The IFSW Motion of Censure of Israel Union of Social Workers

A Wero (challenge) from Aotearoa New Zealand Based on Findings of Delegation to the West Bank January 2016

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This Presentation . . .

- Highlights the motion of censure against the Israeli Union of Social Workers passed by the IFSW General Meeting on Monday
- Is not a self-righteous, moralistic judgement against Israeli social workers and their organisation
- Is an invitation for Israeli social workers to join a journey that I and my pakeha social work colleagues have had to walk on relating to advancing justice for our indigenous Maori peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand
- Is a personal statement from me, not claiming to speak on behalf of my professional association or anyone else
The Censure Motion
Proposed by Palestine

The IFSW General Meeting delegates are concerned with the inaction of the Israeli Union of Social Workers with regards to Human Rights violations in the Palestinian Occupied Territories and their disregard of the Federation’s Code of Ethics.

During the General Meeting our Israeli colleagues provided no evidence that they have or are willing to address the issues raised by the EC Statement.

Therefore, we move a motion for the continuation of the Censure.
Why this, why now??

• It was pointed out that IFSW does not regularly censure professional associations from other countries where human rights violations occur.

• Immediate provocation: The detention from December 2017, and subsequent six month prison sentence imposed on our Palestinian colleague Munther Amira, essentially for fulfilling the vocation of our profession and standing for human rights, essentially for children.
So why is a social worker from Aotearoa New Zealand interested in this?

- Social workers in Aotearoa can identify with the plight of Palestinian people today because we have a history of colonisation and oppression of our tangata whenua, our indigenous peoples, that is not unlike what is happening today to Palestinians.

- For the last 30 years we have been on a journey of acknowledging our country’s shameful past, and increasingly taking a stand against racism and supporting the rights of tangata whenua.

- We invite the Israeli Union of Social Workers to join us on this journey in relation to your country.
My interest: Participation in Political / Educational Delegation to West Bank January 2016

- Included:
  - Tour of Jerusalem guided by Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (http://icahd.org/)
  - Briefing from Military Court Watch on detention of children (http://militarycourtwatch.org/)
  - Meetings with Governors of Jerusalem and Jericho, Mayor of Hebron
  - Briefing from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory (www.ochaopt.org)
  - Visits to Hebron, Qalandia Refugee Camp, Bil'in Village, Bedouin Village Jericho area
  - Visit to Yasser Arafat Mausoleum
Children in Military Detention

- Occupied Palestinian Territories under martial law, Israeli Occupation Forces have full executive, legislative and judicial authority.
- Military Courts have jurisdiction over children over age of 12.
- Some incidents of children as young as 5 detained for hours.
- Most common offence throwing stones.
- Little IOF effort to identify genuine suspects, rather manipulation of Palestinian informants, undermines trust in communities, collective punishment, mass intimidation.
- Arrests typically at night, house surrounded by 200 soldiers.
- 99% convicted, imprisoned up to 3 months.
Experiences of Detained Children

Analysis of 105 testimonies collected by Military Court Watch 2012-2014

- Hand tied 94%
- Blindfolded 85%
- Signed/shown documents in Hebrew 69%
- Physical abuse 60%
- Arrested at night 47%
- Transferred on floor of vehicle 46%
- Threats 45%
- Verbal abuse 39%
- Strip searched 26%

- Informed of right to silence 12%
- Summons in lieu of night arrest 12%
- Parent present throughout interrogation 6%
- Consulted with lawyer before interrogation 5%
- Solitary confinement 3%

(Military Court Watch, 2014)

- Also detention of Palestinian social workers in administrative detention, no charge or due process

(IFSW, 2015)
Settlements

- Since occupation Israel has pursued policy of settlement building in East Jerusalem and throughout West Bank
- Occupying power building settlements and settling its citizens in militarily occupied land is blatant violation of international law
- Immigrant Jewish settlers granted full citizenship rights denied to Palestinians
- East Jerusalem 200,000 Israeli settlers (UNOCHA, 2014a)
- West Bank Area C (total Israeli control, 60%) 341,000 Israeli settlers in 135 settlements and 100 outposts (UNOCHA, 2014b)
- Encroaching on Palestinian agricultural land, separating villages from lands
- Settler violence
Palestinian Land Loss

Palestinian Loss of Land 1946 - Present

1946

UN Plan 1947

1949-1967

Present

Israel Land
Palestinian Land

Tel Aviv
Jerusalem
Palestine
Israel

LIVE

MSNBC
From Aotearoa
Parihaka

• Tangata whenua in Aotearoa know about losing their land

• One example: Parihaka, a village in Taranaki, initiated non violent resistance to confiscation of their lands from the 1860s

• Crushed by the British military, resistance leaders were transported to the bottom of the South Island and imprisoned without trial for years.

• I have been to the West Bank village of Bil‘in, where what happened at Parihaka 150 years ago is being re-enacted as we speak
Nonviolent Resistance: Bil’in Village

- Visit to Bil’in a highpoint of our delegation
- Village of 1800 people, 12km West of Ramallah
- Traditional agricultural economy, olives, cattle, poultry, bees
- 60% of Bil’in’s land, some of its best farming land, annexed for Israeli Settlements and the construction of Apartheid Wall - Israel is strangling the village
- Since 2005, supported by Israeli and international activists, Bil’in residents have peacefully demonstrated every Friday in front of the “work-site of shame”
- Violent response from IOF
- Documentary *Five Broken Cameras*, Emad Burnat
House Demolitions

- A family house has huge cultural significance for Palestinian families, something for next generation.
- Demolitions common, justifications:
  - Administrative, eg built without permit, NB virtually impossible for Palestinians to get permit
  - Military – any military purpose, firing zones, training
  - Punitive – Palestinian accused of attack against Israeli or other offence, family house demolished. This is collective punishment, illegal under international law
- Court order granted, applies to house rather than owner, actual demolition may occur 10 minutes or 10 years later, constant terror
Qalandia Refugee Camp

- Established 1949 by UN on land leased from Jordan, occupied by Israel since 1967
- Refugees from The Nakba
- Population 15,000
- One health centre, serviced by one doctor from 8:00am to 2:00pm
- No services from UN or Palestinian Authority
- People have over time built own houses
- No proper water supply or drainage
- Inconsistent electricity and gas supply
• 60% of population children under 15, however nowhere for children to play
• Severe poverty and unemployment
• Israeli Occupation Force soldiers in camp every day
• Throughout camp walls plastered with pictures of young people killed by Occupation Forces – martyrs
Separation Barrier

- 8 metre high concrete
- Began construction in 2002, pretext to protect Israel from suicide bombers in second Intifada
- Total length 712km, twice length of 1949 Armistice (“Green”) Line
- 85% of route up to 18km inside West Bank (UNOCHA, 2013)
- Divides Palestinian villages from their agricultural lands, severely restricted access
- Divides communities, eg Jerusalem-Jericho road, 4000 years history, cut by wall
- Also known as Apartheid Wall
Social Work: Professional and Ethical Responsibility

• As a pakeha social worker in Aotearoa I have ethical responsibilities:
  • To acknowledge the shameful history of my country
  • Take a stand against the ongoing racism that tangata whenua experience still
  • Teach that and model that for my students
  • As a board member of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, I have a responsibility to participate in leading our professional association to maintain that stand

• My challenge to Israeli social workers is, as I have that responsibility in my country, you have the same responsibility in your country
Isn’t it ironic, that from a land formed as a shelter for the victims of the worst atrocity of the modern era, have emerged descendants from that terrible time who compromise their own humanity in order to inflict as much harm as they can get away with on another people, a people who have just as much legitimacy to reside in the area as them. Civil-minded Israelis are ashamed, thank goodness. (Morgan, 2016)
Israeli Activists for Justice include . . .

- Miko Peled
- Breaking the Silence (http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/)
- B’Tselem (https://www.btselem.org/)
- Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (https://icahd.org/)
- Israeli Union of Social Workers??????
Wero (Challenge)

- For over 30 years social workers in Aotearoa, and our professional association, have been walking on a journey
  - Acknowledgement of the shameful history of colonisation and oppression in our country
  - Acknowledging social work’s role in that
  - Taking a stand against racism and supporting the rights of tangata whenua

- This has not been easy, and is still ongoing, we have not arrived

- Social workers in other countries including Australia and Canada are walking on a similar journey

- We invite our Israeli colleagues to join us on the same journey in relation to the tangata whenua of your country, the Palestinians
For further information . . .

- Talk to Raed Amira here r.amira48@yahoo.com
- Palestine-UK Social Work Network [https://www.facebook.com/groups/PalUKSWNetwork/?ref=br_rs](https://www.facebook.com/groups/PalUKSWNetwork/?ref=br_rs)
  - Contact Guy Shennan
- Go there to learn
  - My Palestinian friends are among the most gracious, generous and hospitable people I have ever met
  - Raed could facilitate a visit
  - Travel2Palestine [https://travel2palestine.org/](https://travel2palestine.org/)