision, but they still put up other 'unnecessary requirements' such as eighteen months of continuous employment. Over 150 Arab-Israeli railway workers lost their jobs in April following the introduction of the army service provision. This resulted in **an international trade union campaign, led by the Histadrut, which helped get the workers reinstated.** Ahmed Tibi MK, an Arab Israeli parliamentarian, said that the court's decision was important and praised the workers for pursuing the case.

What is the Arab-Jewish Institute of the Histadrut?

The Jewish-Arab Institute was founded in 1984 and has made significant advancements in establishing peaceful relations and strong communication among Jews and Arabs in the State of Israel.

This movement promotes coexistence and integration of Arab citizens throughout the State of Israel.

With cooperation and participation of Palestinians, Jordanians and the greater Arab world, the Arab-Jewish Institute's mission is to provide peaceful day-to-day interactions and dialogues between the many Arab-Jewish regions throughout Israel.

These conversations and meetings are built on a foundation of mutual understanding and respect.

We organise political meetings, social opportunities, cultural events which include music, folklore and theatre, and professional networking opportunities which include Jews, Jordanians and Palestinians and other Arab nations.

The Jewish-Arab Institute's efforts know no borders, and we are dedicated to allowing Arabs and Jews to live a life of coexistence and peace, together.

Farok Amror
*President of the Arab-Jewish Institute of the Histadrut.*⁷

Including Migrant Workers

Migrant workers were brought into full Histadrut membership in 2010.

The outbreak of the second intifada in 2000 saw regular suicide bombings inside Israel and many deaths. Over time, many Palestinian workers from Gaza and the West Bank have been replaced by approximately 200,000 migrant workers from other countries, half legal and half illegal.

According to UNISON, these workers face severe problems, including exploitation in the personal care sector, and a rule that children born to migrant workers must be sent back for care to the extended family. However, the Unison delegation noted that 'recent attempts to [enforce this rule] by the authorities led to major protests by migrant workers themselves and also their supporters in Israeli NGOs and the Histadrut'.⁸

Textile factory briefing,
Kavar Sava 2007



7. Amror nd.
8. UNISON 2010:8.

5. Davis 2000.
6. Unison 2010:10.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, January 2010. Histadrut changes its constitution to allow migrant members

The Histadrut's executive has voted to allow migrant workers to become full members. To date, most of the Histadrut's activities in support of migrant workers have been conducted via a special office in Tel Aviv, but the new policy will enable the Histadrut to unionise industries and companies all over the country that employ a high

percentage of foreign workers. Migrant labour accounts for over 7 per cent of Israel's labour force, and maltreatment of these workers is prevalent. The ITUC welcomed the Histadrut's decision, calling it 'a significant step towards ensuring an end to exploitation and helping ensure full respect for their rights at work.'

(ii) A worker-centred trade union

The Histadrut has given up most of its non-trade-union functions. After Haim Ramon won the leadership of the Histadrut in 1994 he sold off most of the union's holdings to private investors and separated the Histadrut from the delivery of state services.

The Histadrut has been normalised, with only the trade union department remaining of the old Histadrut. The big, powerful trade unions

now organise in the Histadrut as separate sectors. Even the 'anti-Zionist' writer Uri Davis argues that 'the contradiction characterising the Histadrut since its establishment in 1920, the conflict between its interests as the second largest employer in Israel and its trade union interests was now greatly reduced ... the Histadrut of today is much "leaner" and closer to a trade union in the social-democratic European sense of the term than its earlier form.'⁹

TUFI NEWSLETTER, May 2009. Israeli Labour Party and the Histadrut quash proposed budget cuts

The Israeli cabinet approved the country's 2009-2010 Budget on 13 May after days of deliberations. Israeli Defence Minister and Labour party chairman Ehud Barak, Minister of Welfare and Social

Services Isaac Herzog (Labour) and Histadrut chairman Ofer Eini all welcomed the deal after NIS 4 billion (£640 million) worth of cuts advocated by the treasury were scrapped.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, July 2009. Israeli Trade Union News: New Israeli law forces bosses to talk to unions

The Histadrut has won important changes to Israeli labour law as part of recent budget negotiations. One new law requires employers to negotiate with labour unions in

the workplace and other changes include administrative and criminal sanctions against employers not paying the minimum wage.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, November 2009. The Histadrut Gains Influence

When Benjamin Netanyahu was the Finance Minister from 2003 to 2005, he became renowned for his attacks on the public sector, slashing jobs and cutting salaries. But since the formation of his coalition government in April this year, the Histadrut has managed to negotiate no fewer than twelve new labour

laws. The requirement of employers to negotiate with unions, criminal sanctions against employers not paying the minimum wage, an increase in the day-care budget, extended unemployment benefits, and the expansion of the authority of Labour Courts are just a few of the laws that have been passed.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, August 2010. Histadrut stops privatisation of Israeli postal services during successful budget talks

The chairman of the Histadrut, Ofer Eini, has won concessions from the Israeli Minister of Finance Yuval Steinitz at his meeting on the

biennial state budget for 2011-12, including the removal of items calling for the privatisation of the Postal Company Ltd.

(iii) A champion of the vulnerable worker

The Histadrut is now at the forefront of organising vulnerable workers in Israel.

The problem of precarious workers is being faced by unions all over the world. Few are tackling it head-on like the Histadrut.

Early in 2006 the Histadrut held strike action in Israel's seaports to support the local authority workers of Nazareth, the largest Arab city in Israel. This was significant as it was the first time that strong and influential workers at the ports went on strike to defend their weaker colleagues in the local authority. Histadrut leader Ofer Eini has compared Israel's growing use of contract labour to a slave market.

In 2012 the Histadrut organised a successful four-day general strike in defence of contract workers.¹⁰ The global trade union federations rushed to heap praise on the Histadrut.

Public Services International (PSI), which represents 20 million public sector workers in 150 countries, wrote that 'the strike was held in support of contract workers who earn less and receive fewer benefits than their directly employed colleagues. The strike included all government ministries, local authorities, train, banks, stock exchange, airport, seaports and other public services . . . On February 12, an agreement was finally reached between the Histadrut and the Finance Ministry which defines **significant accomplishments for the benefit of the contract workers.**'¹¹

The International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), representing 25 million trade union members in 100 countries, said 'thousands of temporary workers will be directly employed and will get better wages. The victory will improve the situation of thousands of public sector workers across the country.'¹²

10. Histadrut statement http://www.infmetal.org/files/12021416145279/The_Histadrut_Accomplishments_in_the_Contract_Workers_Campaign-12-2-12.pdf
 11. PSI statement is <http://www.world-psi.org/en/israel-contract-workers-histadrut-finally-reaches-agreement-government>.
 12. IMF statement <http://www.infmetal.org/index.cfm?c=28880&l=2>

9. Davis 2000.

2. The Emergence of the 'New Histadrut' as a force for social justice

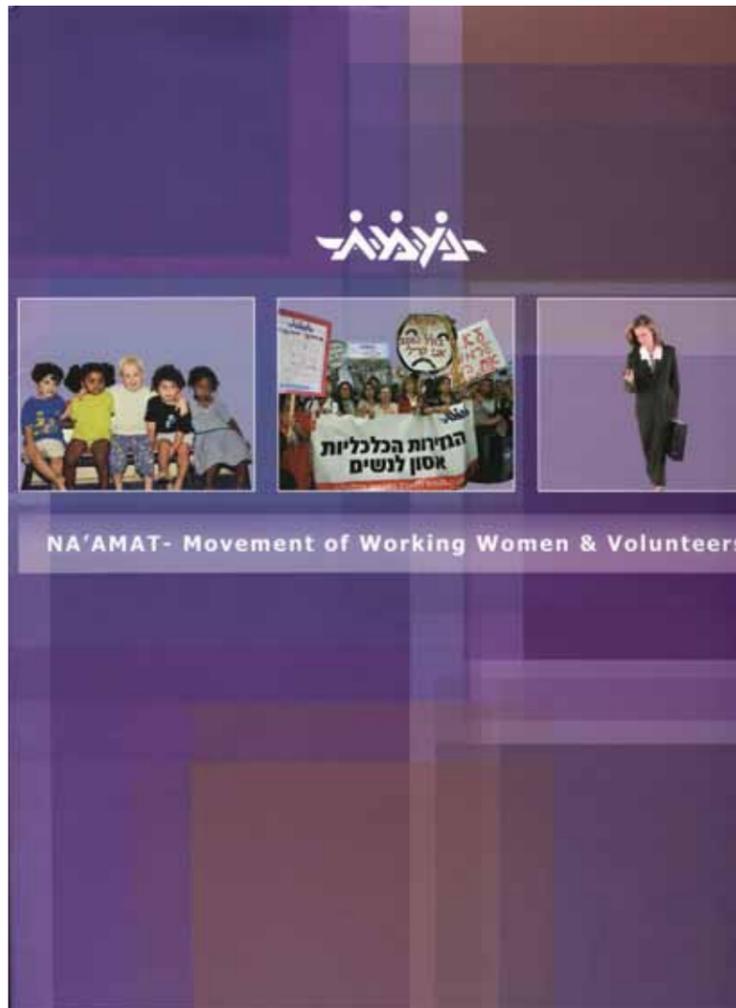
Talking to the Histadrut: Defending Vulnerable Workers

Alan Johnson: Some allege that the Histadrut only protects the salaries of well-paid and secure workers in large firms. How do you respond?

Avital Shapira-Shabirow is the Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut.

Well, that was refuted only one month ago [February, 2012] when the Histadrut organised

a largely successful general strike for the unprivileged workers, the unorganised workers, the contract workers! We struggled in solidarity to equalise the rights of unprivileged and unorganised workers to those who are strong and organised. For the first time a strike was held not to improve wages or auxiliary benefits of those who held the strike but to enable the unprivileged and unorganised workers to be in a better position.¹³



NA'AMAT brochure

13. Shapira-Shabirow 2012.

Israeli trade unionists striking for non-unionised workers' rights shows way forward

Professor Alan Johnson

The Israeli TUC, the Histadrut, made a bold move this week. [6–12 February 2012] Bold not just for the fact that they organised a four-day general strike that included all government ministries, local authorities, train, banks, stock exchange, airport, seaports and other public services.

Bold too for who they struck for.

Israel's organised workers fought for the benefit of Israel's unorganised, deprived contract workers, who earn less and receive fewer benefits than their directly employed colleagues. **And on 12 February, they won, mostly.**

Because of the Histadrut's militancy, thousands of insecure contract workers – tellers at banks, thousands of workers in production lines in industrial plants, thousands of chambermaids at hotels, couriers, warehouse workers and more – will now be absorbed into direct employment.

The deal struck with the Finance Ministry raised the subcontracted workers minimum monthly wage to NIS 4,500 and improved their working conditions.

The strike did not achieve everything, but from employer participation in workers' savings to holiday gifts, and from larger employer participation in pensions' savings to subsidized meals, it leaves thousands of contract workers better off.

In organised workplaces there will be an 'equalisation of

conditions' so that all contract workers will receive a huge improvement in their employment conditions, according to collective bargaining agreements.

For example, a cleaner in the supermarket chain Shufersal, employed by a contractor will receive all the conditions in the collective agreement of their contracted workers. It includes many rights, like an additional 'month thirteen' salary; and now, if a contract worker is employed at the core of the workplace then after nine months the worker will be moved to direct employment.

The Histadrut has also abolished the 'shoulder to shoulder' phenomenon in the public sector.

When contract workers are employed shoulder to shoulder, next to their directly employed friends in the same workplace in the same job, then after nine months of work a parity committee (including representatives of the Histadrut) will decide whether the employee should be absorbed.

If the worker is not absorbed, it is not allowed to bring a different contract worker in his/her place. In effect, this will end 'shoulder to shoulder.'

Social benefits will be equalized, the numbers of workplace inspectors increased, and the linkage to public sector wage agreements will mean significant wage improvement of cleaners and security workers in the public sector.

Histadrut has done what UK unions have struggled to do. It has put the issue of precarious workers right at the top of the public agenda, shutting down the country for four days in solidarity with the most vulnerable group in the Israeli labour market.

UK unions might learn three lessons.

First, social movements and trade unions can draw strength from each other.

It was the summer social protests, the largest (per capita) in the world, which transformed Israeli public opinion and put social and economic justice at the top of the national agenda. That new mood was the real driver behind the general strike.

A fight for equality – levelling up – can be a powerful agenda for any working class movement seeking to sow back together the divisions that thirty years of neo-liberalism has created.

Second, there are powerful progressive forces within Israeli society standing for social democratic values. And they will be more than a match for those who threaten Israel's democracy, especially if we support them rather than shun them.

Third, therefore, UK unions should be building links not breaking links with one of the most important sources of democratic renewal, the Histadrut.

Source: Left Foot Forward.¹⁴

14. Johnson 2012

2. The Emergence of the 'New Histadrut' as a force for social justice

Pri Galil Protest, 2009. Placards read: 'Minister of finance – I have no other livelihood' and 'Finance ministry – If Pri Galil closes, there is no Hatzor Haglilit' (the community in which it is based)



TUFI NEWSLETTER, March 2009. Israeli Industrial News: Factory protests threaten to escalate

Over 700 employees of Pri Galil, a processes-food company in the North of Israel, went on strike on 23 February to demonstrate against the possible closure of their factory. Protesters burned tires and blocked the entrance to the factory by welding the gates shut.

On the 24 February, farmers and students, including members of Hanoar Haoved ve Halomed, the Histadrut youth movement, joined

the protesting workers on a march along the town's main road. Several heads of nearby regional councils came to show their support, and residents of the town also launched a general strike in solidarity.

The Chairman of the Histadrut, Ofer Eini, in a speech on 24 February called the events at Pri Galil 'the spark that would ignite social struggle throughout the country.'

TUFI NEWSLETTER, June 2009: New law bans dismissal of workers on sick leave

Israel's parliamentary Labour, Welfare and Health Committee approved the final reading of a bill on 17 June that will prohibit employers from dismissing staff while they are on sick leave. The

new bill will also entitle employees to 60 days of leave if a spouse falls ill with a malignant illness and up to 90 days if a child becomes seriously ill; a 900 per cent and 200 per cent increase respectively.

Court Typists Protest, 2009.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, November 2009. Court typists put full stop on work

Israeli court typists have been on strike since 12 November after negotiations between their representatives and the Israeli Finance Ministry hit an impasse. During a noisy demonstration in Jerusalem on 22 November, the

striking court typists blocked roads and stopped traffic. The Histadrut has threatened to undertake more aggressive action if the typists are not given more pay and a collective employment agreement.



TUFI NEWSLETTER, February 2010. Starting salaries in the Israeli construction sector to be above the minimum wage

Israeli trade union leaders have signed a collective agreement to raise the starting salary in the construction sector to nearly 12 per cent more than the national minimum wage. The agreement was signed on 21 January by the Chairman of the Histadrut, Ofer Eini, the President of the Association of Construction and Builders, Nissim Boubilil, and the Construction Workers' Union Chairman, Yitzhak Moyal.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, June-July 2010. Histadrut serves up wage agreement with caterers

The Histadrut has signed a collective wage agreement with Chefa Meals & Service Limited, the Israel's largest catering company. It is the first such agreement in the local catering industry and will provide employment security for workers. The chairman of the Histadrut's Food and Pharmaceutical Union, Hertzal Yaka, said: 'The agreement with Chefa represents a model for adoption for other catering companies in Israel to improve the labour conditions of catering employees in the country.'

TUFI NEWSLETTER, January 2011. Histadrut and Employers agree on 12 per cent increase in minimum wage

The Histadrut has reached an agreement with the Federation of Israeli Economic Organisations, an umbrella employers' organisation,

on an increase to the minimum wage. The Histadrut said that this agreement could help up to 600,000 workers.

2. The Emergence of the 'New Histadrut' as a force for social justice

1. Histadrut action forces Coffee Bean chain to sign a collective labour agreement in 2008. Placards: 'The right to unite, belongs to every worker' and 'Workers together, without the fear of the sack.' (rhymes in Hebrew, sort of.)
2. Labour-Zionist Youth Movement Hanoar Haoved VeHalomed. May Day 2005.
3. Pensions struggle, 2003.
4. Israeli cultural icon, the Ashdod-based Israel Andalusian Orchestra on strike in 2009. Placards: 'We want to play (our instruments) and earn a respectful living', 'The musicians are becoming beggars (which rhymes in Hebrew), 'End the exploitation'.
5. (opposite) Histadrut social protest, August 2012.



3. The Histadrut and the Palestinians - a Force for Mutual Recognition, Peace and the Two State Solution

From left: Ofer Eini (Histadrut Chairman), Brendan Barber (General Secretary, TUC), Sharan Burrow (General Secretary, ITUC), Shaher Sa'ed (General Secretary, Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions)



The Histadrut is one of Israel's strongest supporters of the two-state solution

- The Histadrut is publicly committed to the existence of two sovereign, independent and democratic states, a secure Israel alongside a viable Palestine; two states for two peoples, existing in peace and mutual respect.
- The Histadrut has called on the Israeli government 'to make concessions and take courageous and concrete steps towards attaining peace.'
- The Histadrut has worked with the PGFTU and the ITF to make the lives of Palestinian drivers easier at checkpoints.
- The Histadrut distributes information material for Palestinian workers in Arabic.
- The Histadrut does not organise Palestinian workers in the West Bank by agreement with the PGFTU.
- Israeli labour law applies inside the settlements. Palestinian workers are not opposed to this, benefitting from improved terms and conditions regarding the minimum wage, mandatory pension and health and safety, compared to the weaker Jordanian labour laws under which the West Bank was ruled previously.

15. Shapira-Shabirow 2012.

Talking to the Histadrut: supporting the two state solution

Avital Shapira-Shabirow is the Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut.

We strongly support the two state solution and we will back an agreement when the legitimate parties, the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, reach one. Our practical deeds promote and protect the rights of the Palestinian employees. We act as a trade unions federation which treats all the workers in Israel whether they are Israelis (Jew and non-Jews), migrants and of course Palestinians equally. We believe the authorised bodies to solve the conflict are not the trade unions but the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. We call on both to resume their negotiations and to reach a final settlement which will resolve all the bones of contention, including the issue of the borders.¹⁵

PGTFU with Ronnie Draper, General Secretary of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union



The Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions

The PGFTU is a national trade union centre with an estimated membership of 290,000, and is affiliated with the ITUC. The union in its current form is historically aligned with Fatah, but other parties have also worked within its organisation

The PGFTU traces its modern history to 1965, under Jordanian control of the West Bank, as the successor to the Arab Labourers Society that had been set up in 1921 in Haifa. Its current general secretary is Shaher Sa'ed, who has held the position for many years. The PGFTU consists of 13 national unions, each with regional and local organisations, in sectors such as Hotels, Tourism, Hospitals, Textiles, Clothing and Construction.

In 2007 criticism of the PGTFU culminated in the creation of the Federation of Independent

& Democratic Trade Unions & Workers' Committees in Palestine, representing over 50,000 male and female workers in independent, democratically-elected unions and workers' committees across the West Bank and Gaza. Mohammad Al-Aroui, formerly of the PGFTU, is a main coordinator of the new federation.

The Democracy and Workers' Rights Center in Ramallah is led by Hassan Barghouthi. Established in 1993 by a group of lawyers, academics, trade unionists and other prominent figures in the Palestinian society, it defends Palestinian workers' rights and promotes principles of democracy, social equality and justice in the Palestinian Territories.¹⁶

16. The Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions. <http://www.pgftu.org/>
The Democracy and Workers' Rights Center. <http://www.dwrc.org/>

Histadrut Statement for Peace and Co-operation with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (September 2009).

The Histadrut has released a statement to the world-wide trade union movement outlining its support for a two-state solution, Israeli and Palestinian workers' rights and its developing relationship with Palestinian trade unions.

The Histadrut urges 'the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (PA) to immediately resume their negotiations,' and says it understands the effects the restrictions on movement and the security fence/wall can have on the lives of Palestinian workers and their families'. The Federation says it supports the decision to remove security checkpoints in the context of the improved security of the innocent Israeli people, and calls upon the 'Israeli government to dismantle all illegal outposts'.

The statement goes on to say that the Histadrut recognises these problems and steadfastly works with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) to mitigate them whilst negotiations on the wider issues take place.

Israeli and Palestinian trade unions have been successfully working together and signing co-operation agreements over the last few years, and the Histadrut's statement says it is their duty, as trade unionists, to be involved with the peace process and serve as role-models.

The Histadrut says: 'The ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine is very complex and our goal is to reach an understanding and to look for common denominators. We believe that the only way to overcome the hostility is through peace and trust, such as that which exists today between the Histadrut and the PGFTU.'¹⁷

Guy Ryder, the ITUC General Secretary hailed the Histadrut statement as 'an important and welcome call for dialogue and progress to achieve the objective of two states co-existing in conditions of peace and security, and full respect for the rights of all working people.' He said Israeli-Palestinian trade union co-operation has an important 'contribution to make in promoting peace and mutual understanding in the Middle East.'¹⁸

After meeting with senior Israeli and Palestinian trade unionists in Israel and the West Bank, Guy Ryder said 'with the peace process effectively in stalemate at present, the ITUC's working together with our Israeli and Palestinian affiliates is especially important.'¹⁹

The 2008 Histadrut-PGFTU Agreement

Background to the 2008 Histadrut-PGFTU Agreement: Growing Cooperation after the Oslo Accords

Cooperation between the two federations started in 1993 after the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO.

In 1995 the Histadrut and the PGFTU agreed that the Histadrut would provide legal representation to Palestinians working for Israeli employers. The PGFTU were to receive 50 per cent of all union representation fees from Palestinian employees working in Israel.

However, the arrangement was frozen due to the deteriorating political and security conditions. Differences then emerged between the two parties about how much money the Histadrut still owed the PGFTU. This became increasingly difficult to evaluate over time as the number of Palestinians working in Israel significantly dropped during the Second Intifada.

A number of critics of Israel within the trade union movement, especially in the UK and Ireland, emphasised the disagreement; repeatedly using it as a justification for promoting trade union boycotts, disinvestment and sanctions against Israel.

However, throughout even the most difficult times, the two organisations continued to have dialogue. In time, improved relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority led to better union to union cooperation. At the Histadrut's 2007 annual Congress, the PGFTU was officially represented and the delegation present affirmed its commitment to maintain and extend constructive relations.

In October 2007 the Histadrut successfully petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice for Israeli labour law to be applied in the occupied territories. Nine judges ruled that Palestinians working for Israeli employers in West Bank settlements should be given the work benefits provided by Israeli law.

In another program of joint cooperation, over 20 Israeli and Palestinian transport union representatives signed a number of agreements at a bilateral meeting organised by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in June 2007.

The Histadrut and the PGFTU continue to meet under the auspices of the ITF. In February 2008, both parties agreed to facilitate the passage of professional drivers at checkpoints and road blocks in the West Bank.

UNISON reported that the Israeli Union of Clerical, Administrative and Public Service Employees (UCAPSE) were keen to stress that they had recently held strike action to secure unpaid salaries to workers in the Palestinian local authorities.²⁰

In 2008 an historic agreement was signed between the Histadrut and the PGFTU with the full support of the ITUC.

On 24 July 2008, a landmark agreement was reached between the Histadrut and the PGFTU.²¹ Facilitated by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to which both are affiliated, the agreement 'aimed at increased protection of Palestinian

workers and advancing fraternity and coexistence between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.'

The agreement's key features:

- Settlement of all financial issues between the two federations. The Histadrut paid the PGFTU the outstanding balance of legal representation fees paid by Palestinians working for Israeli employers since 1993, and agreed to transfer at least 50 per cent of such fees to the PGFTU in the future.
- Provision of legal assistance by the Histadrut to Palestinian workers employed by Israeli employers, to improve their working conditions, and to support the PGFTU in handling such cases.
- Organisation of educational and vocational training courses and workshops, particularly in the areas of workers' rights and occupational safety and health.

The agreement involved planning for joint projects:

- Palestinian and Israeli truck drivers training project, covering labour rights and occupational health and safety
- Israeli and Palestinian Construction workers union project providing for Palestinian workers to have their skills upgraded and be employed by Israeli construction companies
- Israeli and Palestinian Transport Workers Unions partnership with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) to create an 'Emergency Hotline' to help Palestinian Transport Union drivers at checkpoints.
- ILO support to the PGFTU to 'improve capacity to provide legal support and advisory services to workers, in cooperation with the Israeli federation Histadrut, through the establishment of a legal clinic.'²²

17. ITUC 2009.
18. ITUC 2009.
19. Trade Union Friends of Israel 2009a.

20. Unison 2010.
21. ITUC 2008.
22. ILO 2009:29.

The 2008 Histadrut-PGFTU Agreement was supported by the Global Trade Union Movement

2010 ITUC Congress Resolution

Congress welcomes the landmark agreement between Histadrut and the PGFTU on the rights of Palestinian workers, which was finalised with the assistance of the ITUC in August 2008, and initiatives by Global Union Federations in their sectors to support cooperation in defense of workers' rights. This agreement and other actions to promote decent work and end discrimination are crucial to building the basis for just and equitable economic development....[Congress] support the strengthening of cooperation between the Palestinian and Israeli trade union movements...

The ITUC Secretary-General Guy Ryder hailed the agreement as 'tremendously significant, at a time when the political authorities in Israel and Palestine and the international community are failing to find just and lasting solutions to the political impasse.' Ryder continued: 'It means that the PGFTU will be able to ensure much more effective representation for Palestinian workers, while those working for Israeli employers will also benefit.'

Those considering breaking links with the Histadrut should note that Ryder set out the duty of the international trade union movement: 'The agreement calls upon the ITUC and its affiliates to continue to support future cooperation, and we are fully committed to do this.'

PGFTU General Secretary Shaher Sae'd hailed the agreement as good for the Palestinians. 'This removes a key obstacle to future cooperation and the full respect of the rights of Palestinian Workers. Decent work is a foundation stone for political and economic justice, and we will now be in a position to

devote even more attention to tackling the appalling state of the Palestinian economy and playing a fuller part in the quest for justice, fairness and democratic rights in the building of a Palestinian state.'

Histadrut Chairperson Ofer Eini hoped the agreement would be the first step towards a greater unity. 'Every worker, whether of Israeli, Palestinian or other origin, must have full rights to the protections offered by international labour standards. The outcome of our dialogue with the PGFTU can only help achieve this, and help lay the foundations for future cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian trade unions and progress in our shared quest for justice, peace and prosperity for all in the region.'

In the UK, **TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber** praised the two federations for 'carving a path that political leaders could now follow'.

The International Labor Organisation (ILO) hailed the agreement as 'displaying hope on the way to peace' and a 'unique example of cooperation providing a basis for reinvigorated partnership.'²³

The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group noted in their 2010 report that 'The rights of Palestinian workers have been strengthened over the last two years with increased cooperation between the PGFTU and the Histadrut.'²⁴ The report argued that the discrimination faced by Palestinian workers in the workplace was 'in spite of this agreement.'

TUFI NEWSLETTER, July 2009. Israeli-Palestinian Trade Union News: Palestinian and Israeli stone unions join forces to stop fraudulent permits damaging Palestinian companies

Palestinian stone workers and Israeli traders are joining forces to aid the passage of products from Palestinian workshops in the West Bank into Israel. In a joint letter sent to the Israeli Minister Matan Vilnai, Israeli and Palestinian stone unions have said that fake permit documents were being sold to Palestinian producers to ease their transit through check points.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, September 2011. New agreement between Histadrut and the Associations of Contractors and Builders

A new agreement between the Histadrut and the Associations of Contractors and Builders has been signed which raises the minimum wage in the Israeli construction sector to NIS 5,000 a month (equivalent to £860). It is thought that this agreement will affect 100,000 low-wage workers in the construction sector and it will also apply to both the migrant workers and Palestinian workers employed in the sector.

The 2008 Histadrut and the PGFTU Agreement explicitly calls on the international trade union movement to build links not to break them.

The Histadrut and the PGFTU made a direct and joint appeal to the international movement in their 2008 agreement.

Clause 5 states 'It is agreed by the parties that relations between the Israeli and Palestinian trade unions

shall be based on negotiations, dialogue, and the conduct of meetings and joint projects (e.g. professional courses and workshops) that will promote the rights of Israeli and Palestinian workers and pensioners and will advance fraternity and co-existence between the two peoples.'

Clause 6 'call[s] for support from ITUC and its affiliates throughout the world, and other trade unions throughout the world and other international organisations in order to fulfil the provisions of clause 5.'

The Histadrut, Terror and Gaza

Histadrut recognises the urgent need for the State of Israel to operate against the command and control structures of the organisational terror network belonging to Hamas... No democratic country in the world would allow its sovereignty to be violated and its citizens subjected to terror attacks on a daily basis.... Israel had no choice but to respond to the repeated attacks and aggression.'

The Histadrut's statement on the 2008-9 Gaza Conflict was reflected a consensus in Israel stretching from left to right about the rockets and terror from Hamas rockets. However, the TUC General Council felt the statement 'showed insufficient concern for the level of civilian casualties.'

Avital Shapira-Shabirow, the Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut, explains the Histadrut's position:

'Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Since then there has not been a single settlement in Gaza. In response Hamas made ordinary Israelis face the horrific daily fear of being hit by missiles and mortar attacks; this fact can't just be brushed aside. When Hamas sent over waves of missiles it was part of a plan to demolish the State of Israel. Hamas is a terrorist organisation that does not recognise the existence of the State of Israel.'

23. ILO, 2009:26, 29. See also TUFI 2009b.
24. Avis and Avis 2010:25.

3. The Histadrut and the Palestinians

Furthermore, the Hamas is a dictatorial terror organisation which conducted a military coup in 2007 which constantly tramples human rights, workers' rights and represses all trade unions activity in the Gaza Strip.

The Histadrut believed that Israel had the right to protect its innocent workers and inhabitants after facing years of violence and terror from Gaza directed at Green Line Israel.

*I would ask British trade unionists how they would react after 10 years of facing repeated rocket and mortar attacks on London or Glasgow? I would ask them whether it is not legitimate for a state to protect the rights of its citizens. I would ask the British unions to be even-handed and understand the suffering of the Israeli workers. Please understand that the Histadrut stands for the basic right of Israel to protect itself, as well as called publicly for the easing of the humanitarian situation of the Gazans during that time.'*²⁵

Significantly, the Israeli peace movement, *Peace Now*, did not bring thousands of Israelis into the streets in 2009 to protest as they had done during the 1982 Lebanon war. While deeply regretting the loss of civilian lives, almost all Israelis understood the need to bring an end to the constant rocket attacks on Israeli civilians.

The Histadrut and the Settlements

Should the Histadrut oppose the settlement policy of the Israeli government more vocally?

First, as a trade union, the Histadrut asks that its international relations with other trade unions be based on trade union related matters. As an independent trade union it is not responsible for the actions of the Israeli government.

Second, many individual leaders and rank and file members of the Histadrut oppose the settlements and take part in protests. Former Histadrut head Amir But the union as a whole does not take a collective union position on what is a very controversial and divisive political issue within Israel.

The 2010 Unison delegation found that the Histadrut's stance 'was echoed by some of the other NGOs and new trade unions we met in Israel.' The Unison report made clear that 'although many of the representatives we met were all individually on the progressive wing of Israeli society and openly critical and opposed to the Occupation, they also felt that their organisations could not take public positions on the matter.'²⁶

The Histadrut and other Israeli pro-Labour groups have improved the position of Palestinians in the settlements.

In October 2007 the Histadrut's campaign to apply Israeli labour laws to Palestinian workers who work in the settlements was successful. As a direct result of the Histadrut petition to the courts, Israeli employers in West Bank settlements must now provide improved work benefits according to Israeli, rather than Jordanian law. During the recent Salit quarry strike in the occupied territories, the Palestinian workers in struggle, faced an Israeli employer and the workers were organised by WAC Ma'an.²⁷ There is still much work to be done, however.

Talking to the Histadrut: the Settlements

Avital Shapira-Shabirow is the Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut.

The settlements are one of the issues that should be settled in direct negotiations between the two sides. The Histadrut believes that only a comprehensive agreement that ensures Israel's security will enable the establishment of a Palestinian State with agreed borders which will resolve the issue of the settlements. Right now, we see union co-operation as a bridge to peace.²⁸

Adly Yaish, Mayor of Nablus and Debbie Coulter, then Deputy General Secretary GMB. TUFU delegation 2007.



Have the Histadrut and the PGFTU settled their financial dispute?

Yes.

The facts are these.

A Palestinian worker from the West Bank employed in Israel pays 0.8 per cent of wages to the Histadrut. From 1995 the Histadrut and the PGFTU agreed that half of these dues would be then transferred to the PGFTU. The half retained by the Histadrut would be used to provide legal services to Palestinian workers in Israel.²⁹ However, due to the Second Intifada, the revenue collected by the Histadrut were not transferred and a debt to the Palestinians was created.

The 2008 agreement between the Histadrut and the PGFTU reached a full and final agreement regarding the

settlement of this debt, clearing the way for renewed cooperation between the two federations.

Avital Shapira-Shabirow, Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut, the Israeli TUC, points out that 'The agreement was signed by Ofer Eini for the Histadrut, Shaher Sa'ed for the PGFTU, and the whole deal was overseen by the ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. All claims to the contrary are false.'³⁰

Eric Lee of the global trade union website LabourStart has pointed out that the Israeli-Palestinian arrangement may be 'unique.' It is 'comparable to British unions deciding to pay 50 per cent of any dues collected from Irish workers in England back to Irish unions.'

25. Shapira-Shabirow, Interview, 2012.

26. Unison 2010, p 6.

27. http://www.wac-maan.org.il/en/article_218

28. Shapira-Shabirow 2012.

29. ILO 2009:25.

30. Shapira-Shabirow 2012.

Hamas vs. Free Trade Unionism

Some pro-Palestinian activists want British trade unionists to break links with their Israeli trade union counterparts, and *make* links with Hamas, a viciously anti-trade union organisation.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, September 2008. Hamas seizes PGFTU headquarters

Hamas Islamic militants seized power in a violent coup in July 2007, leaving the enclave under tight sanctions and Palestinian territory divided; Fatah in the West Bank, Hamas in Gaza. Ever since, Hamas has stamped down on trade unionism, with many trade unionists in Gaza facing violence and intimidation. Soon after seizing power, Hamas seized the PGFTU headquarters, removing all existing slogans and flags, and raising a Hamas flag over the building.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, September 2008. Hamas violence against trade unionists

Head of the Health Workers' Union, Usama An-Najjar, accused the Health Ministry [in Gaza] of using 'suppressive' practices to put down its strike and warned of a health 'disaster' if the union's demands are not granted. He appealed to human rights groups and Arab states to pressure Hamas for a resolution. Shaher Sae'd, Secretary General of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), said that the strikes are having a dangerous impact upon healthcare services in Gaza and that those refusing to join Hamas face a fine, losing their job and in some cases torture and incarceration.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, June 2009. ILO Criticises Hamas

A new United Nations International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on the situation of workers in the occupied territories contains many references to the differences in the situation for workers in the West Bank and Gaza, noting that 'the Gaza branch of the PGFTU is still suffering from the attacks against unionists and the takeover of offices and facilities by Hamas'.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, October 2009. Hamas sacks teachers in Gaza and represses trade union action

Hamas has sacked more than 200 volunteer teachers from their posts in the Gaza Strip. According to Jamil Shehadeh, the General Secretary of the main teachers' union in Gaza, the teachers had already been dismissed from their regular jobs earlier this year and replaced by Hamas supporters, but had returned as volunteers to ensure their pupils received an adequate education.

Mr Shehadeh said the move 'reflects the irresponsibility of Hamas around the educational process in Gaza'. He said all teachers should be allowed back to work under fair and dignified conditions or they should all go on strike, but he also warned of 'the practice of repression against trade union action in Gaza'.

4. The Case against Breaking Links with the Histadrut

(i) Unison found the PGFTU supportive of critical engagement

The UNISON delegation that travelled to Israel and the territories in 2010 to 'critically review' links with the Histadrut spoke to all these Palestinian and Israeli organisations and concluded:

"All the organisations we met during the delegation including the PGFTU, the new Israeli trade unions and Israeli NGOs are or have been critical of the Histadrut in the past for various reasons. However, they all stressed that the Histadrut was a legitimate trade union and with over 700,000 members was clearly the dominant trade union in terms of members and collective bargaining coverage. Even the new Israeli unions accepted that the Histadrut had been responsible for Israel's strong labour and employment protection legislation. They also recognised that the Histadrut remained influential, although less so than in the past, with the Israeli government.

Neither did any of them call on Unison to sever its relations with the Histadrut, in fact the opposite. The PGFTU in particular said that Unison should maintain links with the Histadrut so that we could specifically put pressure on them to take a more vocal public stance against the occupation and the settlements."³¹

None of these organisations supports a boycott of the Histadrut:

- The Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (at national level)
- The Mossawa Centre: The Advocacy Centre for Arab Citizens in Israel
- Israel's independent pro-Labour organisations, Sawt el-Amel (the Labourer's Voice), Kav LaOved (the Worker's Hotline), The Workers' Advice Centre (WAC/Ma'an), Koach LaOvdim (Power to the Workers)

And nor does One Voice or Peace Now, both progressive organisations standing for the two-state solution and peace.

Majdi Shella, organiser for the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, speaks out against boycotts

We in the PGFTU will not abandon the Palestinian workers who work in Israel or the settlements, and our link with the Histadrut facilitates this.

We win millions in compensation from the Israeli side every year. We don't get everything we want, but that does not mean our approach is wrong. Also, inside the Histadrut there is a left wing, linked to Hadash [the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, set up by the Israeli Communist Party] and other parties, mainly but not exclusively Arab.

Why would we boycott these comrades who we work closely with?

Let me explain something to you. One of the Palestinians' main problems is that we operate reactively. We have a long tradition of boycotting everything. Israel is part of the UN; the Histadrut is part of the ITUC. These facts are not going to change; we have to acknowledge them. Sometimes boycotting is the easier road. If you want to do nothing, boycott."³²

31. TULIP 2010.
32. TULIP 2010.

4. The Case against Breaking Links with the Histadrut

Talking to the Histadrut: Links Work!

Avital Shapira-Shabirow is the Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut.

At the end of the day you have to evaluate this on the basis of practical deeds. We have a list of files of legal consultation for PGFTU members. No boycott there. When we transfer a cheque to the PGFTU to implement the agreement between the two federations I don't see how that can be a boycott. We have a letter by Shaher Sa'ed to Ofer Eini asking the Histadrut to help the British Unions get humanitarian aid to them. Again, where is the boycott? You know, when a Unison delegation to Israel and Palestine reported back to London, it said the PGFTU did not recommend that Unison sever their links with the Histadrut. Quite the reverse. The PGFTU made clear the advantages to the Palestinian unions of the UK unions maintaining their links and using them constructively.³³

Report of the Scottish TUC Delegation to Palestine and Israel, 28th February – 7th March 2009

The shop steward Jamal explained that the poorest employees in Jerusalem are Palestinian, and that the country is facing a recession, and so boycott will harm the weakest in society such as Palestinians and the poorer Jewish people. He said that instead of a boycott he wanted to see dialogue.

[Arab and Jewish shop stewards at the Sderot food factory] said that they did not support a boycott and they worked together well, whatever their heritage.³⁴

If British trade unions break links with the Histadrut they will be breaking links with the Israeli working class. Make no mistake, the campaigning Israeli NGOs set up because of perceived failings of the Histadrut – WAC/Ma'an. Koach laOvdim and Sawtel Amel – are, according to Unison, 'tiny in comparison to the Histadrut in terms of members, collective bargaining agreements and influence' and none are affiliated to international trade union organisations.³⁵

(ii) Boycotts damage Palestinian workers

The advice from the last British Labour government was that 'Boycotts have no positive role to play in alleviating the suffering and insecurity that Palestinians, and Israelis, have endured in recent years.'³⁶

The value of this advice was seen when Unilever, Bagel and Bagel relocated from the community of Barkan, located beyond the Green Line, to the Safed industrial zone in northern Israel after pressure from Dutch Boycott activists from United Civilians for Peace. 60 Palestinians lost their jobs.³⁷

Trade Union Friends of Israel Delegation Blog, November 2011

I was disappointed to be told about the closure of the Bagel and Bagel plant in the West Bank by Unilever because of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign. The factory has now moved to northern Israel and has put sixty Palestinians out of work. Crazy.

Andy Laws
Bakers Food & Allied Workers Union

Jerusalem Municipality Shop Stewards, Arab and Jew, with TUFU Delegation, 2008.



Gerry Moloney, Head of Communications, Advance, 2009

Listening to people from both communities on the subject of the proposed international trade union boycott, it is evident that all parties oppose this action. In a meeting with

the Jerusalem municipality workers, one view from the Palestinian contingent was that a boycott would be more detrimental to the Arab workforce than any other.³⁸

TUFI Delegation briefing with PGFTU, Ramallah 2008.



2011 TUFU Delegation to Israel and the Territories hears from The Jerusalem Municipality Union Committee

The Jerusalem Municipality Union Committee is made up of shop stewards representing workers from both east and West Jerusalem. After meetings with the stewards, TUFU reported that 'On the question of the boycott of Israel, the

consensus was that it would be the low-paid, Arab workers that would suffer first from a boycott and there should be other avenues pursued to develop peace in the region, starting with the peace talks.'

33. Shapira-Shabirow 2012.
34. STUC 2009.
35. Unison 2010: 12.
36. For the full statement, see www.hmg.gov.uk/petition-responses/petition-view.aspx?epref=Apartheid#detail.
37. Remez 2010. Maariv: Targeted boycott and divestment pushing companies out of the settlements <http://coteret.com/2010/06/21/maariv-targeted-boycott-and-divestment-pushing-companies-out-of-the-settlements/>

38. Symons 2009.

4. The Case against Breaking Links with the Histadrut

Jonathan Baume, General Secretary of the First Division Association.

The pride of the Jerusalem Municipality Employees Committee in its fiercely non-sectarian approach (and quiet contempt for the behaviour of the politicians across the religious, political and communal divides) offered hope and a future that could still prevail, as well as a rebuke to the narrow sectarians amongst the British Left who want ceaselessly to foster division.³⁹

(iii) Breaking links with the Histadrut would isolate British trade unions from the international trade union movement

Not a single Global Federation supports breaking links with the Histadrut. Nor does the ITUC.

The fact is that most unions in most countries have no problem with

the Histadrut. At its 2010 congress the International Trade Union Confederation representing some 176 million organised workers elected Histadrut leader Ofer Eini as one of its vice presidents and its titular in the General Council and Executive Committee.

In February 2011 the ITUC General Council approved the 'Workers' Pact for Peace and Justice for Palestine and Israel'.

The Pact proposed a pathway to a comprehensive peace between Israel and Palestine, based on the coexistence in conditions of security of two sovereign, independent, and viable states.

The Pact committed the ITUC **and its affiliates** to 'international solidarity in support of this Pact for Peace and Justice, mark[ing] our common commitment to security, freedom, democracy and opportunity for future generations of Palestinian and Israeli workers and their families.'



From left: Ariel Yacobi (Chairman of Israeli local government workers union UCAPSE), John Hannett (USDAW General Secretary) Tommy Hall (GMB National Executive).

39. TUI 2011.

2008 TUI delegation to the Amari Refugee camp, Ramallah.



TUI NEWSLETTER, June 2010.

International Trade Union Confederation rejects calls to boycott Israel

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has rejected calls for boycotts against Israel. The resolution adopted by the ITUC congress states that 'congress welcomes the landmark agreement between the Histadrut and the PGFTU on the rights of Palestinian workers... and initiatives by Global Union Federations in their sectors to support co-operation in defence of workers' rights. This agreement, and other actions to promote decent work and end discrimination, is crucial to building the basis for just and equitable economic development.' The resolution also declared that 'congress commits the ITUC to continue to support the strengthening of cooperation between the Palestinian and Israeli trade union movements.'

TUI NEWSLETTER, August 2010. International transport workers' federation adopts positive balanced resolution on Israel/Palestine

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) passed a resolution at its congress in Mexico City at the beginning of the month praising joint Israeli-Palestinian trade union work and welcoming a recent statement made by the Israeli trade union federation (the Histadrut) calling for the establishment of two independent democratic states. As well as calling for a 'lifting of the blockade on Gaza in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009) and the opening of all Gaza ports, and for Israel to end the occupation of the West Bank and to remove all settlements' the motion also rejects boycotts of Israel and instead calls for 'universal recognition of Israel's right to exist, next to an independent viable Palestinian state, acknowledging that this is essential to achieving a peaceful solution.'

The motion was proposed by Nasser Younis of the Palestine General Union for Transport Workers and seconded by Bob Crow of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers.

ITF General Secretary David Cockcroft, 23 December 2009

The experience of good cooperation between leaders of Palestinian and Israeli unions, which we have observed coming out of the roadblocks project which emerged from a tough negotiating session in Cyprus in 2007, shows how trade unions can make a difference to ordinary workers. (...) [The ITF] does not believe that a general boycott of Israel ... would contribute to improving the lives and working

conditions of Palestinians or Israeli workers ... the ITF, the ITUC and **the whole global trade union movement needs to provide strong support for the PGFTU and to the Histadrut which are both independent trade union organisations which do not speak for their governments.** We need to show that practical union cooperation is the right way forward.

Statement by Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) President Michael Sommer 2007

The DGB and the Israeli Histadrut can look back on many years of close, friendly relations. Meetings between Israeli and German trade unionists are a cornerstone of the German-Israeli partnership. This is also a solid basis for conducting debate in a spirit of critical solidarity about measures by the Israeli government which may not be conducive to the search for a just peace. The DGB also maintains dialogue with brothers and sisters in the democratic Palestinian trade unions. They need and receive our help in variety of ways ... Labour organisations on both sides are willing and able to build peace. We support the efforts of Palestinian and Israeli trade union members and their organisations to uphold their mutual contacts ... The DGB categorically rejects calls for boycotts [which] play into the hands of radical and fundamentalist forces.⁴⁰

TUFI NEWSLETTER, March 2009: Australian Union leader refuses to support Israel boycott

The National Secretary of the Australian Workers Union (AWU), Australia's largest union, has condemned moves by other Australian trade unions to boycott the Histadrut and Israeli goods, calling them counter-productive and a 'knee-jerk reaction.'

At the AWU's National Conference on 5 February, Mr Paul Howes said: 'We don't believe a union campaign to boycott Israel helps advance the peace process, especially because unions in Israel and Palestine have made important, if tentative, steps to build co-operative, working alliances under the auspices of global union federations such as the International Transport Workers Federation... these projects point the way to a better life for working people in the region.'

TUFI NEWSLETTER, June 2009: German trade union backs Histadrut against anti-Israel boycotts

Speaking at a joint Histadrut-Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) event in Berlin on 14 June, the President of the DGB, Michael Sommer, expressed dismay over trade unions advocating boycott measures against Israel. At the same event, the chairman of

the Histadrut Ofer Eini said that trade union boycotts only 'damaged workers' organisations' among Palestinians and Israelis and it was "absurd" to boycott one side when the Histadrut and PGFTU were working so closely together.'

John Sweeney, President, American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO), Larry Cohen, President, Communications Workers of America, William Lucy, President, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and 41 other American senior trade union leaders

Trade unionists and their organisations seeking [a two-state solution] should be assisting those working to bring the two sides together in direct talks and then negotiations. In this regard we call for increased engagement of trade unions with their counterparts on all sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We support efforts of Palestinian and Israeli trade unionists and their organisations to maintain contact and cooperative and mutually supportive activities, even in the midst of tumult and political change ... engagement, rather than disengagement with the Israeli people and the Palestinian people is needed.⁴¹

(iv) Breaking links would be a departure from practical solidarity in favour of gesture politics

The British trade union movement has traditionally refused to boycott other free trade unions because of what their governments do.

Labour leader Ed Miliband says 'I am against calls for boycotts which frankly would cause isolation not progress in the Middle East peace process.' (2011)

The General Secretary of the NUJ, Jeremy Dear, has said unions should 'move on' from calls of a boycott, and engage with sister unions in Israel, concentrating on providing support to journalists and trade unionists, defending workers' rights and media freedoms in the region.

The RMT has stood firm for a democratic two-state settlement for Israelis and Palestinians, criticised Hamas, and its conference overwhelmingly rejected 'passive and divisive tactics such as boycotts,' as 'inconsistent with the principles of unity and solidarity between workers that our union stands for and wishes to promote.'

40. DGB 2007.

41. Appelbaum, *et.al.* (2007)

4. The Case against Breaking Links with the Histadrut

Talking to the Histadrut: Who should UK trade unions listen to?

Avital Shapira-Shabirow is the Director of International Relations in the International Department of the Histadrut.

Look, groups like the UK's Palestine Solidarity Campaign do not support the two-state solution – that's what people need to understand. By contrast, the Histadrut supports the two-state solution in a very negative climate.

Some groups have gone well beyond making legitimate criticisms of Israel. Their fight is not really about settlements – they are about demonising Israel itself.

I'd say to British trade unionists, please do not become isolated from the constructive work taking place between the Histadrut, PGFTU, ITUC or any global federation. Please do not lose your hard-won reputation as even-handed bridge builders. Please do not become cut off from the efforts to develop the 2008 Histadrut-PGFTU Agreement. The PSC does not promote peace. It promotes a one-sided and demonising narrative about Israel that pushes us further away from peace. We think the British trade unions should think long and hard before following their lead.⁴²

Pri Galil protest, 2009



42. Shapira-Shabirow 2012.

5. The Positive Alternative: Engagement, Worker-to-Worker Links, Critical Dialogue

Left to right, Avi Edri, Chairman of Israeli Transportation Workers' Union, President James Hoffa, Teamsters Union, Nasser Younis, head of PGFTU Transportation workers' section.



Trade unionists who wish to support the Palestinians' quest for statehood should distinguish between the government of Israel and the trade unions of Israel. This is what we do for every other country. Israel should be no exception.

The alternative to negative boycotts of the Histadrut is positive engagement with the Histadrut and PGFTU.

The Fire Brigades Union discovered that these links can produce real results *for Palestinians*.

Alex Gordon, president of the Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT) speaking at the TUC Congress in 2011

My union fully intend to continue to support struggles by Israeli workers, by Palestinian workers and by Arab-Israeli workers who are fighting for peace and workers' rights. We are concerned about the implication of a review of bilateral relations with all Israeli organisations. Our view is that we should be supporting the Israeli peace movement, and we should be supporting the Israeli trade union movement where it stands up for Palestinian national rights. That is the best route to peace in the Middle East.⁴³

43. TUC 2011.

Building links not breaking links: Lessons from the Nablus Project

Professor Alan Johnson

Some argue that UK unions must break all links with the Histadrut to express their solidarity with the Palestinians, but a recent incident suggests they might be wrong.

The Fire Brigades Union runs a project, 'FBU Dundee to Nablus' and in October delivered humanitarian aid to the Nablus Municipality Fire Department.

Leaving Dundee, the firefighters travelled from Scotland to Palestine, passing through Holland, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Greece and Israel. Along the way they strengthened links with firefighters in Austria, Greece, Israel and Palestine.

The project team met with the Israeli Histadrut in Tel Aviv on October 11th.

Jim Malone, FBU regional organiser for Scotland, speaking at the House of Commons this week, picks up the story:

'The meeting was hosted by the Histadrut and lasted for a very interesting four hours. [There took place] a robust exchange of opinions as to the understanding the FBU and the Histadrut had as to the human and trade union rights afforded Palestinian workers and the Palestinian people.'

When the Histadrut discovered the Israeli authorities were delaying the progress of the humanitarian aid from Haifa to Nablus, it offered its full support. Ofer Eini, Histadrut's Chairman, spoke with the Israeli Defense Minister to facilitate the release of the equipment. Furthermore, he petitioned to the

Haifa Port Authorities to give a reduction in the storage costs of the fire appliance and equipment at the port. And this week the humanitarian equipment was released.

The FBUs Jim Malone was ecstatic. But he also understood what had made the difference.

'Today's news is fantastic, we were faced by many challenges in delivering the project, however with the help of the Israeli Histadrut, the PGFTU and the Nablus Municipality Fire Department we have achieved our goal in delivering this vital equipment.'

This is what solidarity could look like if we would only dump the talk of 'derecognition' and boycott. What is good for the Palestinian workers is the critical but constructive use of the historic links between the Israeli and UK unions, not their destruction for the sake of making a gesture.

The episode suggests a question at any rate. If the TUC and the STUC follow the guidance of the PSC and break links with the Histadrut, who will help the Palestinian firefighters next time?

We could say with the FBU's Jim Malone that 'the workers of Greece, Israel and Palestine share with UK trade unionists a desire for peace and prosperity for all and through solidarity we will continue to fight injustice and intolerance wherever we see it.'

Let's build on the links we have and use them to bring Israeli and Palestinian workers together.⁴⁴

From: אריפּש לטיבא
Avital Shapira-Shabirow
Date: Thu, 8 Dec 2011 18:08.
To: Jim Malone
Subject: FBU Project

Dear Jim,
I hope you are well.

As you know, in solidarity with FBU and the PGFTU the Histadrut Chairman petitioned the Haifa Port Authorities to give a reduction in the storage costs of the fire appliance and equipment at the port.

It is my pleasure to be able to inform you that our request was approved and a significant reduction of NIS 4,750 has been granted and this sum has already been transferred to your customs agent.

In addition, I received a call from COGAT this morning informing me that the oxygen kits, the final part of the aid, have been released and can be collected from the port on Sunday!

In constant support and solidarity.

Warmest regards,

Avital

Avital Shapira-Shabirow
Director of International
Department
Histadrut

The TUC and ITUC have worked for over forty years to build bridges between the Histadrut and the PGFTU. Those efforts bore fruit in 2008, just four years ago, with a landmark agreement between the two federations.

The New Histadrut organises all workers in Israel – Jew and Arab, citizen and migrant, secure and insecure. It stands for the two-state solution and it has organised a successful General Strike in support of the most vulnerable workers in Israel.

As Eric Lee, founder of the global trade union website LabourStart has remarked about the proposal to boycott the Histadrut, 'That is not how we do things in the international labour movement. We do not punish trade unions for the policies of the governments of their countries. We do not do so even if those unions support those government policies — as most American trade unions did during the Vietnam War.'

Exactly.

**TUFI NEWSLETTER, June 2009.
UK Trade Union News: Labour Foreign Secretary dismayed at trade union calls to boycott Israel**

The Foreign Secretary David Miliband said the economic, academic and cultural boycotts 'obstruct opportunities for co-operation and dialogue, and serve only to polarise debate further'. He also commended the Histadrut and the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) for their recent agreements and commitments to work together and said: 'Initiatives like this bring people closer together, rather than pushing them further apart, and the Government welcomes and encourages British union support for such projects. It is vital that we do all we can to break the vicious cycle of fear and mistrust and help Israelis and Palestinians find common ground so that they can live together in peace.'

44. Johnson 2011.

There is an alternative.

(i) Restart the trilateral delegations of unionists from Israel, Palestine and the UK.

In the recent past these were a regular feature of union life in the UK. TUFU's Steve Scott has proposed that they become so again: 'UK unions should bring their Israeli counterparts to the UK to learn more about Israeli trade unionism.' While these exchanges would be an opportunity for UK unions to make their views known, the TUC would also have much to learn from their Israeli colleagues – about resisting post office privatisation, organising a general strike in defence of vulnerable workers, and organising in a multicultural society.

(ii) Build concrete links with both the Histadrut and the PGFTU

Exchanges, branch twinning, awareness-raising and financial support to trade unions in Israel and Palestine is the real way forward. Learn from the model of the FBU-Histadrut-PGFTU cooperation. Support all steps, however small, to unite Israeli and Palestinian workers. Support a just settlement based on mutual respect and acknowledgement of national rights.

Get behind the ITUCs 'Workers Pact for Peace and Justice for Palestinians and Israel.' Passed in February 2011, it commits all ITUC affiliates to 'support and encourage action by the PGFTU Palestine and Histadrut Israel for peace, justice and workers' rights.'

TUFI NEWSLETTER, October 2008. Israeli Industrial News: Jerusalem journalists propose forum to confront crisis facing Israeli and Palestinian media staff

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) have spoken out against restrictions on freedom of movement facing reporters in Palestine and have proposed a joint forum with Palestinian colleagues to deal with a range of problems facing media and journalists in the region. At the meeting on 18 September, held in Jerusalem, they also suggested setting up a hotline to help journalists in trouble.

"This would be a major step forward for journalists,' said General Secretary of the IFJ, Aidan White. **'Joint action by Israeli and Palestinian journalists** to tackle problems both groups face – such as restrictions on freedom of movement – will strengthen efforts to remove obstacles to the exercise of journalism."

Ariel Yacobi, Chairman of UCAPSE and Debbie Coulter, then Deputy General Secretary of the GMB. TUFI delegation 2007.

TUFI NEWSLETTER, March 2011. ITF launch new border crossing project for Palestinian drivers

The International Transport Federation (ITF) has launched a new initiative aimed to improve the lives of Palestinian drivers.

The innovative project will help Palestinian truck, taxi and bus drivers held up at the Irtah crossing between Israel and Palestine. The drivers will also now have access to refreshments, toilet facilities, shade and space for trade union meetings.

The opening ceremony, held on 24 March, was attended by the general

secretary of the ITF, David Cockcroft, officials from the Palestinian Authority, the general secretary of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), Shaher Sae'd, and the general secretary of the Palestine General Union of Transport Workers, Nasser Younis.

The ITF has been working with both Palestinian and Israeli trade unions over a number of years looking for new opportunities for co-operation between workers on both sides.



(iii) Engage in a robust dialogue with the Histadrut

British unions have a duty to make their views known. But as the German trade union leader Michael Sommer has argued, it is possible to conduct this dialogue 'in a spirit of critical solidarity about measures by the Israeli government which may not be conducive to the search for a just peace.'

Trade Unionists should take very careful note of the 2010 UNISON delegation report which was approved by Unison International Committee and endorsed by National Executive Committee. The report recommended that the union should 'use its influence in the TUC and the international trade union movement to maintain pressure on the Histadrut' and to 'actively raise cases of discrimination and abuse with the Histadrut.' The PGFTU, it said, urged the UNISON delegation to **'maintain links with the Histadrut** so that we could

specifically put pressure on them to take a more vocal public stance against the occupation and the settlements.'

The TUC should encourage the Histadrut to:

- be proactive in initiating legal cases on behalf of Palestinian workers in the settlements to enforce the Israeli High Court ruling that Palestinians should be employed under Israeli law.
- exert more pressure for action on the rights of migrant workers. Histadrut has played a role in ensuring that migrant workers have equal rights under Israeli labour law, but more should be done to make migrant workers aware of these rights.
- fight to extend equal rights in medical and social insurance
- oppose any attempts by the Israeli government to revoke its signature to the ILO conventions on the rights of the migrant workers.
- pressure the Israeli government to increase the public sector employment of Arab citizens of Israel.
- continue seeking to improve Histadrut-PGFTU relations and develop concrete links between rank and file trade unionists in Israel and the territories.

5. The Positive Alternative: Engagement, Worker-to-Worker Links, Critical Dialogue

Avital Shapira-Shabirow, Director of International Department, Histadrut and Owen Tudor, Head of International Relations, TUC at TUFFI Fringe 2008.



(iv) Review the TUC's relationship with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and consider supporting progressive organisations such as One Voice.

The TUC supports the two-state solution: two states for two peoples, a secure Israel living in peace alongside a viable Palestine. The PSC does not. The TUC should consider forging links to genuine progressives such as the One Voice network, and determine only to support grass roots organisations that are explicitly committed to a peaceful two state solution to the conflict.

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Links

The Histadrut
<http://www.histadrut.org.il/>

The Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions
<http://www.pgftu.org/>

Trade Unions Friends of Israel
<http://www.tufi.org.uk/>

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

This pamphlet will give you a deep insight into the industrial work of the Histadrut, its progressive aims and values, and its cooperation with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU).

The Histadrut has a proud record of representing workers across the State of Israel. Professor Johnson details the origins of the Jewish labour organisation, its role in the foundation of the State of Israel, the subsequent creation of an Arab workers section, through to the emergence of a New Histadrut in the 1990s.

The pamphlet shows the New Histadrut is inclusive, often militant, and a powerful champion of the vulnerable worker. In 2012, for example, the Histadrut organised a successful general strike in support of private sector contracted workers and secured better wages, better conditions and, for many, permanent employment. That is the spirit of the New Histadrut.

– From the preface by Michael J. Leahy OBE, General Secretary of Community Union.



Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions Leader Shaher Sa'ed with TUFU Chair Roger Lyons, Vice-Chair Doreen Gerson and Director Steve Scott.