**Overview of the General Federation of Independent Unions**

Formally established in 2007, the General Federation of Independent Unions (GFIU) is the largest federation of independent unions in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. We represent twenty one unions in a broad range of sectors, including pharmaceuticals, electricity, water, agriculture, health, social work, postal services, financial services and universities, and others (see below). The unions in the federation have an estimated membership of 20,000. The federation was formally recognized by the GFIU in 2011 after a significant campaign.

Our mission is to organize Palestinian workers and poor and marginalized segments of Palestinian society to fight for political and social justice, including Palestinian workers in Israeli workplaces. The GFIU is primarily involved in the following activities:

1. Labor negotiations on behalf of workers with businesses owners across sectors
2. Lobbying and pressure on the PA and the private sector regarding broad legal, economic, and social policy changes that affect workers, unemployed, poor, women, and marginalized segments of our society.
3. Political lobbying and legal cases on behalf of workers/unionists who face dismissal due to union activities
4. Boycott activities within and outside Palestine

The GFIU is committed to democratic principles of organization. Our eleven-member board and twenty-five member executive committee are elected every four years. We work without salaries, on a volunteer basis, do not rely upon funding from external sources, and safeguard our independence from political parties.

Our work is based on the belief that the struggles of workers in Palestine, the Arab world, and around the globe are inseparable. We see ourselves as participating in an international struggle for social and political justice, and seek to build networks of solidarity and mutual support. For this reason, we are requesting you to consider our membership in the International Trade Union Confederation.

**Our Affiliate Unions**

List of Unions in Federation (English translations)

WB: West Bank; G: Gaza

1. Women’s Community Health Workers Union (all districts of WB; one branch in Gaza)
2. Local Authorities Union (Khalil, Ramallah)
3. Postal Services Workers Union (all districts of WB)
4. South Electricity Company Union (south Hebron)
5. Finance Sector Union (workplace; not regional based)
6. Private Health Sector Union (WB)
7. Government Health Service Employees Union (all WB)
8. Pharmaceuticals Union (all WB)
9. Union of Kindergarten Teachers (Hebron, Bethlehem, Tulkarem, Nablus, Ramallah)
10. Agricultural Workers Union (all WB, except Hebron)
11. General Union of Electricity Sector Workers (Hebron, Jerusalem; Jericho, Jenin, Tulkarem, Salfit, Qalqilya; one branch Gaza)
12. Water Undertaking Workers (WB)
13. Union of Government Colleges and Universities (Al aroub/Hebron, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Jerusalem; three in Gaza covering all universities)
14. Union of NGOs (Ramallah, Hebron)
15. Union of Paltel workers in Gaza
16. Union of Teachers and Employees in Palestinian Universities (Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Birzeit, Nablus, Gaza, and other parts of West Bank)
17. Union of Workers in the Palestinian Red Crescent (Hebron; Bethlehem, Jericho, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarem, Gaza)
18. Union of Independent Workers Committees in Gaza
19. Union of Workers in Friends School (Ramallah)
20. Independent Federation of Workers’ Committees (all Gaza)
21. Union of the Palestinian Red Crescent (all WB & Gaza)

**Our Work**

The GFIU, run on a volunteer basis, has no full-time staff. Despite this, the federation and its unions are involved in many activities on the ground on workplace negotiation and national level policy negotiations/lobbying.

Below is a selection of our recent activities:

1) **Examples of recent labor negotiations at union level**:

1. Government Health Service Employees Union: Strikes for higher compensation coverage for those involved in dangerous work in most districts of West Bank, June 2015
2. Union of the Palestinian Red Crescent: Strikes in Nablus, Tulkarem, and Ramallah for more transparent system and clear structure for wages, job descriptions, 2015.
3. Financial Sector Union: Negotiation and agreement for cost of living increases, 2015.
4. Union of Health Workers in the Private Sector negotiated and went on sit-down demonstrations in the largest hospital in Hebron for clear structure of wages and salary. Agreement reached in Dec, 2015.
5. Water Undertaking Workers Union: Negotiation on wage increases in line with cost of living. Agreement reached October 2015.
6. South Electricity Company Union: Stop restructuring of company, which would have resulted in firing of workers and reduction of wages, November 2015.
7. Postal Services Workers Union: negotiate to ensure minimum wage for those who were earning below minimum wage; negotiation on more secure contracts for twenty employees, 2015.
8. Pharmaceuticals Union: Strikes in Beit Jala company for wages and reached agreement, late 2014, Beit Jala; Strikes by workers in Ramallah on implementation of contractual bonus agreements, 2015.
9. Local Authorities Union (in municipality of Idhna) negotiated on behalf of forty workers who were dismissed, September 2015; Local Authorities Union negotiated and reached agreement for social insurance for municipality workers, 2015.
10. Negotiations on behalf of workers committees in prominent NGOs (Independent Commission for Human Rights: Women’s Center for Legal Aid and Counseling): Strikes and negotiations to contest administrative system and standards as it pertains to workers rights, 2015.

(More details of labor negotiations can be provided upon request).

2) **Examples of National Level Lobbying at the federation level**:

1. Negotiations and public awareness raising on new social legislation, related to social insurance, taxes, health insurance for unemployment, and labor law. Organizing alliance and participating in public meetings to campaign against the passing of new laws, especially the new social insurance law. Participation in national level committees and negotiations between the PA, International Labor Organization, other major unions, and other relevant actors; Analysis and submission of new draft proposals to Palestinian Authority Current/ongoing.
2. Negotiations on new minimum wage levels, Current/ongoing.
3. Analysis, lobbying in support of workers’ rights to organize. Lobbying against new proposed union decree, which would restrict workers rights. Ongoing.
4. Lobbying with Ministry of Labor regarding new restructuring plans in private sector; ongoing.
5. Federation has presence in most national committees between workers, the government, and the PA Ministry of Labor, such as committees on wages, health and safety, labor policies, social security; Current/ongoing.
6. Mobilization (through media and public workshops) against new decree and establishment of private company, which would have managed pensions of employees in the private sector. Succeeded to stop this decree in 2014.
7. GFIU negotiated in the 2012 national minimum wage agreements. Also, successfully negotiated for general wage increase in line with cost of living as well as social and health insurance provisions for workers. 2012.
8. Analysis and submission of GFIU proposals to PA on changes to income taxes; government budget; ongoing.
9. Called national-wide strike of 200,000 workers to demand minimum wage, social insurance protection, progressive taxation; December 26, 2010.

(More details of national level lobbying can be provided upon request).

3) **Political lobbying and legal cases on behalf of workers/unionists**

Lobbying for unionists from Finance Sector Union, NGOs, who were penalized for union activities; ongoing.

(more details can be provided upon request)

1. Boycott Activities
2. One of founding members of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement.
3. Legal and advisory support for workers committees contesting normalization activities of NGOs and international organizations, current/ongoing.

(more details can be provided upon request)

**History of Application for ITUC Membership**

The federation applied to the ITUC in mid 2013, however at the time, the application was pending. At this time, GFIU was having a dispute/conflict with Democracy Workers Rights Center (DWRC) regarding DWRC internal practices. Due to this reason, we had difficulties to pursue all requirements for the ITUC entry.