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**In cooperation with the ILO and the**

**FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG<sup>1</sup>**

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# **The Impact of War on Labour Relations**

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## CONTENT- main points of discussion

For over a decade, the IIRRA in cooperation with the ILO and the Friedrich-Ebert- Stiftung organize an annual conference on a relevant and current issue, be it an item taken from research conducted by the ILO or another attention grabbing case linked with the tripartite structure and labour relations.

This year's conference follows up on the recent 2022 conference titled "Labour Relations at Essential and Emergency Services". It expands on the main items discussed in 2022 by focusing on other vital services in times of war and not only front-line workers, such as maintaining vital agricultural activities, transportation, replacing missing care givers (most of them coming from foreign countries), etc.

The 2022 conference dealt with various emergency situations, such as earthquakes, floods, pandemics, and more. This year, our main discussion dealt with wartime events which involve other and separate sectors. Additionally, this year we focused on the status of volunteers and issues relevant to the social strength required on the home front in times of crisis. All of these points were discussed in the framework of labour relations and the tasks required by the pillars of the tripartite structure.

**The content of the conference was discussed during two current wars being waged in Ukraine and in Israel with the goal of deepening and delineating practices to extract specific and practical recommendations which can be used by other countries in similar situations.**

Without trying to force or try to influence the coming outcomes or subsequent recommendations, there is no doubt that a focal point in this area is the functioning of the public sector and the vital services it can provide in a short time frame. Flexibility is the name of the game in crisis situations with the dynamic demands by the population and other public authorities and municipalities. Despite the often-cumbersome approach of big organizations, in crises they must be able to be mobile and offer the possibility of moving employees to vital areas as needed.

Another focal point raised in the 2022 report was: "The starting point should be merging the two polarities of emergency and routine into an "emergency routine" mode. This approach is particularly relevant in a world expecting more frequent crises, such as pandemics, climate catastrophes, earthquakes, and floods". This way of thinking and feeling leads to the certainty that the occurrence of

crises is a question of “when” and not “if”. This enables maintaining alertness and preventing the loss of vigilance.

The main discussion outcomes shall form a basis for further thinking at a national level for more advanced planned and structured schemes.”

### **Structure of Conference**

The keynote speech was provided by Mr. Kari Tapiola: “Crisis Management through Tripartite Cooperation and Social Dialogue”.

#### **Panel 1: The Impact of War on Labour Relations**

Panel speakers included representatives of relevant sectors that discussed the activities already being performed and those required by the tripartite factors, such as remuneration in times of forced vacations, the “German Model”, models of compensation, etc.

#### **Panel 2: Social Strength and its Contribution to the Home Front in Times of War**

Panel participants discussed the functioning and the assistance of volunteer associations and individuals. Other matters included mental assistance bodies and the economic survival of freelancers and SMEs in times of war. Also, labour rights of foreign workers and dilemmas concerning psychiatric treatment by public experts or by privatized doctors was debated.

Panel participants included national security representatives and academics from relevant fields.

An ILO expert, also participated at this panel and contributed to the discussion by describing main models of assisting society in times of war, focusing particularly on Ukraine practices.

Considering the items discussed in 2022 conference, there is a relevance of quoting some paragraphs of that report regarding set up of several sectors of the economy preparing for emergency conditions. These parts show the changes done and needed and draw recommendations at laboratories in hospitals, medical services rendered and transportation especially in aviation.

## **Relevant 2022 Report quotes:**

### **From the 2022 Introduction:**

"The crisis changed all aspects of life, including lifestyle, daily schedules, and routines. Priorities have shifted following the pandemic outbreak. The study is particularly timely in view of the emergencies expected in the world with pessimistic climate forecasts and waves of radicalization manifesting in wars and increased and escalating violence between countries and by violent groups within certain countries.

With this in mind, it is imperative to adopt an approach termed "routine emergency", which is one that has taken root in Israel, a country that has experienced wars and violence in addition to health crises and now expected climate events".

### **Work flexibility, and negating agreements for working remotely during emergencies**

"Dr. Hanoach Goldschmidt, head of the Sourasky Medical Center Laboratory Division, described the collective agreements signed during the pandemic to make work hours more flexible. Lab workers were recruited to fill shortages and work was conducted in small units while maintaining meticulous safety guidelines. The number of tests processed more than tripled during the crisis, a number that does not include routine hospital testing. Medical students were also recruited. The number of lab workers in Israel is relatively low compared to other countries. When the crisis continued, the State published tenders for private testing institutions. This created a problem in wage gaps between private and public lab workers with some choosing to leave their public positions for higher earnings in a private facility and created the need to incentivize workers to stay. This was dealt with through rapid recruitment of personnel and certain easements of wage thresholds during certain periods of the crisis .

Conclusion: A policy should be formulated to determine the scope of activities of private and public laboratories, and a reserve force of lab workers should be trained to maintain institutional knowledge ".

### **Management and work flexibility during emergencies**

"Mr. Prosper Ben-Hamo, chair of the workers committees at Clalit, described the initial phase of the pandemic and the hysterical atmosphere that prevailed. This was followed by shutdowns of various departments and their replacement with Covid treatment sites that required specific accessibility and separation measures. People were forced to function while wearing cumbersome protective equipment

and regular two-hour breaks. Community clinics opened Covid sites so that many people were directed there instead of overburdening the hospitals. A central laboratory was established to replace the scattered testing sites that existed previously. Negotiations with workers were conducted to determine compensation. Some activities were outsourced to private hospitals and labs. Despite all these changes, when the peak of the crisis passed most of the work was returned to public institutions. However, there is still a shortage of medical staff and wages are too low. During labour conflicts, hospitals often reduce workload and outpatient clinics stop providing services, although these measures are restricted to avoid any potential harm to hospitalized patients. Workers were not given unpaid leave and instead were assigned to other tasks. Some administrative workers worked from home. All parties understood that negotiations were necessary to come to some agreement”.

### **Consolidating updated plans and appropriate training for workers in future emergencies**

”Adv. Avi Edri, chair of the Transport Union and the Histadrut Workers’ Division, described the very different situation of the ports and airports when compared to other transportation sectors, as most activities were shut down during the crisis. Drivers were made redundant as schools were shut down. The State ignored the needs of the independently employed. This was a watershed moment. Solutions were found in real time. We cannot return to a situation in which solutions are provided for public frameworks but not to private frameworks. We must begin rehabilitating entire industries related to airport services, tourism, catering, and taxi services. The State played no role in helping these sectors. In one airline company, oral negotiations were held and an agreement reached to reduce salaries by 50%; some planes were converted to carrying loads. Other companies suffered worse circumstances due to shutdowns and did not reach agreements. Vacation days were used but companies still faced liquidity problems. The State determined conditions for assistance and continued operations yet provided no means to alleviate the situation. Instead, the State demanded proof that workers were in fact being employed and demanded that others not employed be laid off. Some airlines reduced pilot salaries while others refused to do so. The Histadrut allocated its own funds to assist with increased severance pay for those workers laid off. Other workers chose to leave and found positions in other industries.”

## **Introduction**

Two years after the COVID crisis and its aftermath, the brutal events of October 7, 2023, were carried out. This time, the attack was particularly violent and within a few hours led to the murder of 1,400 people, mostly civilians (primarily women and children, as well as a number of conscripted male and female soldiers). Almost 200 men, women, and children were taken hostage by the attacking forces. For the most part, the assault was perpetrated by a known terrorist organization that has certain state traits, and not by an organized army or state military force. Within several days, the IDF (conscripted and reserve forces) began a campaign in response to these events that is still ongoing at the time of writing this report.

The October 7 attacks included the destruction and burning of homes and infrastructure in various agricultural settlements, most situated along the Gaza border, along with more brutal assault of attacking forces. The north of Israel was also militarily mobilized to a more limited degree, resulting in the displacement of many of the area's residents to other parts of the country. There are currently 130,000 Israeli citizens who have been displaced. The IDF is a mandatory service military comprised of conscripted male and female soldiers. It also relies on reserve units with people aged 21-45 who are called to reserve duty and people over 45 who volunteer, a number currently estimated at over 300,000, which is approximately 5.7% of the Israeli labour force. As reserve units are comprised of people of various working age groups, they constitute the most significant professional and management elements of the Israeli economy.

The need of the government to provide wage compensation for families and individuals due to reserve military duty continues to incur enormous expenses. This is unfolding as many businesses cannot function due to their staff being drafted and the substantial drop in foreign workers in industries such as agriculture, construction, and auto repair. The longer the war continues, the more direct and indirect damage to Israel's economy and industries. Additional expenses are being incurred and will continue for housing of displaced citizens and rehabilitating the damage to infrastructure and homes.

What are the chances of reducing the economic and human price? When will the physical and mental rehabilitation stage begin and how long will it last? How will the country cover the vast cost of the war

effort and compensation for residents without spiraling into more crises following the war? What is the role of the tripartite framework in finding accepted solutions for recovery and growth?



## **From speakers statements**

**Dr. Roby Nathanson**, chair of the conference steering committee and conference moderator, began by emphasizing the particular importance of conducting the event in the current circumstances of active and comprehensive wars being waged in Ukraine and Israel. He addressed the changes in the labour market during the COVID crisis that increased the number of people working remotely, operations during shutdowns, new perceptions of work, shifts in employee-employer relations, occupational flexibility, and more. In the current situation, the shortage of workers in service industries is particularly severe, specifically construction and agriculture which both rely on foreign workers and Palestinian workforce. Dr. Nathanson spoke of the crisis of small and medium size businesses, noting 70,000 small businesses that still have no economic solutions or support. He emphasized the importance of the tripartite structure, which is not sufficiently utilized, and noted that many sectors did not adequately plan for the current crisis.

**Dr. Gadi Nissim**, IIRRA Chair, noted the 2022 conference that addressed work conditions of vital employees during crises. However, that event focused on the COVID crisis and the assumption that much could still be done. Current circumstances mandate a far greater scope of address: over 100,000 residents evacuated from their homes, homesteads and farms looted, and businesses damaged due to the draft, and significant reductions in demand. There are also questions on how to construct a nutrition security while hundreds of thousands of people are enlisted in the war effort. How should work be conducted during this time and what should be the compensation structure for individuals, families, and business owners? Other questions relate to the possibility of increasing work flexibility and addressing job security. Equally vital is the issue of providing emotional and mental support.

**Mr. Emmanuel Julien**, ILO Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia, spoke of the importance of continued collaboration between the conference partners. He highlighted the pioneer approach of the ILO, founded in 1919, and the policies it provides which are the cornerstone of the organization. Tripartite value stems from the structure that enables agreements based on social dialogue: **“universal peace can only be founded on the basis of social justice”**.

During the campaign for his appointment, the current ILO Director General emphasized the key value of social justice promoted by the ILO, which has worked these many years to prevent and stop injustices across the globe.

The organization is currently in the advanced stages of consolidating a comprehensive plan for Ukraine focused on real human needs. It is not the role of the ILO to intervene in conflicts between governments, but it does work to provide aid to the parties that may lead to talks and an end to the conflict. The tragedy that occurred in Israel on October 7 should also be addressed in a similar manner, working to facilitate a resolution that will end the suffering of both parties in the war. This approach is in keeping with the ILO Conventions, begun in 1919 with the end of World War I, as an organization that operates within the framework of the Declaration of Philadelphia and its principles.

**Dr. Ralf Melzer**, Director of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Israel, expressed his gratitude for the collaboration among conference organizers partners. He described events and his participation in the committee which dealt with the war in former Yugoslavia and operated in Sarajevo. He attended meetings on issues relevant to this conference through his role in an ILO task force. Dr. Melzer stated his belief that the tripartite structure provided a way to resolve acute problems in negotiations and promote social justice. He congratulated the parties for the initiative to conduct this event in these particularly trying times.

**Mr. Kari Tapiola**, former Deputy-Director General of the ILO, emphasized the tripartite principle which predated the discussion of social dialogue. The latter was first formalized during the mid-'80s and promoted throughout the European market, initially in employee-employer relations and later in tripartite agreements with governments. This principle was then extended to civil society, but the first to espouse these policies was the ILO. People active in unions are often elected to political positions and carry on the work of moderating conflicts and utilizing the professional insights they had attained in previous positions.

This tripartite structure and negotiations of social issues was also evident in South Africa after the Apartheid, at first when applied in negotiations between unions and employer organizations on legislation of work conditions and then when public support was required.

Moreover, bilateral negotiations between social partners may also be fruitful if government factor involvement is unfeasible, as such dialogues influence the public opinion and this then becomes a way to exert pressure and enlist governments to join.

During World War I there were attempts by Germany and France unions to conduct talks, but despite this, the war broke out. Motivated by a need for unions of Germany and France to collaborate, following the war they adopted the ILO Constitution.

The tripartite principle was articulated as follows:

**Tripartism was born out of war as a way of ensuring what was supposed to be lasting peace. As the Constitution stated, such peace was possible only with social justice**

As proven throughout history, tripartism is a factor vital to upholding democracy and it cannot exist in dictatorial countries.

The speaker described the three stages of response to a sudden and acute crisis:

1. Immediate response, generally led by the government.
2. Consolidation of a response plan and addition of activities which entail the government partnering with social partners.
3. Rehabilitation started after the acute crisis has past, in which social partners play a significant role.

The Russia-Ukraine war - There is currently a severe crisis in factory employment and production. The ILO has provided aid by supplying food products and finding safe accommodations for those evacuated from their homes. ILO teams continue to provide consultation services on how to operate factories and employment possibilities during times of war. Organization supervisors have also undergone training to provide initial psychological support for those in need.

Mr. Tapiola also noted the collective negotiations to draft a liberal code during the Russo-Georgian War and its aftermath. The government became concerned that foreign investments would decrease but was

subjected to pressure from the unions, and so finally approved the labour code with the assistance of ILO experts.

In summary, there is no better approach to resolving such conflicts than dialogue conducted within the tripartite framework.

## **Panel 1: The Impact of War on Labour Relations**

**Adv. Rivka Werbner**, Chief Labour Relations Officer, Ministry of Labour: Despite the many wars in its history, Israel has never experienced a similar situation. People missing, an unprecedented number of hostages and thousands of displaced citizens. Who must bear the cost? This requires speedy legislation while still actively managing the ongoing circumstances. COVID legislation was also consolidated in an ongoing crisis. New laws were passed to meet new universal needs. Now specific laws are required to address various groups, such as families with members absent from work due to schools closing. One parent must stay home while under threat of missile attack, people were not entitled to compensation and not included on the COVID work absence mandates. Providing for such groups entails expanding current definitions to foster families and not only nuclear families. Also, compensation for families of missing people and hostages must be addressed. Some protections have already been offered to families of security officers, such as police, prison services, and civil security frameworks. We have eased conditions for approving furlough expenses and now include unemployment benefits for workers displaced from their jobs to retain their vacation days. We have also approved workers aged over 67 who received a special benefit due to being furloughed. Additionally, employers are required to continue pension payments to these workers to prevent future economic damages.

Note: At present employers, particularly in small businesses, are making efforts to modify the legislation to enable state compensation for the pension payments they are required to make.

Benefits have been determined for those supporting agriculture due to the shortage of foreign workers. Agricultural workers who continue their work in the industry are provided with extended benefits, as are displaced people who choose to work in the field. Compensation for employers is also given due to logistical expenses (travel, etc.). Physical damage to structures and various infrastructure is addressed in a separate compensation fund of the State.

**Mr. Lejo Sibbel**, ILO Budapest office, described his experience from the Russia-Ukraine war. In 2022, there was a 30% drop in domestic production, there were over six million Ukrainian refugees forced to flee, and approximately seventeen million entitled to basic aid. The country has already undergone extensive infrastructure damage, and unemployment has reached 60%, a number primarily comprised

of female workers. There is also the shortage of information for residents regarding their rights and possible avenues of aid. The ILO did provide initial support during the first year of the war, specifically for displaced people especially from the eastern regions of Ukraine who suffered grievous harm. A body of supervisors was established to provide instruction for various populations and advise the ILO on how to prioritize and determine urgency of aid. The legal status of drafted citizens was clarified, as well as that of unions who helped provide equipment to displaced people.

What is required? Workers must be trained for quality employment and women's employment must be supported. This is necessary to restore workers to the market, including adding older workers to foster stability, survivability, and peace. Mental aid must also be provided for long-term rehabilitation. Veterans of war must be given options for education and specific professional training. Emphasis must be placed on support and prioritization of small and medium enterprises. Construction, agriculture, and mining should be prioritized as the central industries stabilizing local economies. This poses a challenge for employer associations and unions who must conduct and improve modes of negotiations. It is reasonable to assume that after the war is over, there will be more labour relation disputes and conflict resolution mechanisms should already be formulated to stave off disagreements.

**Mr. Kobi Bar-Nathan**, former director of Salary and Employment Agreements at the Finance Ministry: Despite the COVID crisis, the subsequent negotiations and signing of collective agreements with unions, it seems the current situation bears some similarities and differences to the pandemic. If working trust and ties are not systematically employed during routine times, they obviously cannot function during crises. Insights must constantly be formulated to prepare for the upcoming crises or more extreme situations. We must aspire to less complex solutions and make modifications as events unfold. The public sector is responsible for the functioning of the economy. We must establish ongoing trust with opposing parties, unions, and organizations. Without this trust in times of peace, it is impossible to create such in times of crisis. Crises are typified by efforts to establish certainty in conditions of uncertainty. Signed agreements stabilize operations but are valid for short periods. Extending such collective agreements entails gleaning lessons with negotiation parties. This is what transpired during the COVID crisis with previous trust helping reach agreements. Work security is provided proportionally and with the understanding that some workers do not return to their previous place of employment. The furlough model should be made more flexible. The current crisis demands

working according to regions and worker sectors in various situations, which differs from the previous crisis (which was addressed uniformly and comprehensively). It is important to include negotiation parties while formulating government policies. Also, it is important to create greater occupational flexibility due to worker shortage resulting from people being drafted and far from home. Online information dissemination is becoming a vital and effective tool. These issues are also relevant to the municipal sector.

**Adv. Michal Waxman Hili**, head of Labor and Human Resources Division in the Manufacturers Association: Many activities have been taken to help and advice factories through digital platforms. This ongoing communication is primarily conducted by the Labour Ministry. Solutions have been stalled due to the numbers of displaced people, drafts, hostages, closing of schools, etc. There is a severe shortage of workers. A survey of needs has been completed that reveals the extreme decrease in numbers of workers during the first two weeks of the war. Recently, there have been improvements in this area. The first stage did not include amendments to compensation by tax property regulations or their adjustment to the new situation. Despite the need for some certainty, no support was initially provided to address furloughed workers, and this created expenses for sick leave (much of it fictitious and retroactive). Absence from work was first recognized as an entitlement to compensation only in specific areas of conflict, and not the entire country. This oversight created a situation in which workers were required to continue attending work despite the special circumstances and increased absence justified by sick leave. It produced rising furlough approval demands on a large scale while providing no incentive to continue working. Currently, a proper agreement has been reached on the matter with the Finance Ministry. The flexible European model was not implemented despite the fact that the COVID crisis demonstrated its efficacy. In view of the security situation and lack of foreign and Palestinian workers, these quotas must be increased to bring in 100,000 foreign workers. Relevant agreements have been signed with certain countries, but they are difficult to apply in Israel due to the war. There was a beneficial collaboration with the Population and Immigration Authority which provided partial address for the industry worker shortage.

**Mr. Adam Blumenberg**, deputy director of the Economic Policy Division of the General Federation of Labour in Israel, stressed the uniqueness of the Histadrut as an organization with broad social values, and not just a professional association. This approach dictates a wide range of activities that help all

populations, not just organization members, all of which are geared to promote the national economy, not just the needs of workers and the labour market. Histadrut activities are aimed at providing broad support to the home front while operating all organizational branches across the country, subsidiary organizations, and associate organizations. Realization of worker rights was an integral part of this activity. Concurrently, aid has been given to rescue forces by active Histadrut members and volunteers. Displaced people have been housed in Histadrut facilities, youth villages, and nursing homes, work conducted in collaboration with Na'amat (Histadrut's woman organization). Many efforts have been invested in local and international advocacy while employing ties with other factors to prevent decisions made against Israel. Intensive work has been done in Knesset legislation to address furloughed workers. Unionized workers have volunteered in droves. Flexible furlough conditions were formulated during routine and implemented. Also, arrangements have been made for pension payments of drafted workers. Lack of foreign and Palestinian workers have promoted more flexibility in permits for overtime for local workers. Overtime was also approved for adolescents and security guards. Local collective agreements have been signed to preserve and improve employment security and work conditions for workers in aviation, retail, and the public sector. Work has also been done to maintain social conditions and address the mental health of those workers in need. Much activity was done in collaboration with the Histadrut's forum of independent and freelance workers.

Dr. Nathanson noted the vital activities of the Histadrut not just as a union but also as a social organization, an approach which it has always maintained. He also noted its work to promote higher subsistence allowances for independent and freelance workers.



## **Panel 2: Social Strength and its Contribution to the Home Front in Times of War**

**Moderator: Dr. Lilach Lurie, Senior Lecturer, Department of Labour Studies, Tel Aviv University**

**Adv. Roe Cohen**, president of Lahav, the Israel Chamber of Independent Organizations and Businesses: There are over 200,000 independent workers in Israel. This is a relatively small number when compared to Western Countries due to the insufficient support provided by the State to such businesses and the economic risks taken in Israel's business management. Israel has a low percentage of independent workers (only 11-12%). During crises, it is vital to immediately provide aid to this sector. This is the reason work has been done to formulate an emergency safety net to self-employed persons, a protocol possible with the National Insurance Institute to provide immediate aid. The Finance Ministry published a directive on the matter without consulting with Lahav. Despite having a productive meeting with the Finance Minister, compensations were determined and published that were not in accordance with understandings reached during previous discussions. No address was given to salary payments by employers or ongoing expenses of businesses, such as municipal taxes. Within two weeks, a new and improved directive was determined. The important point to maintain in unusual circumstances and times of uncertainty is the creation of economic certainty by the government and provision of aid in real time. This is the way to establish social resilience on the home front. Without a clear directive, unnecessary tensions are created between employees and employers. Several ideas have been raised regarding who will bear the cost of salary payments. The idea of not enforcing the withholding of wages by the State is completely unreasonable. Apart from wage paying there is no social system to support unemployment payments for independent workers, an issue that has been discussed for some years. Payment of sick leave for independent workers is also lacking in the system. There has been no systematic address of these matters, unlike other countries, such as France, England, and Germany. Areas that have been addressed include mandatory pensions, maternity leave, and negative income tax for independent workers. However, the speaker called on the conference partners to help address the matters listed that are still unresolved.

Dr. Lilach Lurie recommended conducting a comparative study in several relevant countries to examine the proposed idea of an emergency safety net to self-employed persons.

**Mr. Izhar Carmon**, founder and CEO of Tzedek Centers, presented the Centers' activities in 18 municipalities in Israel and in local government. These activities were not designed to meet needs in times of emergencies. All plans were adapted to find housing for displaced people, provide legal and financial aid, and address needs as events unfolded. The Centers were established to change social policy and reduce the impact of privatization on social services and promote a social-democratic approach. When social services which are the exclusive responsibility of the State are privatized, they become difficult to access in routine times and almost impossible during an ongoing and acute security crisis. Tzedek Centers are guided by principles of responsibility, rehabilitation, and victory. National priorities, and subsequently the national budget, must be amended to address physical rehabilitation (infrastructure) and emotional needs (including the employment of a high number of social workers, as well as social aid to families and rehabilitation of public systems). This is the path to true victory extending beyond military goals. The crisis has revealed real heroes, such as local municipalities, which also functioned well during the COVID crisis. These are the people already in the field who understand the needs of residents. Thus, authorities should be transferred from the overly centralized national government to local government bodies. Organizations and volunteers are vital to addressing needs when the government is incapable of doing so, at least in the initial stages of the crisis with so many people displaced or evacuated from their homes.

**Ms. Yifat Sade**, co-chair of the Movement for Public Psychology: It is enormously important to strengthen the civil framework, including addressing trauma, damage to infrastructure, loss of life and bereaved families, and personal safety. The basic agreement with the State is that the physical and mental wellbeing of residents is maintained. Personal treatment is required when people's physical security is undermined. There has been a sharp rise in behavioral problems of adolescents and domestic conflicts. There are extended periods of being drafted to reserve service, the very people who will require professional treatment but will be unable to access services. These people must be identified. Psychological services can provide this assistance if they are provided within the framework of a professional system, which has been currently lacking and neglected for many years. It is a cost-effective system when implemented through public frameworks. It should be given the resources it requires to function. Prior to the crisis, people would routinely wait 8-10 months for treatment. Meanwhile, the system has been continuously privatized, creating gaps between those who can afford

to finance their treatments to those reliant on an increasingly hobbled public system. Thousands of psychologists have abandoned the system because of low wages. In the early days of the current crisis, a huge number of professionals began volunteering their services with the encouragement of the State, but this avenue cannot be relied upon in the long run. An idea has been raised to allow psychologists to work in the public system as freelancers or free contributors, but this is also a temporary measure that cannot provide continuity of vital services. Such workers must organize and unionize to improve working conditions. This is also in keeping with the approach articulated by the Histadrut as a social movement. This is an excellent opportunity to finally redress previous mistakes.

**Adv. Shiri Lev Ran**, Commissioner of Foreign Workers' Labor Rights, Ministry of Labour: The situation has created a shortage of workers in labour intensive industries. Such workers are particularly afflicted by a conflict their own, situated in a foreign country, and with no agency or body to contact. This has been especially acute in areas damaged during the initial attack and under missile fire, such as the Gaza border towns, the city of Ashkelon, and other regions. Despite the hardships, there have also been many hopeful moments and issues that were dealt with by people in positions of responsibility. Civil society has helped these workers when evacuated due to the war and facilitated finding alternative employment. Mental aid has also been provided. However, there have also been documented cases of worker rights being abused by employers. After several days of recovery, unit efforts were shifted to the field to ascertain the needs of this population. This initiative was joined by PIBA (Population and Immigration Authority) staff. Routine enforcement activities were suspended, except for extreme situations that required intervention. Information was disseminated to foreign workers to reduce uncertainty. The Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) and IDF Home Front Command have collaborated to provide guidelines for times of emergency. Additional information was provided regarding worker rights, including when workers leave the State, loss of property, and mental trauma. Most communication was conducted through online platforms, but language barrier issues have been a problem. Aid has been given in legal matters, such as workers being fired, quitting, or furloughed. As is known, these workers are not insured for loss on income in the current circumstances. Questions have been raised regarding home leave entitlement, and there are many other complex legal matters that are as yet unresolved. The main problem to the economy is the shortage of workers, a lack that existed prior

to the war in restaurants, construction, house aid, auto repair, and agriculture, and is currently much more severe.

It is difficult to provide answers to such issues in extreme conditions, particularly when they were neglected in routine times. In view of the circumstances forced on everyone, including foreign workers, it would be wrong to make allegations or criticize this population when it is left unprotected.

## **General Insights**

Matters left unmanaged during routine times are exacerbated in crises: lack of ongoing contact and trust among parties, lack of employment flexibility, excessive privatization of core social services, outdated plans that do not account for extreme events or plans not implemented during crises (despite ostensibly being addressed), the evacuation of entire settlements and their temporary rehousing, operation of a national emergency authority, practical and productive collaboration in the tripartite structure, implementation of flexible furlough models, and the emergency benefits to self-employed workers.

## **Recommendations for actions**

- ★ Starting from the “emergency routine” approach that combines two extremes (routine and emergency). This is a realistic policy with the number of extreme events becoming more frequent and expected to continue in areas of health and climate (earthquakes, floods, pandemics), and wars.
- ★ The public sector has to find his way to function in critical days and to open up his vital services to the population needs as the driving force of the entire economy.
- ★ Focus and improve work conditions of broadly defined sectors of vital workers and avoid taking their work for granted during emergencies.
- ★ Find solutions to make work arrangements more flexible during extreme situations through negotiations. Workers must be trained in a range of occupations that focus on possible emergency scenarios.
- ★ Examine the economic situation in crises and the responsibilities for workers and their families.
- ★ Work migrants should be appropriately compensated; comprehensive social security services should be provided for their welfare and to ensure their economic contribution during wide-scale crises.
- ★ Social partners must consider themselves committed partners in consolidating emergency plans and major actors in their implementation.
- ★ Establish a network of collective agreements and treaties to address emergency situations.
- ★ Employers should maintain stable relations with pensioners and conduct assessment days to prepare for their possible assignment during crises.

- ★ Volunteers and volunteer groups should be trained and operated as worker shortages and other insufficiencies in government and public activities are expected in the initial weeks of a traumatic event.
- ★ Volunteers and organizations provide an excellent grasp of population needs, including basic supplies of food and medications, and other needs of those displaced due to the security threat.
- ★ Certain government powers should be decentralized and given over to municipal authorities and budgets should be allocated for such activities.