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Response to the IFSW Statement: A Call for Ethical Integrity and Decisive Action

We express our deep disappointment with the International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW) statement regarding the Israeli Union of Social Workers (IUSW). While the censure issued against the IUSW acknowledges ethical breaches, it fails to address the full gravity of the situation. We have identified several critical gaps in the statement that require urgent attention:

Commitment to Ethical Standards:

The IFSW's Statement of Ethical Principles underscores the importance of adhering to moral and professional responsibilities. However, the IFSW's response does not fully align with these principles. The failure to firmly condemn actions amounting to genocide—acknowledged by the International Court of Justice and multiple UN bodies—reveals a troubling inconsistency. The use of mitigated language to describe these atrocities undermines the Federation's commitment to upholding justice and human dignity.

Repetition of Ineffectual Measures:

The 2018 censure against the IUSW for refusing to recognize Palestinian rights demonstrated the IFSW's awareness of systematic violations. However, issuing another censure in 2025, with no substantial repercussions for continued breaches, suggests a lack of resolve. The IFSW's acknowledgment of recurring violations calls for decisive action, not just symbolic reprimands.

Overlooked Atrocities Against Palestinian Social Workers:

The statement omits the ongoing targeting of Palestinian social workers, including their killing, detention, and forced displacement, particularly in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. This silence disregards the professional and personal toll on social workers who are essential to supporting their communities under occupation. Such omissions weaken the credibility of the IFSW's ethical stance and fail to address the exacerbation of Palestinian suffering.

Escalation of Professional and Societal Struggles:

The persistent persecution and forced displacement of Palestinians, coupled with the systemic targeting of professionals like social workers, directly hinders their ability to serve their communities. This situation demands more than a censure; it requires the IFSW to adopt a decisive position that acknowledges and acts against the root causes of these violations.

Bias and Partiality in the Statement:

By failing to unequivocally condemn the occupation and forced displacement while extending leniency to the IUSW, the IFSW demonstrates a troubling bias. Such an approach not only undermines the Federation's neutrality but also compromises its moral and professional integrity. In the face of genocide and forced displacement, the IFSW has an ethical and professional obligation to issue clear and decisive actions rather than making statements that appear to placate the oppressors.

Contradiction with the Principles of Peace and Nonviolence:

Clause 9.3 emphasizes that social workers must work toward peace and reconstruction and not allow their skills to be used for inhumane or military purposes. However, the acknowledgment that members of the IUSW participate in combat roles starkly contradicts these principles. This highlights the IFSW's failure to ensure its members adhere to the values of peace and nonviolence.

The Palestinian Union of Social Workers & Psychologists

General Secretarial



نقابة الأخصائيين الاجتماعيين
والنفسيين الفلسطينيين

الإمانة العامة

Lack of Firmness in Addressing Clear Violations:

The IUSW admitted that its members are involved in combat roles due to mandatory conscription under Israeli law, yet the IFSW merely made a symbolic request for their exemption. While this request was framed as an "ethical principle," it has not been translated into a decisive stance or practical action that reflects a genuine commitment to the IFSW's ethical values.

Double Standards:

By limiting its response to symbolic requests and acknowledging that it does not expect the Israeli government to change its policies, the IFSW displays double standards. How can the Federation ask social workers to work toward peace while overlooking their direct involvement in combat roles that exacerbate civilian suffering, thereby contradicting the core principles of the profession?

Ignoring the Role of Palestinian Social Workers:

While the statement focuses on Israel's mandatory conscription, it completely ignores the ongoing suffering faced by Palestinian social workers due to the occupation. The targeting of Palestinian social workers through bombings, arrests, and forced displacement severely hinders their ability to serve their communities. This omission undermines the credibility of the IFSW's ethical stance and fails to address the growing hardships faced by Palestinian communities.

A Call for Action

The current situation requires the IFSW to move beyond censures and engage in meaningful actions, including:

- Demanding accountability for ethical breaches, particularly in conflict and occupation contexts.
- Publicly recognizing the genocide and forced displacement as violations of international law.
- Advocating for the protection of social workers in Palestine and ensuring their ability to serve their communities free from persecution.
- Taking an unequivocal stand against systems of oppression and aligning with the principles of social work that prioritize justice, peace, and human dignity.
- Condemning mandatory conscription of IUSW members in military contexts and calling for their exemption in alignment with social work principles.
- Highlighting the suffering of Palestinian social workers and supporting them in resisting the occupation and its violations that obstruct their professional roles.

