



FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION IN PALESTINE

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly must be recognised as an enabling right that fosters inclusive development. The social movements that have flooded the streets of the Arab Spring have the potential to democratise the state and secure democratic transition. The right to assemble and organise is a precondition for the defence of collective rights and remains at the core of any functioning democratic system.

SOLIDAR member Movement for Peace (MPDL) and partners in Palestine, Democracy and Workers' rights center (DWRC) Palestinian NGO Network Organisation (PNGO) and Stars of Hope, and the Palestinian National Authority met during the "[Know your right workshop](#)" in [Gaza City](#) on the 10th and 11th of June, and the 13th of June in [Ramallah](#) to discuss the limitations and challenges undermining freedom of association in Palestine.

The workshops were organised in the framework of the SOLIDAR-led and European Commission-funded regional project "**Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: Mobilising for Social Justice by strengthening and promoting the role of CSOs, social movements and (independent) trade unions in reforms and democratic change**".

ONGOING CHALLENGES IN GAZA AND IN THE WEST BANK

Although the current Law no.1 for non-governmental and charitable associations guarantees freedom of association, a series of administrative directives and decisions undermine its effective implementation. Provisions contained in other legislation issued since 2007 indicate a trend towards imposing more restrictions on the freedom of association for non-governmental organisations.

Bassam Zakarneh, the president of the Union of Public Employees, stressed the fact that his arrest and detention and the closure of the union after declaring it an "illegal entity" took place in violation of laws and legal procedures. The UPE represents 40,000 public sector employees, who have been deprived of union representation since the union was banned on 11 November 2014 by decision of the executive authority.

In addition, it was stressed that in the absence of a functioning Palestinian Legislative Council, the government is not held to account for its actions and decisions, and that **there is no longer any dialogue with any union representing**

workers in the public sector. Former agreements are not respected.

Trade unions and other civil society organisations should strengthen their cooperation and exchange of good practices in order to develop a common voice to advocate for the respect of freedom of association in Palestine.

The revision of the ENP should primarily focus on promoting freedom of association as an enabling environment for civil society and social partners to work with national, regional and local authorities to design together effective strategies that guarantee decent working conditions, social security, accessible and quality healthcare, social services, as well as accessible and quality education and lifelong learning.

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