

The Palestine Committee of Norway  
Trade Union Section



# Annual report 2012

**Published since 2006**

*The Palestine Committee of Norway is a solidarity organization dedicated to the Palestine cause. Since it was founded late 1969, the organization has done its solidarity work both in Palestine and Norway. The Trade Union Section (TUS) was founded in 2006, and has since then worked towards members in Norwegian Trade Union movement.*

See the Program of principles for the Committee (Palcom – for short) here:  
<http://palestinakomiteen.no/join-the-palestine-committee-of-norway/>

*The Trade Union Section has members from different trade unions in Norway. This report is a translation of our annual report which we are distributing to our contacts. We also want to share what we do with our Palestinian friends.*



**Youth group on their way to Tulkarm**

**Palestine Committee Trade Union Section** was established in autumn 2006. Our main aim is that all types of solidarity and support work is angled towards the trade union movement. Norwegian LO and trade unions have for many years provided financial support to unionist and other projects. LO`s exchange of delegations with Palestinian trade unions have provided many lessons and strengthened the ties.

**Palestine Committee Trade Union Section** will support current and new initiatives from the LO and the trade union movement. We will also draw up plans and make our own initiatives. And best adapt to our work on the grasroot members. Hopefully we can work as a supplementary force in relation to more economically demanding and top heavy projects LO is directing.

Initiative, wide range and cooperation are key words for the best to strengthen trade union solidarity work for the Palestinian people

## Youth Unionist Trip, March

In March 10 youth members from several unions and from across the country went on a solidarity trip along with two tour guides. In the program was set up for the Norwegians to meet Palestinians in the same age group. Some of the things that made the strongest impression was meeting with workers at the Taydeh checkpoint and Geshori industrial zone, but the youth group also had a nice visit at YMCA vocational school in Jericho. Here they met Palestinian youth in vocational training, and learned a lot about the possibilities of vocational training under the occupation.

### Jan Godfrey from the Union Industrial Energy writes: (he has also taken the pictures)

In Jericho, there is a school called the YMCA. It was founded in 1948 and started with 5 tents and support from the International Red Cross. The school is training young Palestinians in different vocational subjects such as carpentry, wet room work and car painting, data and copy machine repair, to give young people a chance at a decent job and life.

There are 360 young people at a time. 20% come from Jericho and nearby areas, while the remaining 80% coming from the rest of the country. Since there are few seats and many people applying, there is an Admission Committee at the school. There will be interviews with every attendant to select those who will be admitted, and they are trying to let in those with the greatest need. Most are living at school while they go there. There are two residential buildings, one for boys and one for girls. The school would not have survived without the support of international aid agencies. It costs \$ 350 per year to educate a youngster. 15% of the youngsters pay 1,500 to be able to go to school.



Most studies are based on practical learning, seven months of the year in practice. During the practice the teachers do follow-up visits and guidance before the students return and are tested and graduated. In addition to subjects related to their future profession, they get training in "Life Skills". They learn about their rights and how to survive. They acquire identity and pride. In addition to the subjects they have their own classrooms for psycho-social assistance for those who are traumatized because of the occupation.



The figures for those passing examinations are very good. 85% have jobs within 6 months, while 90% within 12 months. Most gets jobs in Palestine while a few get to work in Israel. The school has helped many thousands of young people to get a way of life.

On a tour through the school, we are shown the workshops. They call them modern, but it wouldn't have been described like that at home. Most workshops are dilapidated and the tools are old. The computers are out of date. We enter the room filled with dismantled copiers, refrigerators and air conditioning systems they learn to fix. In one hall we find the inventory of a car and a drill. In another, there are doors, fences, furniture and decorative objects in different degrees of construction. In the car paint hall stands a white car where they are taping paper over the windows for protection. We are shown how the half-finished bathroom where the students are instructed in the plumber trade, right next to where they are taught to be electricians. The buildings are worn, the equipment old, but everywhere it is the young people we notice. They are happy to be here. They are happy that they are getting a shot at a good life. They are happy for everything they get.

## Teachers trip, April

Theme of the tour: "Education under occupation".

Education in Palestine is not only school, training and education, but much, much more, Israel has always seen education as a political threat. Therefore, they have full control of all curricula, and therefore they have met teachers and professors with particularly brutal repression. Youths, pupils and students are in the front line of resistance against the enemy. Education has been a central part of the resistance. It gives the Palestinians themselves pride and awareness confronted with hard oppression and harassment, it helps them to endure and provide them with national identity. It helps them to see the outlines of a free Palestine, without fragmentation, separation and walls - a prison where Palestinian life and soul of the Palestinians can be locked in.

### **Ola Bostadløyken, tour leader, writes:**

This journey took place in 9 days in Easter 2012. The group consisted of 12 teachers from across the country plus the tour leader.

As usual in this type of travel we had a reasonably comprehensive program, and for the simple reason that there is a lot to see, a lot to learn and a lot of impressions that will face us. Also in this study trip we collaborated with our partners in the West Bank, this helps to assure that we always get a good and eventful program, and that the program is adapted to what is happening in the area during the time we are there. Every day we were on tour in the West Bank, visited various organizations, learning institutions and activists, and we had a lot of meetings.



As always after such trips, it is difficult to highlight individuals or individual events. But it is clear that to get the presentation of students at Bir Zeit University about how the situation has been there makes an impression. Especially when one can see young students from Gaza who has not seen his family for several years, as they are unable to return home to Gaza, and that the family did not get permission to visit them. As for instance the last day of the semester, a day the students efforts will be awarded. This is a great day, not only for the individual student, but for the entire extended family. And some students from Gaza are sitting all alone, without their family present.

Bir Zeit University is a place that gives a very good impression and it is always a pleasure to meet students and leadership, and we are always welcome.

Some of the program:

Meeting with the Stop The Wall grassroots organization, visit Balata refugee camp, the old town of Hebron, women's projects at the "green line", the Friday demonstration in Bil'in, political tour around Jerusalem, kindergarten in Jalazone, meeting Father Yousef in Nablus, he took us to a school, visits to Arafat's grave.

In addition, meetings with the Education Association's partners in Palestine and Palestinian teachers organizations. In the evenings, we had time to talk about and digest the day's adventures.

As leader of the group it is always exciting to have new people on such a journey, and always good to hear that they enjoyed the days we were together. It is very inspirational when I later learn that they have taken used the impressions in their work later.

We have under planning a new teachers trip, in Easter next year, 23. March – 1. April

## **Study trip to Gaza, september**

As a pioneering project TUS decided early this year to send a study trip to Gaza. We wanted to break the blockade, and began research on contacts, security, what would it take to get an entry permit from the authorities in both Egypt and Gaza Strip. We announced the trip with the clear prerequisite that it might be necessary to cancel due to the situation.

It was a resource-intensive process, and great efforts to penetrate an extensive bureaucracy. We started the job of putting together an application and received the organization – Democratic DRWC Workers Rights Center — to invite and host us. Mona Rostom (picture), in the DRWC Office did a brilliant job, created a great program and fixed all the convenience during your stay. The program included meeting workers, youth organizations, United Nations agencies, Norwegian People's Aid, visit with fishermen, farmers along the border, refugee camps and tunnels. Meeting with Ismael Haniyeh Khaled also was an option.

After a lot of waiting and uncertainty with respect to the Egyptian authorities and Embassy in Oslo, we finally got the go-ahead, everything was clear and 10 participants and two tour guides were ready to pack their bags and go. But then something happened we didn't have anticipated. Unrest broke out in the Northern Sinai. And even if we had been given an entry permit from Egypt, the Egyptian Tourist Police would not give us permission to be transported from Cairo to Rafah through the Sinai. After a review of the security situation the travel leaders decided to cancel the trip at the last minute. They received worrisome travel advice from a number of authorities and there was great uncertainty among some participants.



It is still of the greatest political importance to have a study tour to help break the blockade of Gaza, now more than ever. The population of Gaza needs visit and Egypt say they will open the border.

After the recent attack on Gaza in november, there seem to be increasing possibilities that restrictions on entry and exit are eased. This is also part of the truce agreement between Hamas and Israel.

**Therefore, we do not give in, but are awaiting the situation and will try again.**

TUS has decided that we will examine the potential early 2013. We should leave as soon as possible.

## **Investigation tour to industrial zones, september**

Petter and Kjersti from TUS was a week in early september in the West Bank to find out more about the conditions of work for Palestinians, with special emphasis on work in the industrial zones, in the colonies and in Israel. We also would meet the new New Unions which now builds up in order to protect these workers.



Work for the occupying power is one of the few opportunities, and perhaps one of the most important, of income and ability to provide for himself and his family, as the theft of land makes farming industry steadily decreasing. Economic life has severely suffered and unemployment has skyrocketed. Since September 2000, over 432 factories and 9,735 small shops and street seller stalls have been destroyed.

Palestinian workers are particularly suffering from this destruction and restrictions put on every aspect of life, which make reaching work places and earning a decent livelihood almost impossible. For the Palestinian labour movement the struggle for self-determination and freedom has become an intrinsic component and precondition for achieving their working class demands.

Restrictions on permits make it difficult, if not impossible, for younger workers to obtain them, and many are forced to enter illegally or through buying black-market permits. Abuse of these "illegal" workers is common; they face live fire from Border Police and, if caught, hours of arbitrary detention involving degrading treatment, severe brutality and even torture. At least forty percent of the Palestinians who enter Israel daily to work are doing so without a "permit".

All of the industrial zones require a cheap, mobile labor force that will draw from the de-development of the Palestinian economy. The jobs that they produce are highly vulnerable, and are dependent on the Israeli market and political situation. Labor laws have not yet been agreed upon, guaranteeing a period when workers will be without legal protection. The zones are growing rapidly, and by 2025, as many as 500,000 Palestinian laborers are expected to work in these industrial zones.

We believe that there are little knowledge in Norway about this particular part of Palestinian society, and our goal is to spread the knowledge further to the Norwegian labour movement.

We have some ideas for how to develop the Norwegian Trade Unions' contact with the New Union. It is an independent grassroots trade union, and it's exciting to meet them.

## **Municipal Workers Union Oslo, november**

This trip was a cooperation between Municipal Workers Union in Oslo and Palcoms Trade Union Section, with 17 participants. In addition to our usual program, they spent time visiting their own projects in Rantis and Deir Ghassaneh.



The group visiting  
PGFTU Jericho

## Break connections with the Histadrut

TUS has been on the offensive throughout the period and worked systematically to inform and to raise debate about Israel's Zionist Union nationwide. We have a campaign towards LO Congress in May 2013, and encouraged local unions to submit such proposals. We have written feature articles, stories and debated the topic in the press and union magazines.

There are now proposals to break with the Histadrut submitted to the LO-Congress. (LO: The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions). We will work for that proposal is maintained so that it will be debated on the Congress.

### The proposal from LO in Oslo to the LO Congress reads:

The political situation: Boycott Israel and Israeli institutions that do not recognize a free Palestine!

- LO will work for an independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with all the features that naturally belongs to a sovereign State. Israel must bow to international conventions and resolutions from the United Nations. A deadline must be set, and pressure put on Israel to speed up the case. In addition to political pressure, concrete boycott measures must be taken against the State of Israel.

- The Histadrut, which supports the Israeli Government policies and abuses against the Palestinians, must also be boycotted and suspended from the international Trade Union Movement and international bodies until they recognize the Palestinians' right to their own State, and begins to defend the Palestinians working in settlements, in Israel and in the industrial zones to gain their professional and political rights.

- LO requires that up to a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders is a fact, the Palestinian Trade Union Confederations get the right to work inside the Israeli colonies and the industrial zones in the West Bank.

- LO will strive to ensure that all Palestinian democratically elected bodies be recognized.

### LO's action plan

- LO will still put the Palestinian people's rights on the agenda and demand increased pressure against Israel. Support to Palestinian LO (PGFTU) in Palestine must continue.

- LO will still put the Palestinian people's rights on the agenda and demand increased pressure on Israel and that the Petroleum Fund will not invest in Israeli companies. To increase pressure LO must work for concrete boycott measures of the State of Israel.

- LO will break with the Israeli Histadrut. LO will also work for a boycott of the Histadrut in all international forums where they are represented. The support for Trade Union Confederation of Palestinian must continue.

Israel's occupation of Palestine is one of the world's major conflicts. Israel shows no willingness to end the occupation. On the contrary is continuous colonisation unabated and building illegal settlements in the Palestinian territory is going on, and the existing settlements is expanding.

LO must take an active role in order to increase pressure on Israel and to connect with the international BDS. Thus also break any association with the Histadrut. The Histadrut has been an important Organization for the build-up of the Zionist State and is an active supporter of continued occupation. This is also in line with previous decisions of Congress.

## Trondheim Conference, january

TUS attended the Conference with a Palcom information desk, handing out TUS literature and leaflets, where our most important achievement FU's was to gather support for breaking connections with the Histadrut and to give information about and get participants to our solidarity trips: Go to Palestine and experience yourselves.

Ahead of the Conference Palcom TUS and International Selection of LO in Trondheim arranged in cooperation a seminar about Palestine.

The seminar had this content:

-Solidarity with Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), Karim Essahli, head of the International Section, LO in Trondheim:

-Histadrut – the role of the Histadrut in Israel's occupation policy and in relation to the Palestinian trade unionists by Kjetil Larsen, Palcom TUC.  
Boycott Israel. Rolv Rynning, Municipal Workers Union.

There were 66 participants to the seminar, which was a success.



## Visit on Union Congresses

**Norwegian Union of Commercial and Office Employees, september**

**Norwegian Railway Workers Union, november**

TUS was visibly present in both in Trondheim and Oslo Congress Centre during the meetings, with stand, flags, t-shirts, and other material — about our study trips, articles about the Histadrut and to urge the union to break ties with the Histadrut on the LO Congress in May 2013.



## Union Boycott Conference 27. september



The Conference was a collaborative effort between several unions and Palcom. It had about 60 participants.

The topics were

- Facts on the ground
- Hazardous Connections. A report from Norwegian People's Aid and The Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees, on Norwegian ties with the Israeli occupation.
- Solidarity in practice. What can trade unions do.

Jamal Jumaa from the Stop the Wall was ment to be the main speaker at the Conference, but was prevented from coming by Israeli authorities. Instead, he took part on Skype from Ramallah, and delivered a very good analysis of the situation in Palestine right now.

Palcom gave much information and TUS held introduction about our study trips.

## Campaign against G4S

G4S is the world's largest security company, and one of the largest providers of security services, including State and local institutions. Palcom has started a campaign that so far has concentrated on the University of Oslo and Oslo Municipality. We have also sent letters to major companies and municipalities in Norway that uses G4S in their services, with the demand to end the contract and partnership with the company. The campaign that is international, has gained the support of 21 organizations among them the biggest trade unions, Amnesty International and Norwegian People's Aid.

You can read the background for the campaign and the petition here:

<http://palestinakomiteen.no/oppop-fra-21-organisasjoner-g4s-bidrar-til-okkupasjonen-av-palestina/>



## TUS' offshots

### Bikers for a free Palestine

Bikers For Free Palestine had only two stunts in Oslo's streets during the current motorcycle season.

#### May 1.

As usual, the Palestina section was fronted by Bikers to Free Palestine, with activists from TUS. Also as usual received much applause along the streets of Oslo



#### In June, in relation to the Ship to Gaza

In return, there was one stunt in connection with the Free Gaza ship Estelles visit in Oslo.

We made several rounds, around the Parliament, MINISTRY of FOREIGN AFFAIRS, the American and Israeli embassies and at last down at the Marina where we concluded where there was a concert by Estelle.

We've enlisted a new biker, and have another two other people who are interested in joining.

We promise a higher level of activity with numerous thrilling stunt in next season.

**If you are a biker, and want to join, please contact us!**

### Campaign against UEFA U21 cup 2013 in Israel EM out of Israel

Palestine Committee of Norway believe that a state that keeps sports people as political prisoners and does not provide these opportunities for normal sports, is unfit to host an international sporting event. With Israel as the venue for the UEFA U-21 in 2013, the situation for Palestinian football is placed in a sharp relief.

On the basis of the Norwegian Football Federation engagement against racism and discrimination, with a Fair Play poster that highlights the opening, we ask the Norwegian Football Federation to urge UEFA to move the U-21 championship in 2013 to another country.



Activists handed out fliers in front of the qualifying matches in Norway, and Gullbrand met football president Yngve Hallén with a petition and an appeal that Norwegian Football Federation must try to influence the European Football Federation (UEFA) to ensure that the European event will be moved to a country other than Israel.

Yngve Hallén told that the Norwegian U-21 players will get introduced to the Palestinian conflict.

## Eriks travel handbook

TUS' member Erik Skare, who at the moment is studying at Bir Zeit University in Ramallah, has written a political travel guide, right now is on its way from the print shop:

"Are you ready to go to Palestine and wonder if you should have with you something in your pocket? Get familiar with this handbook! It will be a helpful friend on the ride even if you've been there before. "

- Peter M. Johansen, journalist in "Class struggle".

"The book gives practical advice and a concise understanding of the core issues at the heart of the Palestinian issue. Activism of this kind needs both a clear understanding of what one faces at Ben-Gurion Airport, the Allenby Bridge and Rafah Crossing to the Gaza Strip, as well as the possibilities to become active at places like refugee camps in Lebanon and in the Palestinian society in Israel.

Activists needs both a good understanding of the history and an open minded analysis of what is happening today and what people are fighting for in the future. "

From Ilan Pappés foreword

**Highly Recommended!**



## Our thanks

We want here to express our gratitude to all, our supporters in Norway and our partners in Palestine, for small and big things you do to make our solidarity work possible. A very special thanks to our friends in Palestine, who enrich and enlighten us, who always receive us with great hospitality and love. We respect you so much. Without you our work would be poor.

We summarize that 2012 has brought Palestine Solidarity a long way forward on the agenda of the Norwegian trade union movement. An increasing number of central and local unions in national gatherings and general conferences make clear political statements, and an increasing number of union members mean that there must be stronger pressure on Israel to end the brutal occupation.

**We will thank all our Palestinian friends for all you gave to us in 2012.**

**We wish you your freedom and national rights, and an end to the occupation!**

**We are looking forward to meet you all again in the coming year.**

**Palestine Committee of Norway,  
Trade Union Section  
December 2012**

<http://palestinakomiteen.no/faglig-arbeid/fagligutvalg@palestinakomiteen.no>

