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# **Building the Union and the Nation**

**An evaluation of LO Norway's support to the  
Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions**



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# 1 Introduction

LO Norway supported the PGFTU from 1994 to 1999 by providing funds for various development projects. This evaluation reviews the effects of the LO support, looking at the lessons learned and knowledge acquired which can also be relevant for future projects. The Terms of Reference are attached as Appendix I. The evaluation team<sup>1</sup> commissioned by LO visited the West Bank and Gaza from 26 November to 4 December 1999. The team met with representatives of the PGFTU at all levels of the organisation, as well as representatives of other relevant institutions. A list of contacts is attached as Appendix II.

The following elements of LO's support are reviewed and discussed in this report: The effect of building two trade union headquarters in Gaza City and Nablus; the importance and effect of the trade union magazine "the *Labourers' Voice*" on internal democratisation and cross-regional contact; the effect of the support to the women's groups in the PGFTU on female participation and influence on all levels of the union movement and working life; and the effect of the support on the PGFTU's general training programme. On this basis, the report assesses the overall development of the PGFTU from 1994 to date, including the relationship between the PGFTU and the *Histadrut*; and the lessons learned from LO-PGFTU co-operation with regard to helping develop democratic trade unions striving to promote democratic development.

## 1.1 The evaluation process

This study is based on a relatively short time frame. The time and resources spent are equivalent to 1.5 man-months of labour. This has made it necessary to focus the evaluation process. Accordingly, the evaluation team has chosen to look at the two major objectives involving how the LO project has helped support democratic development within the Palestinian trade union movement and how the project has helped support the development of the PGFTU as a civil society organisation. The individual activities supported through the programme have generally been judged against the background of the two above-mentioned objectives. The main source of information has been the interviews with the relevant representatives from the PGFTU and other stakeholders in the West Bank and Gaza. The evaluation team also conducted interviews with representatives of LO prior to the field visit. In addition, the LO documents related to the project has been studied.

<sup>1</sup> The team was composed of two external evaluators, Researchers Bjørne Grimsrud (Project leader) and Lena C. Endresen from Fafo, and one internal facilitator, Moussa El Jeris (Abu George), from LO.

## 1.2 Recommendations

LO's support for trade unions may be considered a kind of international development aid aimed at strengthening civil society by supporting non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Voluntary organisations operating relatively independently of state control are generally seen as instrumental for consolidating and maintaining democracy. However, aid aimed at supporting democratisation should also consider the wider context of the NGOs. Independent NGOs may be a force in democratisation, but their ability to play that role is also determined by political and economic dynamics, as well as by the legal framework in which they exist. International support with regard to improving this framework, i.e. the rule of law, the tax system and the regulatory environment for organisations, may be a strengthening factor. If trade unions are to be a force for democratisation, their internal democracy is important. Further, if a development project is to be enduring, "ownership" of a project has to be based in the local organisation and people. This means that planning processes must be guided by the needs and goals of the receiving organisations that support and undertake the work.

A programme of the type evaluated here needs to be seen in the broader perspective of long-term development effects. As mentioned, one element of this is the legal framework where the project has focused on the forthcoming new Palestinian labour code in a timely manner. Another element is the development of internal democracy within the unions. This is a long-term process which requires the establishment of formal structures in addition to a culture of openness and participation. To some extent, this long-term objective may conflict with the rapid rebuilding of the PGFTU. As elaborated in this evaluation, elements such as training and recruitment have helped develop an open, participatory organisation, while the rapid build up of central institutions in the PGFTU and transfer of funds directly to its central bodies may not serve this long-term objective. LO Norway seems to have been aware of this possible conflict and managed to promote both objectives.

However, in a continuation of the programme, more attention should be devoted to the long-term objectives. The evaluation team recommends that all future co-operation activities should focus on creating a democratic trade union movement. Specifically, this means that one needs to maintain a strong focus on activities related to creating a legal structure allowing independent trade unions (e.g. the new Palestinian labour code), creating a democratic trade union structure (e.g. organising PGFTU congresses and regular elections of officers at all levels), enhancing the development of a professional member-oriented trade union movement (e.g. continue efforts to obtain collective agreements; to include women in mainstream activities), and to training and recruitment. One specific objective that should remain in further programmes involves including activities which can help bring the PGFTU in Gaza and the West Bank closer together, both organisationally and politically.

Regarding the LO's support for the PGFTU in general, the evaluation team deems its justification and implementation to be valid. The evaluation team is convinced that LO's support for the PGFTU has played an important role in the process of developing a trade union with a potential for attaining internal democracy and acting as a democratic force. It has not been the task of this evaluation to audit individual activities or the use of resources, but, insofar as the team has investigated, the technical aspects of the collaboration have been



satisfactory, with the exception of the earliest transfers of funds to the PTUF in Tunis. This is, however, a matter to which the LO reacted swiftly.

The following specific changes and priorities should be considered:

- Helping bridge the differences between the West Bank and Gaza by supporting joint training seminars at the industrial union level.
- Helping finance a top-level seminar between the PGFTU on the West Bank and in Gaza to examine the organisational obstacles relating to a joint congress.
- Promoting financial decentralisation, while increasing accountability and transparency by calling for independent auditing of the industrial unions and regional offices.
- Promoting more similarity in the financial structures used on the West Bank and in Gaza, e.g. the distribution of dues revenues. Calling for the PGFTU to use the same independent auditor on the West Bank and in Gaza.
- Strengthening the *Labourers' Voice* by helping finance the establishment of a full-time paid reporter under the editor in Nablus but posted in Gaza, and by implementing the establishment of an editorial board.
- When designing the continuing support to women's activities make sure that this has the form of recruitment and to trade union activities, bringing women into the main organisation at all levels.
- Calling for a debate in the international trade union donor community regarding the type and scale of joint PGFTU-*Histadrut* activities.
- Calling for an ILO examination of the forced deduction of fees from Palestinian workers working in Israel and the UNRWA's refusal to allow the PGFTU to organise their employees.
- Improving the quality and accuracy of the reporting of LO Norway.

## 2 The political and economic context

The worker-employer relationship is a complex system, involving not only the payment of a wage in return for work, but also varying levels of commitment and motivation, work intensity, control over the pace and content of work, a working environment, a social position, an income level, a set of consumption standards, etc. This in turn depends on a set of labour market institutions which affect or derive from the incorporation of labour in production, remuneration for and the working conditions of labour, and associated social and income guarantees. These labour institutions include formal and informal labour market institutions, trade unions, employers' associations, corporate contracts and collective agreements, labour codes, bargaining procedures, underlying social rules as political rights, political structure, values and norms, culture, ideology, etc. (Rodgers 1994). This illustrates the complexity of the institutional settings in the labour market. All these different labour institutions affect the structure and function of the labour market, determining, among other things, how workers are represented and organised. Without this wider analytical framework, it would not be possible to analyse the role of civil society organisations such as trade unions within the context of economic development or their role in promoting democratic governance.

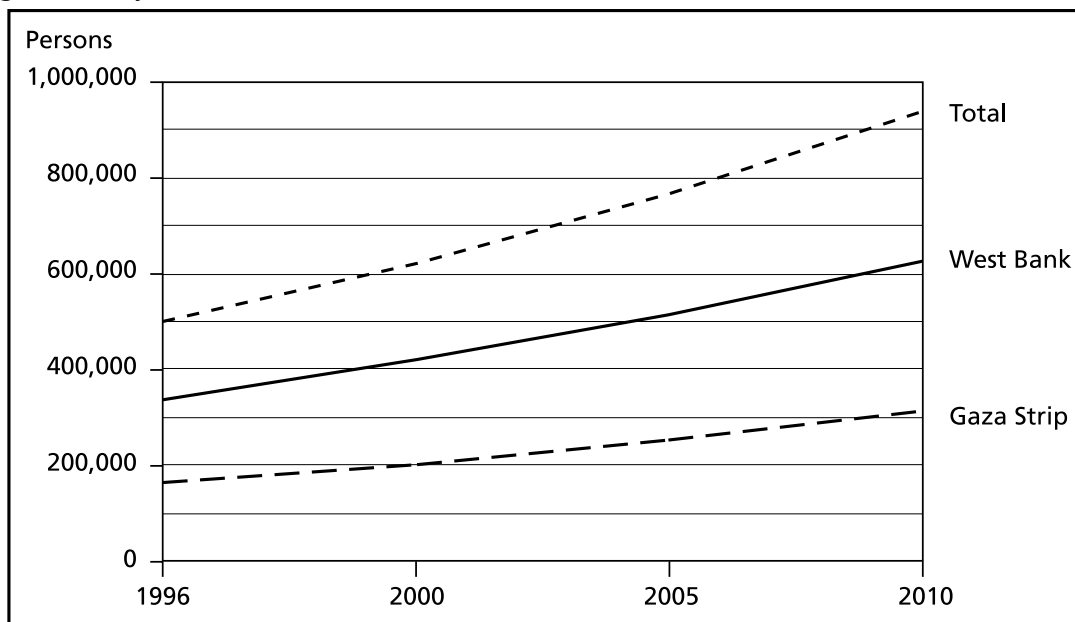
In the case of the PGFTU, the overall political development in the Middle East has formed a complex context during the period of LO's support. After the Middle East Peace Process started in 1991 with the Madrid Conference, the so-called "Oslo Channel" was established. There, secret negotiations between representatives of the two nations resulted in the Declaration of Principles (the "Oslo I Agreement"), signed in Washington in September 1993. The Oslo I, and later the Oslo II Agreement (signed in September 1995) laid the foundation for Palestinian self-rule in parts of Gaza and the West Bank, and the first Palestinian general elections in January 1996. The "Oslo Process" then, has brought Palestinian institutions to Palestine under a Palestinian Authority, in addition to engendering international recognition for the PLO and the Palestinian demand for national self-determination.

The peace process between the Palestinians and Israel has been a rugged road whose progress has been rife with setbacks and compromises. Living conditions for Palestinian workers on the West Bank and in Gaza have not improved during the period, and Palestinian expectations and hopes for the future have vacillated between optimism to pessimism. The Oslo Process originally defined a plan for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by the end of the last century, but as of early 2000, the process is much delayed. The Permanent Status negotiations officially began in September 1999 and are scheduled to conclude by September 2000. However, many observers believe that resolving the permanent status issues will take longer and that the peace process will continue long after that.

Overall economic development has been slow in the Palestinian territories during the peace process (Hooper and Pedersen 1998). One underlying problem here is the rapid rate

of population growth on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. If this trend continues, by 2010, natural growth alone will lead to an increase of 1.8 million in the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the Gaza Strip, where socio-economic conditions are relatively worse, the population will be twice the size in 2010 as it was in 1995. On the West Bank, with a somewhat lower rate of growth, population size will increase by nearly 60 per cent during the same period. If not addressed soon, this combination of steadily declining living standards and population growth will pose a threat to Palestinian social and economic development. The growth in domestic revenues of the Palestinian Authority will not keep pace with the demand for public services. As a result, the quality and coverage of education and health care at all levels will decline.

Figure 1: Projection of the labour force in WBGs from 1996 to 2010.



Source: Hooper and Pedersen 1998

The private sector will be unable to create the estimated 450,000 jobs needed over the next 15 years to maintain the present (unacceptably high) level of unemployment. Despite the growth in the Palestinian Authority administration and security forces, the formal economy does not provide employment opportunities for everyone. One result has been the emergence of thousands of sweatshops and home-based service and micro industry businesses. Here, working conditions are often harsh and, to the extent that they have been developed at all, labour regulations have little impact.

Palestinian workers also continue to work in Israel. The number of workers with a work permit is determined by the Israeli authorities and it fluctuates. At the time of the evaluation team visit to West Bank and Gaza, it was 50,000. In addition, approximately twice that number of people works in Israel without a work permit. All these workers, and their conditions, pose a special challenge to the PGFTU.

To sum up, one can only say that the political and economical context in which the PGFTU has to operate is difficult and will remain so in the years ahead.

### 3 The Palestinian Trade Union Movement

The foundation of the Palestinian labour movement dates back to the 1920, during the time of the British mandatory rule in Palestine. With the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Palestinian trade union centre (Arab Workers' Society) moved from Haifa to Nablus. In the years that followed, from 1948 to 1967, the Palestinian trade unions developed differently on the West Bank and in Gaza. On the West Bank, the Palestinian unions merged with the Jordanian trade union movement in 1960 and operated under Jordanian labour law. A separate Palestinian trade union movement was established in Gaza, with industrial unions in accordance with Egyptian labour law. This movement, the Palestinian Trade Union Federation (PTUF), organised a congress in 1964 in Gaza where, in addition to having the six industrial unions in Gaza, it was decided to organise Palestinian workers abroad. As a result, 13 exile branches were established in Europe and the Middle East. In 1969, this organisation became a part of the PLO and was established with an exile leadership located at PLO headquarters.

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 changed this situation. In Gaza, the unions were closed down by the Israeli authorities from the 1967 occupation to 1979, when they were allowed to reopen under strict regulations. Beginning in the mid-1980s, a revitalisation of the union activities took place within the framework of the Palestinian uprising *Intifada*. A politically-based union movement emerged. Several of the six unions held elections, although the Israeli occupation authorities tried to stop such activities. A new generation of trade unionists came into position. One was Rasem Bayari, elected deputy leader of the Metal Workers' Union in 1987, and leader in 1990. The six industrial unions in Gaza re-established a confederation in 1992, still as a branch of the exile based PTUF, and elected Rasem Bayari as their leader.

On the West Bank, local and regional unions continued to operate during the Israeli occupation. Following Fatah's decision in 1979 to work for a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and prior to the *Intifada*, the West Bank union movement was split into four political factions. From 1982, four confederations co-existed, controlled by Fatah, the Communist party, DFLP and PFLP, respectively. The in-fighting led to a situation in which the various factions established local unions within the same trade. A unification initiative was taken in 1988, and in 1990 the General Federation of Trade Unions was established on the West Bank, bringing together all the factions. The founding meeting elected Shaher Said leader. In 1995, representatives of the two confederations in Gaza and on the West Bank arranged a joint meeting to establish the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), electing Shaher Said as leader and Rasem Bayari as deputy leader.

At this time, the exile PTUF was still seen as the parent organisation. When the PTUF leaders returned from exile to the West Bank and Gaza, they were met by the leaders of the PGFTU. Internationally, the PTUF was affiliated with the fading communist-led World Federation of Trade Unions. For this reason, the International Confederation of Free Trade

Unions (ICFTU) had established direct contacts with the PGFTU on the West Bank and sent Co-ordinator Phil Drew from TUC Australia to co-ordinate the support and contacts in Nablus in 1994. LO Norway, a member of the ICFTU, was also asked and advised by this organisation to establish direct contacts with the PGFTU. Initially, LO Norway held back to avoid creating a split in a PLO organisation during the initial stage of the Israeli-PLO negotiations. LO Norway then established contact with the PTUF. However, for practical and financial reasons and, as will be elaborated below, LO Norway soon altered its strategy and established direct contact with the PGFTU. Within the PLO, this development was not actively challenged and the PGFTU actually got some sort of clearance to take up direct contact with foreign donors, despite protests from the PTUF.

With the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the leader of the PTUF in exile, Haider Ibrahim, was appointed Deputy Minister of Labour. Thus the stage was set for the establishment of a semi-independent trade union movement under the management of the Ministry of Labour. However, this did not happen, probably because the PGFTU was already a reality that enjoyed direct international support. Instead, the PGFTU broke away from the PTUF and announced its independence. The PGFTU was immediately granted observer status and invited to join the activities of the ICFTU, becoming the Palestinian workers' representative in the ILO.

Since the establishment of the PGFTU in 1995, preparations have been underway for organising a founding congress and adopting a constitution for the joint organisation. A congress was convened in 1996, but stopped by Palestinian Authority security forces. Nevertheless, some of the mainly West Bank representatives already assembled took advantage of the occasion to have a meeting, adopting a temporary constitution and confirming the appointment of Shaer Said as leader and Rasem Bayari as deputy leader of the PGFTU. The reason for the Palestinian Authority's interference in the conference is not clear, but is assumed to be linked to dissatisfaction about the establishment of a democratic trade union movement and the sidelining of the PTUF. In general, it is evident that the failure to organise a conference since 1995 is also linked to internal problems in the PGFTU and the differences between the West Bank and Gaza. The restrictions the Israelis put on travel between the West Bank and Gaza contribute to this. A congress organised in April 1999 for the Gaza part re-elected Rasem Bayari as leader of the Gaza PGFTU.

Today, the PTUF is an empty shell without members. That being said, it has held on to its membership in the Damascus-based International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU). More important, however, and probably the reason for keeping the organisation alive, is that it still has 15 seats in the PLO's principal governing body, the Palestinian National Congress.

Besides PGFTU-affiliated unions, there are a number of other craft unions, associations and in-house unions on the West Bank and Gaza. Among the most important are the Nurses' Union, the Teachers' Association, the Engineering Union, the Medical Association and the UNRWA in-house union. According to the Centre for Palestinian Research in Nablus, the Islamic movement *Hamas* has tried to establish trade unions, but not succeeded.

Although the history of the Palestinian trade union movement can be dated back to the 1920s, it is its recent history that has set the most important hallmarks. From 1988, the new labour movement was formed as a mass mobilisation organisation within the framework

of the *Intifada*. The members comprised both the workers at the workplaces on the West Bank and Gaza, and Palestinians working in Israel. This was an entirely politically-based union movement whose role was to mobilise Palestinian workers for the wider national struggle. Since the start of the peace process and establishment of the Palestinian Authority, this movement has to some extent tried to get re-established, this time as a more traditional and professional trade union movement in Palestinian self-rule areas. All along, it has been difficult for the trade union movement in the Palestinian territories to forge an effective role for itself. Given the political context of self-rule in limited areas, the economic context of restrictions, the excess supply of workers and the unclear legal situation, this has not yet been possible. Apart from regulations introduced by the Israelis, it is still Egyptian labour law that regulates labour relations in Gaza, and Jordanian labour law that applies on the West Bank. In addition, there are problematic areas such as the Israeli settlements and East Jerusalem. For some time, the new Palestinian Legislative Council has been working on a proposal for a new Palestinian labour code, but as of January 2000 this legislation has not been passed.

### **3.1 The PGFTU today**

As of 1999, in many ways the PGFTU seems like two organisations, one on the West Bank and one in Gaza. The leaders of the confederations and unions have frequent contact and manage to make concerted efforts on some questions, but for many practical purposes they remain two separate entities. This is partly a reflection of the overall differences between the West Bank and Gaza. One important political difference between Gaza and the West Bank involves relations with Israel. In 1994, both Shaer Said and Rasem Bayari signed a co-operation agreement with the Israeli Trade Union Confederation *Histadrut* on behalf of the PGFTU (see below). On the West Bank, this contact and agreement with *Histadrut* do not seem to be controversial. In Gaza, however, this contact has become more controversial. For example, when there is a need to help a Gaza worker working in Israel, the Ramallah-based NGO, the Democracy and Workers Rights Centre in Palestine is contacted rather than *Histadrut*.

The Gaza PGFTU claims to have approximately 18,000 members in eight unions as of 1999. These are the Transport Union, the Metal Workers' Union, the Agriculture and Food Industry Workers' Union, The Service and Commercial Workers' Union, Construction and Woodworkers' Union, the Textile Workers' Union, the Municipal Workers' Union and the Post and Communication Workers' Union. On the West Bank, the 186 local unions have been organised into twelve national unions, which are the same as in Gaza, except for the Municipal Workers' Union plus the Bank and Insurance Union, the Printing and Media Workers' Union, the Chemical Workers' Union, the Health Workers' Union and the Tourist Sector Workers' Union. The West Bank is organised into nine geographical regions and Gaza into four. The PGFTU on the West Bank claims a present membership of 88,000, of whom 35,000 work in Israel.

Figure 2: Membership in the PGFTU, 1998

Union	Total paid membership	Female percentage of members
Metal (WB)	2,571	Less than 5 %
Transport (WB)	4,597	Less than 5 %
Tourism (WB)	1,218	Less than 5 %
Post and Communication (WB)	435	Less than 5 %
Chemical (WB)	668	Approx. 20 %
Agriculture and Food (WB)	4,263	Approx. 10 %
Printing and Media (WB)	1,379	Approx. 10 %
Textile and Garment (WB)	4,753	Approx. 20 %
Service (WB)	5,265	Approx. 15b%
Health (WB)	2,195	Approx. 20 %
Bank and Insurance (WB)	979	Approx. 20 %
Construction and Wood (WB)	43,341	None
Textile (Gaza)	1,267	Approx. 30 %
Metal (Gaza)	1,262	Less than 5 %
Transport (Gaza)	4,342	Less than 5 %
Agriculture and Food (Gaza)	1,892	Less than 5 %
Municipal (Gaza)	612	Approx. 15 %
Service (Gaza)	1,161	Less than 5 %
Construction and Wood (Gaza)	4,002	Approx. 5 %
Post and Communication (Gaza)	442	Approx. 5 %

Source: PGFTU

The most important benefit of belonging to the PGFTU today is probably the organisation's agreement with the Palestinian Ministry of Health, which enables it to offer a discount on the public health insurance. In 1999, members of unions affiliated with the PGFTU in Gaza paid a monthly health insurance rate of 45 New Israeli Shekel (NIS) to the Palestinian Authority, as compared with 75 NIS at the normal rate. On the West Bank, the fee varies slightly from region to region, but the discount constitutes approximately 50 percent of the normal rate. Given the fact that a PGFTU member pays an annual membership fee of approximately 20 NIS in Gaza and 30 NIS on the West Bank, this is a very good offer. This discount is made possible by the Ministry of Health thanks to funds received from the deduction of health insurance from the Palestinians working in Israel. In Gaza, the PGFTU also provides for additional members, so-called hardship cases, to receive even greater discounts.

The PGFTU has developed five objectives for its work over the next three years. These are:

- Develop an independent, democratic trade union;
- Increase the membership;
- Increase the number of female members;
- Campaign for the establishment of a proper Palestinian Labour Law;
- Work towards greater financial independence.

These objectives have been developed through leadership training at the ILO training centre in Turin, although it is not clear how these objectives are anchored in internal organisational processes. It is, however, evident that the broad directions of these objectives guide the PGFTU. As regards labour law, several internal seminars have been organised to develop positions and sensitise the organisation on this issue. The main demands made by the PGFTU in respect of the new legislation include the introduction of minimum wages, a national health scheme, proper health and safety regulations, the right to organise, and the right of trade unions to organise public sector workers.

One aspect of the PGFTU's organisational development strategy has been to establish regional offices. The evaluation team visited two of these offices, in Jenin and in Hebron. A key part of the officers' activities is to collect membership dues. A very limited number of members pays their dues through the cheque-off system, and a few unions collect membership dues at the workplace. Instead, a member visits the regional office where the industrial unions also have their regional representatives. Here, union dues are paid and members are given an invoice that provides the right to a discount on health insurance. A typical regional office (at least on the West Bank), also has an Educational Department, Women's Department and Legal Aid Department. Local training and women's activities are usually organised through the regional office. In Jenin and Hebron, recruitment and the establishment of new local unions were also important activities.

The objective of developing an independent trade union should emphasise the process of developing a professional trade union movement focused on traditional and core union activities such as collective bargaining. The evaluation team found this aim reflected all through the organisation both in Gaza and on the West Bank. One indication of the development towards a professional trade union movement is the increase in the number of collective agreements negotiated. Most of these agreements are with one employer alone. In the Jenin region, for example, the total number of collective agreements had reached 50, including 15 new ones over the past year.

The recent establishment of industrial unions on the West Bank and the attempt to link these unions with their counterparts in Gaza has led to the preparation of new articles of association for the industrial unions. These articles of association are being discussed both in Gaza and on the West Bank. The aim is to establish similar types of articles of association in all the industrial unions and to move towards the establishment of pan-Palestinian industrial unions. One new element to be introduced into these articles of association will be representation in the central bodies proportional to the number of members in each local union. Today, each local union is represented equally in the industrial union, just as the industrial unions are represented equally in PGFTU bodies. A typical industrial union in



the PGFTU today is the Construction and Woodworkers' Union in Gaza. It has approximately 3000 paying members, of which 10 per cent are working in Israel. The Union has its headquarters in the (LO-financed) PGFTU building in Gaza and also shares four regional offices with the PGFTU. Members maintain contact with the union and pay union dues by visiting the regional office. Each of these regions also organises three to four training courses a year. A total of up to 500 members attend training courses each year.

Jerusalem poses a special challenge for the PGFTU. The city is the home of one of the oldest and strongest unions in PGFTU, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union, which organises workers in Arab hotels in East Jerusalem. This union recently merged into the industrial union of Tourist Sector Workers on the West Bank. Some joint activities and training are taking place between leaders and members of unions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, but reality is changing rapidly at the grassroots level. While on the rest of the West Bank the unions increasingly have to relate to the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli presence is increasing in East Jerusalem. However, Palestinians working in East Jerusalem do not pay the obligatory fee to the *Histadrut* for Palestinian workers working (with work permits) in Israel.

## **3.2 The new labour law**

The Palestinian Authority has been working on a labour law for a long time. After a draft was drawn up by the Ministry of Labour, the Palestinian Authority could not agree to put it before the Legislative Council. As a result, members of the Council took the proposal and tabled it on their own initiative. This proposal has now been debated twice in the Council (December 1998 and July 1999) and will soon be put before the Council for a third and final reading. The discussions on the content of the legislation have been long and hard. Getting the more comprehensive legislation possible has been one of the PGFTU's highest priorities. Among other things, the PGFTU attended hearings in the Standing Council Committee on Education and Social issues, which includes the field of labour legislation. Further, a PGFTU demonstration was organised outside the Legislative Council during the second reading of the proposal. Employers and other groups with strong business interests both outside the Council and the Palestinian Authority, and even inside these bodies, have all been active in trying to influence the scope of the legislation.

The labour movement faces many dilemmas in respect of what to demand to achieve the best possible labour code. Minimum wages may play a very important role in economies such as the Palestinian one, where there is an unequal distribution of wealth, many small businesses and relatively weak trade unions. On the other hand, the introduction of minimum wages may lead to redundancies and reduce the need for trade unions to negotiate wages. The latter also applies to other rights that may be secured either by legislation or negotiation. This is why it is not uncommon in non-democratic regimes to find relatively extensive legal protection of workers (in the formal sector). The PGFTU also faces the dilemma of whether to ask for high or low severance payment. Generous severance payment may reduce mobility among permanent staff and increase the tendency for employers to

engage temporary staff. But in a society without a general pension system, severance payments are an important replacement. Other difficult questions include health insurance. The Legislative Council has decided to put forward a separate law on this issue and not include it in the labour law. But following the Hebron accident in October 1999 (see below), it is likely that the third reading will introduce increased financial responsibility for employers in the event of on-the-job accidents.

One final question revolves around the conditions under which trade unions are allowed to operate. This includes regulations for establishing and registering a trade union and regarding who should be allowed to join trade unions. In the Arabic countries, government employees have traditionally been excluded from joining trade unions (in countries such as Egypt, however, academics in this sector have been allowed to join professional associations). On the West Bank and in Gaza, the PGFTU has already started challenging this practice by organising in the municipal and health sector. The new labour code appears to allow unions to organise in the government sector, but does not allow collective bargaining. Another question is whether the code will allow the registration of competing trade unions. Competing trade unions within same sectors often cause more labour unrest and less optimal economic solutions in collective bargaining (Calmfors and Diffill 1988). On the other hand, not allowing the creation of competing trade unions might compromise the rights of (political) minorities. In the case of the West Bank and Gaza this could, for example, mean that *Hamas* would be stopped from forming their own trade union movement. It would also mean that the PTUF could no longer claim the status of a trade union confederation.

All in all, it seems as though the Palestinians are heading towards a labour code more liberal than those in most Arabic countries, but still probably short of meeting all the standards of ILO's core labour rights, such as the right to collective bargaining in the public sector. That being said, the proposed Palestinian law seems to establish space for the development of a democratic, independent trade union movement. It will be up to the PGFTU to fill this space.

## 4 The project

Contacts between the Palestinian Trade Union Federation in exile (Lebanon) and the Norwegian trade union movement were initiated at lower level as early as in 1978. In 1985, the PTUF, together with the *Histadrut*, was invited to the LO congress in Norway. After the Oslo I Agreement, LO decided on a grand scale assistance programme for the Palestinian trade union movement. The first co-operation agreement was signed in April 1994 with the PFTU in exile (Tunisia).

The second co-operation agreement was signed in 1995 with PGFTU on the West Bank and in Gaza. This change came after a visit to Gaza and the West Bank by representatives of LO in August 1994, when it became evident that not all the funds from Norway had been passed on via Tunis as envisaged. During LO's next visit in December 1994, a decision was taken to deal directly with the trade union confederation in Gaza and the West Bank. In March 1995, the PGFTU and the Israeli trade union centre *Histadrut* signed a co-operation agreement. This was made possible through active involvement on the part of the international trade union movement. LO Norway played a role in these negotiations.

In 1995, LO outlined the objectives for its involvement and co-operation with the Palestinian trade union movement as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- To help support the peace process by strengthening its popular support;
- To contribute to the development of democratic institutions in Palestinian society;
- To help rebuild the Palestinian trade union movement to take up its role as a democratic force and a defender of workers rights.

The contracts between LO and the Palestinian trade union contain technical details and do not state the objectives of the co-operation. Written reports and project documents contain relatively little about the objectives of the activities and initiatives, with the exception of the document mentioned above. It is not clear to what extent the objectives for LO's support have been elaborated with the PGFTU, they seem rather to have been communicated orally by the LO project co-ordinator.

The project started out as part of the portfolio of the Norwegian Labour Movement's International Solidarity Centre (AIS) with Arne Grønningseter as project co-ordinator. As a result of reorganisation in 1995, it became a regular part of the portfolio under LO's international affairs department, and Moussa El Jeris (Abu George) took over as project co-ordinator. There is generally danger inherent in appointing a project co-ordinator with a personal history as closely connected to the recipient organisation as Abu George, but in the case of LO's support to PGFTU, this seems to have generally benefited the project. Although the evaluation team would like to see dialogue on the objectives of the support

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 1 June 1995 from LO Norway to the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

between LO and PGFTU in the project documents, the objectives seems to be clear to and “owned” by both organisations. This indicates that the LO project co-ordinator, who enjoys confidence in Palestinian society, has provided favourable conditions for the project.

Figure 3: Funds spent 1994-1999 in NOK (This table is based on figures from LO Norway and show the relative size of the activities)

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999 Budget
Total project budget	3,649,454	4,179,153	5,483,925	1,382,655	2,376,000	2,815,383
Organisational support, WB Legal aid	214,937	494,320				
Organisational support, Gaza		389,351				
Building Nablus, total 4,915,421		1802,829	2316,003			
Building Gaza, total 3,453,378		3577,057				
Labourers' Voice			279,556	290,945	200,220	520,000
Training, West Bank		83,279	302,671	470,200	500,220	48,000 incl. Gaza
Training, Gaza (centre)	458,516	80,432		305,220	400,220	
Training, Egypt				268,248	481,000	241,000
Women's programme, WB		69,600	108,114	120,090	273,220	808,000 incl. Gaza
Women's programme, Gaza			123,642	120,090	200,220	
Study visit to Norway	109,060	167,236				
Exchange Programmes	73,651					
Gaza Bakery	592,180					
High level talks		170,057				
Health and Safety, Hebron					167,239	178,000
Others Research Gaza	99,755	30,372				Evaluation (incl. in the above)
		Election ICFTU				

Regarding project management routines at LO Norway, the evaluation team would like to note that the quality and accuracy of the annual reports could be improved. There are several examples of inaccurate and inconsistent information on, for example, the number of new members recruited or circulation figures for the *Labourers' Voice*. Further, the financial data are not very transparent. From this point of view, the evaluation team has based its

information solely on figures provided by LO Norway, and has seen it as beyond the scope of this evaluation to examine these figures further. However, it is believed that the figures reflect the actual activities which have taken place.

## **4.1 Gaza Trade Union House and Nablus Trade Union House**

A special agreement regarding the trade union buildings in Gaza and Nablus was signed between LO Norway and PTUF on 14 October 1994. The first funds were transferred in 1994 and construction began in the spring of 1995. An additional proposal for support for the establishment of a trade union office in Jerusalem was put forward by the PGFTU. It was initially also included in the LO project proposals, then later postponed and eventually withdrawn from the project plans.

The building in Gaza was completed in March 1996 at a total cost of NOK 3,640,326, which was NOK 186,948 above budget. Considering this was the first project of its kind for LO in this region, this minor cost overrun must be characterised as a satisfactory result.

The building in Nablus was completed in February 1997 at a total cost of NOK 4,915,421. The original proposed cost in the agreement of 14 October 1994 was NOK 3 million, which was reduced to NOK 2.5 million in the budget proposal. In March 1996, it was clear that the building itself would cost NOK 1,877,963. Part of the problem in Nablus was related to contractual structures. Instead of having one company responsible for the erection of the building, PGFTU undertook this task, contracting sub-contractors directly. The appointed controller did not follow the building process as closely as expected. The building was financed as follows (in NOK):

Norad	2,149,882
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1,287,672
LO	394,376
PGFTU	1,060,313

The two buildings are currently in full operation. Nablus houses only the PGFTU in the building, while the national and local unions with offices in Nablus are still located in the old trade union centre. The ground floor at Nablus is rented out for private gatherings but may be used for seminars, if necessary. There are also seminar facilities on the first floor.

The building in Nablus is large. As mentioned above, it cost more than planned. The building functions as a symbol of the PGFTU, showing its strength and importance in Palestinian society. The running costs do not seem to be a too heavy burden on the PGFTU at this stage, avoiding the need to draw on financial resources which could be better spent otherwise. There is, however, a potential to utilise the building more extensively, for example, by accommodating union offices.

The Gaza building also seems to function well. All the unions have their offices there, but the main union activities such as collecting membership dues, take place in the four

regional offices. It was the evaluation team's impression that other union activities and meetings were mainly held outside the building. The seminar rooms seem to be in regular use. A library had also been established. A micro garment factory had been established in some empty rooms on the top floor. The building running expenses in Gaza appear to be manageable for the PGFTU thus far.

## **4.2 Organisational support**

In the early phases of the project in the years of 1994 and 1995, funds were transferred directly to the PGFTU (and PTUF) to cover part of their operating costs. These funds made up a substantial part of the income of the PGFTU in these years. In 1994, part of this comprised legal assistance and funds for legal aid. On the West Bank, the PGFTU established its own advisory service for members. In Gaza, this was first established in co-operation with the Israeli Institution Workers' Hotline. Some of the initial funds transferred for legal aid via Tunis in 1994 could not be accounted for.

In 1995, activities included support for equipping three local trade union offices on the West Bank, training clerical staff, partial financing of PGFTU employment costs, legal assistance and local travel. For the latter, a minibus was bought (which later had an accident and via the insurance money was replaced with a car for the use of Shaer Said). In Gaza, the support for 1995 was spent, among other things, on office rent.

This support seems to have been crucial to the PGFTU in these phases of development. Normally, this type of support is not seen as desirable from donor's point of view, given the possibilities for misuse and creating dependency on outside support. The latter often occurs because the recipient organisation tend to be overly large and often top heavy. To some extent, this also happened with the PGFTU. The organisation is larger than can realistically be funded by the dues of members and potential members. The support may also have contributed to a centralisation of organisational power. The evaluation team believes that the financial structure should be decentralised.

Seen in perspective, however, this organisational support helped the PGFTU to get established during a critical period. It made it possible for the leadership to develop the organisation without being overly dependent on the goodwill of the Palestinian Authority or detailed donor demand. While sufficient control remained with the LO, the PGFTU achieved organisational development when having to handle these funds themselves. Limiting support to specific activities may actually have had created less ownership to the activities.

## **4.3 Training**

Training is crucial in building a trade union movement. In making its transition from a political trade union movement to a professional activity-based movement, the PGFTU has needed substantial training. The most important training in a trade union takes place

through active participation in organisational work on different levels. Local activities have a short history in the PGFTU. Some important knowledge has been passed on by people with experience from before 1967 or from Israel. Both these types of experience are, however, limited. For example, Palestinians working in Israel are not permitted to join the *Histadrut*. On the other hand, they have learned from observing the activities of the *Histadrut* at Israeli workplaces, and this knowledge has been important for re-building the PGFTU. But even this experience is of limited use due to the poor structure of *Histadrut* and its special history of socio-economic trade unionism.

Right from the start, the support from LO Norway included funding for training activities. One of the first activities was the establishment of a training centre in Gaza in March 1994 in rented premises. This centre also provides offices for the PGFTU leadership in Gaza. When the trade union building was completed, all activities were moved there. Support for training courses also started in 1994 with four one-week courses with 25 participants each. In 1995, courses were held both on the West Bank and in the Gaza region, including training for female trade unionists, a general trade union basic education course and a course for the executive committee of PGFTU.

In 1996, the West Bank and Gaza both developed member-oriented two-day courses. On the West Bank, a total of nine courses were organised, one for each region, covering a combined total of 350 participants. Topics included negotiation skills, Palestinian and Israeli labour laws, occupational health and safety, and the PGFTU's constitution. In 1997, 37 courses were organised on the West Bank and Gaza, attracting 1251 participants. In 1998, 67 courses and seminars were organised for 1938 participants. In 1999, LO stopped funding for local training courses to avoid duplication of the work of another donor, the Danish General Workers' Federation (SID).

In addition to this, a special seminar was developed for training trainers. In order to bring together trainers from Gaza and the West Bank, and to utilise the education facilities built up in the Egyptian Trade Union Confederation partly by funding from LO Norway, these courses were organised in Cairo. In 1997, the first course took place with 25 participants. In 1998, two x 25 people took part in trainers' training in Egypt. The first course was a following up of the group from last year. A final trainers' training course took place in Egypt in 1999 with the second group from 1998.

Most educational activities take place on weekdays in ordinary working hours. Some of this training takes place at the workplace. Most workers seem to be able to obtain unpaid educational leave. The new labour code will probably regulate this and give the workers the right to paid educational leave for one week a year. In some cases mentioned, for example, by the educational officer in Jericho, training must take place after working hours. In the case of participants taking unpaid leave, lost income is reimbursed by the PGFTU. In Gaza, some courses were organised on weekends for people working in Israel. A typical two-day training programme with 30 participants costs 3000 to 4000 NIS. This includes 30 NIS a day in compensation for lost income (40 NIS for SID courses). Other expenses are transport allowances (200 NIS combined), lunch (600 NIS combined), stationers (200 NIS) and tutors' fees.

Based on the support provided by LO Norway, the PGFTU has built up education departments in Gaza and on the West Bank. On the West Bank, this is also the case for each

of the nine regions. Today, training activities are a central, integrated part of the PGFTU's activities. Training activities are used systematically in the regions and by the unions to recruit new members. Both the education department and women's department offer courses for potential members, mentioning this as part of the PGFTU's recruitment strategy. Core target groups in addition to new members are said to include members of workers' committees, local trade unions and preparation committees in workplaces where the union is about to get established. Training has also been used systematically to help develop the PGFTU policy on the new labour code and to mobilise the rank and file to take part in actions regarding this issue.

The trainers educated in Egypt have been used extensively both on the West Bank and in Gaza. They seem to comprise the backbone of the trainers used by the PGFTU today. The PGFTU Educational Department has also made use of instructors from outside the trade union movement, e.g. from universities and the Ministry of Labour.

The Educational Department of the PGFTU on the West Bank has listed its objectives as being to: train trainers, help to develop organisational and leadership skills in the PGFTU, help build and educate new local and industrial trade unions, offer education on ILO conventions and international labour law, teach collective bargaining and labour relations, teach health and safety, and educate members on media and communication. The educational activities undertaken in conjunction with the PGFTU's work on the new labour code show how education and training have developed into a strategic organisational tool. The channelling of training funds from LO Norway through the PGFTU's organisation has probably helped to develop this link. In the PGFTU West Bank central office, the staff currently consists of four full time education officers and a couple more part-timers and volunteers.

#### **4.4 Women's activities**

Already in 1995, the LO project facilitated the creation of a women's department and forum (a special meeting point for female trade unionists) in the PGFTU in Nablus. Some training activities were also initiated. When the trade union house was completed in 1996, these activities moved. The women's forum continued its programme of activities, including 18 seminars for female members and non-members in 1996. In Gaza, a similar process of establishing a women's department and forum with its own office in the new trade union building took place in 1995-96. In 1996, this forum in Gaza trained 256 women. Progress was made in recruiting female members to the trade union and to getting women into the leadership of the unions. There are today women's departments at PGFTU headquarters on the West Bank and in Gaza, as well as in the nine regional offices on the West Bank. The strategy for women is both to increase the number of female members and to increase the number of women in holding positions within the PGFTU.

Women's role in Palestinian society reflects a traditional Middle Eastern pattern. Working women are either well educated from better families and often work in the health sector or as teachers, or young non-married or engaged working class girls often working in the textile industry. Totally, women make up only 12 per cent of the Palestinian work force.



Traditionally, there has been no place for women in blue colour unions. This is still reflected in the PGFTU, where only nine per cent of the members are women. These are mainly found in the Health Union and the Textile Workers' Union. The women of Palestine differ however partly from their Arabic sisters in light of the political role they played in the *Intifada*.

LO's support for the establishment of women's departments nationally and regionally within the PGFTU, and for training courses for women, has helped make this a smoothly functioning, integrated part of the organisation. The women's departments seem to have been able to attract both traditional women activists from the political women's movement and young women workers. The activities include recruitment of women workers into the PGFTU. This, in particular, has been the case in the textile industry and in the private and public service sectors. In contrast to the Egyptian trade union movement, for example, one also sees extensive collaboration between the women's department and other parts of the PGFTU. Women hold posts not only as women's representatives but also as education officers and local trade union representatives. In the industrial unions on the West Bank today, for example, two of 15 executive committee members in the Bank Union are women, as are one of 13 in the Chemical Union and two of 12 in the Social Workers' Union. In Gaza, women occupy three of nine seats on the executive committee of the Public Service Union, which has 40 per cent female members.

The women's departments and forums also co-operate with other women's organisations on other general gender and equality issues. Among some of the female members of the PGFTU interviewed by the evaluation team, it was evident that their connection to the women's forums was stronger than to their industrial union. There may be some danger in this, as it may reduce the influence of women in the main bodies of the organisation. LO Norway should be aware of this when providing support in future, and make sure that helping to create the necessary space for women in the PGFTU in general remains the main focus of the women's department. The attention women's departments devote to general issues such as recruitment and occupational health and safety helps to maintain this focus.

The evaluation team interviewed the leaders of the women's departments in several of the West Bank regions. In Jericho, for example, women trained under the LO programme are currently running several local courses on issues such as health and safety, and they are trying to establish unions at typically female workplaces. The same was reported from Bethlehem and Jenin.

Given the above remarks, the overall conclusion is that the development of women's departments within the PGFTU both on the West Bank and in Gaza is probably one of the most successful of the LO-funded projects. Even in traditionally conservative areas such as Gaza and Hebron, the evaluation team met several committed women activists. As mentioned, to some extent women have also taken positions in the main structures of the PGFTU.

## 4.5 Labourers' Voice

The first issue of the *Labourers' Voice* was published for the Mayday celebration in 1994. LO started supporting the monthly trade union newspaper in 1995 as a part of its general support programme, and from 1996 as a separate project. In 1995, funds earmarked for training were also spent on the *Labourers' Voice*, facilitating free monthly circulation of 8,000 to 10,000 copies. In 1996, circulation remained at approximately 10,000 copies per issue and ten issues were published. Israeli restrictions made it difficult to circulate the newspaper in Gaza as well. Since 1997, the *Labourers' Voice* has been circulated as a supplement to the daily newspaper *al-Ayam* once a month. This secures a wide coverage in all parts of Palestinian society. The newspaper is sold in approximately 25,000 copies. Beside this circulation, the *Labourers' Voice* is handed out to workers through workplace visits.

The evaluation team has the impression that the *Labourers' Voice* has become a quality publication with journalistic independence. It is open for debates through articles and letters to the editor. The editorial policy has been to create and open dialogue between the leaders and members of the PGFTU, and to be relevant to others seeking information on trade union questions, for instance, academics and the authorities. The editor lists workers, activists in other social organisations and Palestinian officials as readers of the newspaper. Among the special themes covered by the *Labourers' Voice* have been elections in the industrial unions and the proposed new labour code.

However, one objective underlying LO support for the *Labourers' Voice* has been to enhance communication between trade unionists on the West Bank and in Gaza. The objective is partly fulfilled by the fact that the daily newspaper which contains the *Labourers' Voice* as a supplement is sold in Gaza. But the sense of ownership of the *Labourers' Voice* is limited at the PGFTU in Gaza. There is no permanent Gaza correspondent, despite the fact that the PGFTU, supported by LO Norway, has trained several (17) aspiring journalists by providing at least one course. The reason is probably more political than practical. In Gaza, the PGFTU has instead been trying to publish its own trade union magazine. The project reports in LO Norway also mention an editorial board established in 1997, and including representatives from both Gaza and the West Bank. In an interview with editor Atef Sa'id, the evaluation team was told that no such board existed and that the editor alone was running the paper, and reporting directly to Shaher Said and the executive board of the West Bank PGFTU.

## 4.6 Other activities

In 1994, funds for cultural activities were transferred to the PFTU in Tunis. Some of these funds were never handed over to the West Bank and Gaza as intended. After signing the new agreements with the PGFTU, this problem no longer exists.

Study excursions to Norway: In 1994, two lawyers and two trade union officials took part in a ten-day seminar at Sørmarka Conference Centre. One of the aims was to discuss the new labour legislation in Palestine and to learn more about labour law in general.

Exchange programmes for local trade unionists: In 1994, five trade unionists from the West Bank visited local trade unions in Norway. A planned group of five representatives from Gaza could not participate due to the failure to secure travel permits. A re-visit of Norwegian trade unionists took place in 1995. Different local union representatives from Norway have continued to visit their PGFTU counterparts frequently.

Bakery in Gaza: A trade union-owned bakery co-operative was started in Gaza in 1995.

Initiating labour market research in Gaza: In 1994, support was provided to initiate a trade union research project in Gaza to be undertaken by Fafo in conjunction with the PGFTU. In 1995, this project was established as separate activity financed directly by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

NOK 30,000 was provided for ICFTU's co-ordination and local representation in Palestine in 1995. A major objective for this involvement was to promote internal elections in the PGFTU. Some elections were held in 1996.

A project on occupational health and safety was established in Hebron in 1998. It is organised as direct co-operation between the regional PGFTU organisation and the Norwegian United Federation of Trade Unions' (Fellesforbundets) regional organisation in Oslo. The focus has been on chemical health threats in the shoe industry in Hebron. The relevance of this project became evident by the tragic accident in an unlicensed lighter factory in Hebron in October 1999, where seven young female workers were killed. The tragedy happened following an explosion in a room whose doors were locked from outside. The seven young female workers in the room could not escape the fire and smoke that followed in the aftermath of the explosion, and were therefore killed. Their relatives' anger was channelled by the PGFTU, and the PGFTU was instrumental in organising a demonstration against the authorities responsible. The PGFTU also quickly made its own documentary on site and disseminated information on the accident nation-wide through the *Labourers' Voice*. The actions taken by the PGFTU may have been directed more against the Palestinian Authority than the factory owner. The Palestinian Authority reacted by arresting the owner and charging him for illegal import and transaction of funds from abroad (but not for the accident *per se*).

## 4.7 The PGFTU-Histadrut agreement

With the election of the new leadership in *Histadrut* in 1994 (the first non-labour party leader ever), official contacts were established between *Histadrut* and the PGFTU. The PGFTU has seen this as important step in order to secure the *Histadrut's* support for the peace process and to help ease the situation for Palestinians working in Israel. One central issue here was the fact that, since 1970, health insurance and collective agreement fees had been deducted from the salaries of all Palestinians working in Israel. The health insurance has equalled the one which is obligatory for Israeli workers, apart from pensions. According to Agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, part of this insurance is to be transferred to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. The collective agreement fee thus equals the fee paid by non-unionised Israeli workers covered by a collective agreement as

compensation to the trade unions for negotiating this agreement. It currently accounts for 0.7 per cent of gross wages.

One of the objectives of the support from LO Norway has been to help supervise talks between Palestinian and Israeli trade unionists. Attempts were made in both 1993 and 1994 to bring high-level delegations from *Histadrut* to meetings with Palestinian trade unionists. In 1994, a joint Palestinian, Israeli and Norwegian women's trade union seminar was organised in Oslo. In 1995, the deputy president of *Histadrut* and the two general secretaries of the PGFTU met in Oslo. The meeting ended in a joint statement opening the way for future co-operation. A follow-up meeting was organised in Tel Aviv where an agreement was signed on 5 March 1995 between *Histadrut* and the PGFTU regarding the reimbursement of dues paid by Palestinians working in Israel from 1993. The agreement also provided for a joint committee to be established to discuss the funds collected from 1970 to 1993, but this committee has not yet been established. In the agreement with the PGFTU, *Histadrut* commits itself to transferring half this sum to the PGFTU and spending the other half on legal aid for Palestinians working in Israel. During the early years after the agreement, these funds were not transferred regularly, but since 1998 they have been sent regularly to the PGFTU in Nablus which passes on part of these funds to the PGFTU in Gaza.

As mentioned above, LO Norway helped establish the contacts and relations that paved the way for this agreement. LO also offered *Histadrut* technical help to fulfil its commitments (although the offer was not accepted by *Histadrut*). The project reports view the establishment of this agreement as an important development for the PGFTU and for their relations with *Histadrut*. However, the agreement touches on several difficult questions, illustrating the complexity of the peace process and the need for awareness from donors. In the opinion of the evaluation team, this agreement may not be the type of instrument needed to further the development of Israeli/Palestinian relations.

First, there is the question of whether the practice of automatically deducting 0.7 per cent of Palestinian workers' wages in Israel is legal under international labour law. ILO convention 87 outlines workers' right to organise and not to organise. This is an individual right. Excepted from this are closed shops where workers accept membership in a trade union at the point of employment as a part of the employment conditions and collective agreement fees where non-unionised workers pay a fee to the union for the services provided under the auspices of the collective agreement. In the case of Palestinians working in Israel, the closed shop exception is irrelevant since Palestinians are not allowed membership in *Histadrut*. Regarding the agreement fee, this generally applies in Israel only for workers in unionised workplaces. However, the Palestinians mainly work in non-unionised shops, yet this fee is still deducted. The fact that the Palestinian workers are not paid directly by their Israeli employers, but through an office in the Israeli Ministry of Labour does not change this.

Secondly, *Histadrut* do not spend their part of the funds pursuant to the agreement. These funds not only cover legal aid for Palestinians, but also large parts of their international activities. The evaluation team has been given documents showing how *Histadrut* has spent these funds over the past five years.

Thirdly, these funds currently comprise 60 per cent of the revenues earned by the PGFTU West Bank and approximately 20 per cent for the Gaza PGFTU. This represents funds over

which the individual contributor, the Palestinian workers in Israel, have no control. As long as they work in Israel, they have to pay this fee. *Histadrut* may, however, in a given situation exert control over this flow of funds. Further, PGFTU officials are not worried that these funds may be collected in violation of international labour law. Quite the opposite is the case, as the evaluation team heard from Rasem Bayari, who mentioned that he had proposed to President Arafat that a similar fee be introduced in Palestine. Money is power in all organisations including the PGFTU. Being less dependent on membership fees and more dependent on funds collected on the basis of political decisions, whether this is by the Israeli or Palestinian authorities, does not help to build a democratic trade union movement.

## 4.8 Financial management

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to look at individual financial transactions. This is the responsibility of the auditors. It is, however, important to analyse finances as a part of organisational development.

The LO funds have been the most important international support for the PGFTU. Some other unions including SID in Denmark, UNISON in Britain, the ICFTU and ILO, have supported individual activities within the PGFTU and between the PGFTU and *Histadrut*. After the initial problems with the funds transferred through Tunis, financial control systems were established locally on the West Bank and in Gaza. They include separate PGFTU bank accounts for each project, the appointment of auditors and accounting/bookkeeping assistance.

The evaluation team was shown the latest financial statements both in Gaza and on the West Bank, and had a separate meeting with the auditor in Gaza. The PGFTU also sends these statements to LO Norway on a regular basis. They give the overall picture of the PGFTU's activities and use of funds. However, the statements themselves do not give details such as the number of employees or the number of training courses organised on the basis of the amount spent on training. This type of information was given to the evaluation team separately.

In Gaza, the unions pay 40 per cent of their membership dues to the PGFTU. The fee is 30 NIS for new members and 20 for renewals. In addition, the PGFTU collects a surcharge on the health insurance invoices. On the West Bank, 30 per cent of the fee is held by the workplace union, 30 per cent goes to the regional office, 15 per cent to the industrial union and 15 per cent to the PGFTU. Many of the members in Israel are registered directly at the regional office.

In 1999, the PGFTU centrally on the West Bank derived 35 per cent of its income from the LO project, 60 per cent from the transfer of funds from Israel and the last 5 per cent from membership dues. In addition, some building-related expenses were paid from income earned by renting out the meeting hall. The relatively small contribution from membership dues is due to the fact that most of these funds are retained by the local organisations.

The financial structure is different in Gaza. Here the central PGFTU takes 40 per cent of the membership dues. In addition, the central PGFTU charges a fee for issuing the invoice needed for the member to claim the deduction for health insurance. All in all, the Gaza PGFTU seems to have a wider financial basis where the main income is support from LO Norway, then interest on funds transferred from *Histadrut*, health insurance fees, membership dues and operating income from *Histadrut* fees. In addition, socio-economic activities such as the bakery, the micro textile factory and a kindergarten provide minor supplements to revenues. The number of paying members has increased from 4000 in 1993 to 18,000 in 1999.

The structure of the finances also makes it difficult to assess the overall picture. In Gaza, for example, financial statements and auditing only covers the PGFTU. The PGFTU transfers part of these funds to the unions to support union activities. The accounts of the unions are not audited by the PGFTU's independent auditor. It was the understanding of the evaluation team that the PGFTU maintains close control over the union's finances to make sure that 40 per cent of the membership dues are transferred to the PGFTU. Likewise, on the West Bank both the unions and the regions have their own finances. In one region, the team saw the latest statement. Besides membership dues, the statements also include incomes such as gifts from political parties. This was not, however, a significant amount. In addition, there are donor funds channelled outside the PGFTU. The evaluation team understands that this was the case in particular for the Danish SID project, where the local SID representative covered the costs of seminars, tutors and participants directly.

It is important that both the unions and the regions develop their own financial bases. These financial transactions must be open and subject to in-house and independent auditing. The SID model is more questionable. It would be better for the development of healthy financial routines in the PGFTU at all levels if such funds were channelled through at least one PGFTU budget, for example, at regional level.

The main expenses of the central PGFTU organisation on the West Bank is salaries for the central and partly for the regional officers who are on the payroll, office rent for the regional offices, and educational activities. The PGFTU on the West Bank has deliberately aimed at decentralising its financial management. The region keeps a high percentage of an increasing income from membership dues. At the same time, the regions are being asked to cover more of their own expenditures, including more payroll and office rent costs.

The main expense of the PGFTU in Gaza is also salaries. In Gaza, these include both PGFTU and union staff at the headquarters and regional offices. A total of 78 staff and 15 executive committee members/leaders of industrial unions are employed at the Gaza headquarters. Other major expenditures are training courses and women's activities (both reflecting the fact that the LO activities are included on the budget). The Gaza PGFTU has a much more centralised economy than the West Bank. A relatively large amount of the funds go into the central budget and are redistributed by the PGFTU. It was said that one of the reasons for this was to channel funds from strong unions to weaker ones. All industrial unions get the same support regardless of the amount paid in to the PGFTU, but this is probably also a case of wanting to have a centrally controlled union movement. The attitude to financial decentralisation is very different in Gaza than on the West Bank.

## 4.9 Support to PGFTU in a civil society perspective

One of the main objectives of LO's support to the PGFTU is to support the PGFTU as a democratic force in the post-Oslo Agreement Palestinian society. LO wanted to contribute to certain political processes in Palestinian society, in particular the peace process and democratisation.

Support to trade unions corresponds to a focus on civil society. The issue of civil society as a focus for international aid was debated throughout the 1990s, based on the idea that civil society can contribute to democratisation and social justice. In this debate, NGOs have received funds and attention. Numerous conceptions of what NGOs are and what they do have been produced by those involved in aid planning and implementation. Basically, NGOs are seen as important building blocks for a civil society, but they do not operate in a vacuum. The political and economic spheres in which they work influence their ability to strengthen civil society and democracy.

The tasks facing the Palestinian national movement in the shift from resistance to the Israeli occupation, towards governance and negotiations, is one of the greatest challenges facing Palestinian society today. In the on-going process of building a Palestinian state, the question concerning the prospects for democracy in this entity is important. At present, civil rights are subservient to the needs of the developing Palestinian Authority. The political focus of the Palestinian Authority is to attain an independent Palestinian state, and this objective is placed above all other considerations. For the Palestinian NGO sector, one main challenge has been to adjust to the new political realities, and to define roles and purposes in the new political framework.

Currently, then, the relationships between the emerging Palestinian state and Palestinian civil society are ambiguous, and in the process of being shaped. The Palestinian NGO sector in general has been weakened compared with its standing prior to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. PGFTU has, however, strengthened its organisation and influence, processes which the LO support has helped. The LO support has also been important for the relative independence of the organisation, although the way in which PGFTU relates to the Palestinian Authority has still not found its optimal balance.

Civil society is often defined as distinct from the state, which exercises power in the political and economic spheres in which civil society works. It is, however, not very helpful to think about state-civil society relations in tidy opposition. Rather, NGOs should be seen on a moving continuum of opposition and collaboration with state institutions and governments in the debates over social justice. For trade unions, this is particularly relevant. The state is the most important player in developing the various frameworks of the labour force, and civil society (trade unions) cannot replace the state in that function. What trade unions can do is to ensure that the role of the state towards issues relevant to the labour force is played transparently, and through dialogue and opposition, develop and improve the state's performance.

Palestinian society's situation today is difficult and delicate. Several representatives from the civil society think that attaining a Palestinian state is the overarching issue at this time, and that issues such as rule of law and a strong civil society must be regarded as a "luxury they cannot afford" for the time being. This attitude is also prevalent among trade unionists.

This attitude, combined with a prolonged peace process, might however affect Palestinian institution building so that the institutions become mechanisms to support the Palestinian Authority, based on personal favours at the expense of ability and expertise. The situation is that the future structure of Palestine is linked to the development of the peace process. The Palestinian economy is also intimately linked to the Israeli economy, so ultimately the Palestinian Authority is bound to Israel as partner in the process of building Palestine. In this delicate situation, the independence of NGOs may be undermined and the quest for national independence may make many organisations avoid confronting the Palestinian Authority.

At the same time, there seems to be a positive development within Palestinian society in which reduced focus on the conflict with Israel has led to an increase in the ability to address internal issues, including criticising certain Palestinian Authority actions that undermine the development of democratic institutions. For many Palestinians the concept of a civil society represents an attempt to deal with the issues of political repression and a valuable instrument for the democratic society they hope will develop.

LO's intention was to support a process of change in Palestinian society. The two trade union houses played an important symbolic role as they provided quick, visible outcome of the support. As a result of long-term support for programmes such as training, women's activities and the *Labourers' Voice*, the buildings have also been filled with activity. Although building the trade union houses was a success in the Palestinian context, it is difficult to generalise and conclude that this kind of support would be meaningful in other contexts. This focus on processes rather than short-term projects represents one of the strengths of LO's support to the PGFTU. All told, LO's support has played an important role in developing the PGFTU as a democratic force and a defender of workers' rights.

Support to trade unions is an important way to support civil society. The trade union movement has the potential to be an engine for democratic development and popular participation in society. In the Palestinian case, the presence of an informed, active labour force, which most probably can contribute to democratisation, can take shape through PGFTU membership and activities.



## 5 Conclusions

The initiative to start the project was taken by the LO as the official negotiations between Israel and the PLO got underway after the Madrid Conference in 1991. With its long-standing relations with *Histadrut* and its more recently developed contacts with PTUF, LO Norway saw the possibility of playing a role in developing the Palestinian trade union movement and in the contact between Israeli and Palestinian labour movements. During the preparation of these project activities, the Oslo Channel became known. Soon after, the Oslo I Agreement between Israel and the PLO was signed. This increased the interest of LO Norway in developing projects in the region. One of the objectives of the resultant support was to help support the peace process by strengthening its popular support. It is almost impossible to assess whether this objective has been reached. Such an assessment may possibly be done at a later stage in the peace process, but has not been attempted in this context.

The revitalisation of the Palestinian trade union movement under the Israeli occupation created a movement aimed at a political struggle. The labour movement was a part of the national struggle of the Palestinians. Formally, this was expressed by the PTUF, which constituted part of the PLO.

With the establishment of Palestinian Authority in 1994, this situation changed to some extent. The PLO became the authority and main employer in parts of former Palestine. At the same time, the national struggle is likely to continue until a final peace agreement is reached with the Israelis. This creates the very delicate political situation in which the Palestinian labour movement operates today.

The early establishment of the PGFTU and denouncement of PTUF by the local trade unions on the West Bank and Gaza created a labour movement nominally independent of the Palestinian Authority. This is a different development from that of the Palestinian women's movement, for instance. Within that movement, the major West Bank and Gaza organisations still recognise the PLO's Women's Movement as their supreme body. Two factors seem to have been important for the establishment of the PGFTU: One was the existence of trade unions in both the West Bank and Gaza with local organisations and traditions of trade union activities predating 1967 and the other was the influence of the international trade union movement in establishing early direct contacts with the PGFTU in Nablus in 1994. LO Norway in general and through this project was not a front runner in this process. Due to reluctance to act in a way that could create schisms within the PLO during an early phase of the negotiations with the Israelis, LO Norway maintained its recognition of the PTUF as the supreme body of the Palestinian workers.

Although LO acted swiftly and with substantial funds to help build the trade union movement in the Palestinian territories, the official LO line of recognising the PTUF and by first agreeing to transfer some of the funds through PTUF in Tunis may have helped created a more autocratic and government-controlled union movement in Palestine.

The evaluation team is in general still sceptical to the extent to which the PGFTU and its operations are linked to political arrangements. One is the agreement with *Histadrut* and the transfer of funds through the Israeli authorities. Another is the agreement between the PGFTU and the Palestinian Ministry of Health enabling the PGFTU to offer a discount on public health insurance. One effect of this agreement is that the operational and economic basis for the PGFTU is linked to this understanding with the government. One might say that is all for the best, but the arrangement could potentially influence the way PGFTU operates as an organisation. The PGFTU risks becoming more an agent for the government than for the workers. However, there is no evidence that the Palestinian Authority sees this agreement in such a strategic light. At the Ministry of Labour, people did not know the specific content of the agreement and had obviously not been in contact with the Ministry of Health regarding the content of the agreement.

The relationship between the Palestinian Authority and PLO on the one side and the PGFTU on the other is ambiguous on many levels. Although they have the same leaders, the PLO and Palestinian Authority are two different institutions with different roles. The PGFTU sees itself as an important supporter and even instrument for the PLO in the national struggle. The Palestinian Authority, on the other hand, is, as the legislator, the main provider of workers rights and welfare. In many ways the PGFTU sees the role of employers as subordinate to the role of the Palestinian Authority. This may have several explanations. First, the Palestinian Authority plays a major role in creating the macro-economic (based on international aid) and legal conditions that apply in the Palestinian territories. Second, it is a fact that the Palestinian Authority is by far the most important employer and is a wage leader in the economy. Third, it is probably also a reflection of a more traditional view on the role of political leaders as being patrons of their followers. The European labour movement's traditions of class struggle are less evident in the Palestinian society.

That being said, trade unions are not merely organisations in a political context, they are based on a unique situation, the employee-employer relationship, built on workers' collectives at individual enterprises. This is also true in Palestine. When allowed to develop, this is likely to emerge through political behaviour. A most interesting development which has taken place in the PGFTU over the past few years is therefore the shift in focus from being an organisation primarily aimed at being part of the Palestinian political struggle towards being more and more the workers' representatives both in relation to the Palestinian Authority and more recently in relation to the employers. The foundation for this development is the systematic building of the organisation and training of the officials of which the LO project has been a fundamental supporter. However, the concrete manifestation of this development is linked to concrete events such as the mobilisation around the new labour code, the taxi drivers' strike and the demonstrations and actions taken by the PGFTU following the tragic workplace fire in Hebron.

The PGFTU's development of focus shows that the organisation is changing based on impulses from within the organisation. The internal democracy in the PGFTU is not very well developed in the formal sense. At the confederation level, no democratic congress or election of officers has taken place. At the national union level, the situation is mixed, some unions have organised congresses and elections and others not. The same is the case at the local level. The organisational status of the PGFTU's regions is not clear in respect of who

appoints or elects the regional representatives. However, given all this, it is clear that there is currently a culture of internal debate and a need for the leadership to be in line with their members. One such example involves the consultations held with the members of the PGFTU in Gaza on the question of following the Palestinian Authority's call for boycotting work at the Israeli settlements. Here, after organising meetings with the members concerned, the PGFTU ended up supporting its members view that no such boycott could take place without alternative sources of income.

Recruiting new members and training new cadres help enhance the internal democratisation process. A leadership based on autocratic power structures would be much more reluctant to undertake such activities. Recruiting new members creates the need for developing organisations and making room for new people to hold office in the organisation. Every growing organisation will therefore be more open than a static one. By focusing on training and the recruitment of new members, the LO project helped to create this dynamic process in the PGFTU. The question is whether this democratic process will continue over time when the structural changes are smaller, or if what we see today is just the take-over of a new generation of autocratic leaders.

One of the objectives of the LO project which is reflected in several activities has been to help bridge the distance between the PGFTU in Gaza and on the West Bank. The evaluation team could observe that is still plenty of room for improvement. For all practical purposes, we are still talking about two organisations. The organisational structures are different, although that may be an area in which the two parties are moving in the same direction. The membership dues and financial structures are different. The contacts with the Palestinian Authority often take place separately. The two parties have separate agreements on health insurance discounts. The taxi drivers organised two different strikes with different demands on the West Bank and Gaza. This is just to mention a few important examples. The practical obstacles for developing joint West Bank and Gaza activities still remain. The opening of a safe passage through Israel in 1999 only partly resolved this, since half the applicants are refused access to the passage. This includes all Palestinians listed by the Israelis as having a criminal record. PGFTU union officials are well represented on that list.

Some of the political differences between the PGFTU on the West Bank and in Gaza can be seen in the two taxi drivers' strikes referred to above. On the West Bank, the actions took the shape of a classical labour conflict in the public sector with demands directed at the Ministry of Transport, and negotiations taking place with this ministry. In Gaza, the actions were more political and took no clear direction. A letter outlining demands was sent to President Arafat directly and to the Ministry of Security. In addition, the drivers in Gaza went to the Legislative Council, where they blocked the roads. Actions were also directed towards the public in an effort to raise the rates charged for taxi services.

The LO project has been of crucial importance in developing the PGFTU. Two factors have facilitated this. One was the fact that the funds were transferred directly into the organisations of the PGFTU in Gaza and the West Bank. As opposed to efforts of other donor projects, this has helped the development of organisational structure, including financial management. It has also been instrumental in building important parts of the organisational structure such as the education department and women's department.

Strategies and priorities on how to use the funds have partially been developed by these departments themselves or other structures within the PGFTU. This has created a strong sense of ownership in relation to the activities. An alternative arrangement where LO had gone in and financed individual activities directly would not have had the same effect on developing the organisation. The other factor has been the non-involvement of *Histadrut* in the programme (except for the agreement on funds deriving from Palestinians working in Israel). This contrasts with other major donors such as the German, Italian and Japanese trade unions which emphasise joint PGFTU-*Histadrut* activities. *Histadrut* and the PGFTU are two organisations occupied with very different organisational questions. Although one might argue the need for cross-border contact and popular involvement in the peace process between Israel and Palestine, the long-term interests of this process are probably better served with the development of a democratic Palestinian trade union movement operating on its own strength and presence among Palestinian workers.

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# Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

*Terms of reference for the evaluation of the LO projects and financial support to the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) from 1994 to 1999.*

## **Background**

LO has supported PGFTU from 1994 to 1999 with funds to various development projects.

The overall political development in the Middle East has formed a complex political context for PGFTU in the period. The Palestinian Authority has been established and the political situation has been influenced by the shifting phases of the peace process between the Palestinians and Israel. While living conditions for the Palestinian workers in West Bank and Gaza do not seem to have improved in the period, Palestinian expectations and hopes for the future have moved back and forth from optimism to pessimism.

## **Goal of the evaluation**

The goal of the evaluation is both to evaluate the effect of the LO support on the basis of LO's objectives and aspirations for this support, and to look at the lessons learned and knowledge acquired which can be relevant for future projects. Recommendations with regard to the design of possible future LO support shall be made.

The trade union movement has the potential to be an engine for democratic development and popular participation. Fafo will apply such a wider socio-political perspective in this evaluation.

## **Scope of the evaluation**

The evaluation will be based on the following terms and include the following elements:

- The effect of building the two trade union headquarters in Gaza City and Nablus. With regard to the financial side the evaluation will only concern the amount used in regard to the importance of the headquarters for the PGFTU and up against alternative use of these funds. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to analyse the financial sides of the building processes as such, and whether the construction has been in accordance with the agreements signed.
- The importance and effect of the trade union magazine "the *Labourers Voice*" on internal democratisation and cross regional contact.
- The effect of the support to the women groups in PGFTU on female participation and influence on all levels in the union movement and in the working life.
- The effect of the support for PGFTUs general training programme, by an analysis of the programme's content and relevance, and through interviews with former participants.

- The evaluation of the activities 1-4 will form the basis for an assessment of the overall development of the PGFTU from 1994 to date. Elements in this assessment will be the progress made in building up PGFTU, its internal democracy and ability to organise workers and act on their behalf. Further, the role of PGFTU and the trade union movement as it transforms from an exile organisation to a local administration, the relations between the PGFTU, PFTU and the Palestinian authorities.
- A final part of the assessment will look at perspectives for future co-operation. How is it possible to help develop democratic trade unions? What are the role of unions and civil society in general for development? What is learned from the experiences with the PGFTU and what are the recommended future directions of the co-operation? To the extent that the time frame permits, the evaluation will analyse whether support aimed at the development of a democratic and well functioning trade union movement can be a tool for promotion of democratic development.

#### **Evaluation team and plan**

The evaluation team will be made up of researchers Lena Endresen and Bjørne Grimsrud from Fafo. Bjørne Grimsrud will be the project leader. The evaluation will include a field visit to Gaza and the West Bank. Project co-ordinator Moussa El Jeris from LO will join the team as a facilitator.

#### **Assumptions**

LO will make available an overview of the financial support given to PGFTU and corresponding documents showing the planned use and the aims of the support.

## Appendix 2: List of persons met

### LO Norway

Arne Grønningsæter Former project co-ordinator

### PGFTU – West Bank

#### Executive Board, PGFTU

Shaher Saed	General Secretary
Naser Younis	Treasury-Head of Transport Union
Salim Stateieh	Head of Petrochemical Union
Hussain Al Foqha	Head of Education Department
Tysir Arouri	Head of Legal Department

#### Education Department, PGFTU

Abdul Hakim Shibani	Jenin – Cairo Course
Mahmoud Diab	Qalqelia – Cairo Course
Anan Qadri Ed	Co-ordinator – Nablus-Sørmarka Course 1995
Nabila Asseli	Jericho – Cairo Courses
Yasir Ouweisat	Qalqeli – Cairo Course
Mahmoud Abu Odeh	Bethlehem- Cairo Course

#### Women’s Forum, PGFTU

Abla Masrojev	Co-ordinator – West Bank
Leila Shream	Co-ordinator – Jenin
Nabila Khwaldi	Co-ordinator – Jericho-Cairo Course
Laeila Qwasmi	Co-ordinator – Hebron
Elma Enayeh	Nablus
Naaela Afani Selfeet	Cairo Course
Feryal Hamarshi	Nablus
Nahed Jubran	Bethlehem
Mona Jubran	Bethlehem

#### Labourers’ Voice, PGFTU

Atif Sad Editor

#### Hebron Regional Council, PGFTU

Sammour Al- Natsheh Secretary – Textile Union



Zouhair Said	Legal Department, Municipal Union, Sørmarka Course 1995
Nizar Jabari	Health and Safety Trainer, Sørmarka Course 1998
Farouk Hamyouni	Construction and Woodworkers' Union, Sørmarka Course 1998
Mohamed Atawneh	Educational Department, Sørmarka Course 1998
Ziad Joulani	Medical Services Union – Cairo Course
Adib Dwaik	Shoe Industry Union – Cairo Course
Atif Ayaidi	Food Industry Union
Laila Qwasmi	Women's Co-ordinator
Fidaa Bader	Textile Workers' Union
Manal Awadi	Municipal Union
Inaam Jawawdi	Women's Department

#### **Jerusalem Regional Council, PGFTU**

Khalid Abu Hilal	Tourist Services Union President, Member of PGFTU Executive Board.
Manwel Abdul Al	PGFTU Executive Board
Suheil Khader	PGFTU Executive Board

#### **PGFTU – Gaza Strip**

Rasem Al Bayari	Deputy General Secretary
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#### **Educational Department, PGFTU**

Esiad Al Astel	Trainer, "Cairo course", Executive PGFTU, Administrative member of the Agriculture and Food Industry Workers' Union
Abdul Jawad Zeiada	Trainer, "Cairo Course", Secretary of the Agriculture and Food Industry Workers' Union
Nasif Al Khaldi	Trainer, "Cairo Course", Treasurer of Textile Workers' Union
Ayesh Ebaid	Trainer, "Cairo Course", Sørmarka 1995, Chairman of Construction and Woodworkers' Union, PGFTU Executive
Baker Al Jamal	Trainer, "Cairo Course", Administrative member of Public Service Union. PGFTU Executive member.

#### **Women's Forum, Norwegian programme, PGFTU**

Nawal Ghanam	Co-ordinator of Woman Department PGFTU
Samira Abdul Aleem	Co-ordinator in the Public Service Union "Cairo Course"
Somia Sha'at	Co-ordinator of the Textile Workers' Union - Rafah
Sana Mansour	Co-ordinator of the Agriculture and Food Industry Workers' Union, Jabalia
Samaah Othman	Co-ordinator of Textile Workers' Union. Jabalia – Cairo Course
Ahlam Al Shorafi	Secretary of the Women's Department

#### **General Union of Transportation, PGFTU**

Mahmoud Abu Ajena	Chairman, PGFTU Executive
Nadi Zain El Din.	Administrative Member, Jabalia

**General Union of Construction and Carpentry, PGFTU**

Ayesh Ebaid Chairman, PGFTU Executive – Cairo Course  
Zaál Abu Alaish Treasurer

**Treasurer and Accountant, PGFTU**

Zaki Khalil Treasurer of the PGFTU . Executive Member, Chairman of  
the Textile Workers’ Union. “Cairo Course”  
Alabid Al Harzan Accountant for the PGFTU

**Centre for Palestine Research and Studies**

Said Kanan Head

**Palestinian Legislative Council**

Dalal Salameh PLC member

**Democratic Front**

Taysir Khaled PLO executive member, Deputy of the General Secretary

**Ministry of Labour**

Rafik Al- Natsheh Minister of Labour and member of PLC  
Riad Jubran Director of Labour Relations  
Hassan Saleh Director for International Relations  
Abdul Majid Swalim Director of Projects

**The Democracy and Workers’ Rights Centre in Palestine**

Wajeh Al Ayiasa  
Reham Al Barghoti  
Afinan Daglas.

**Birzeit University**

Dr. Rema Hammami Women’s Studies Program

**Histadrut headquarters**

Jihad Ackel Member of *Histadrut* Executive Board (An “Israeli Arab”  
(met outside the planned programme)  
Avital Shapira Director Arab and Islamic Desk, International Department  
Eng. Michael Frohlich Project Director, International Department  
Dov Randel Former Scandinavian Desk, International Department

**Talal Abu Ghazalah Auditing Company**

Zuhair Al Nazer General Director – Gaza Branch  
Jameel Al Massry Director of Auditing  
Mohamed Al Astal Auditor



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