

European Trade Union Confederation  
Boulevard du Jardin Botanique, 20  
BELGIUM

Oslo, 15.11.2023  
Our ref. 23/114-30  
840.100/FASA  
Your ref.

Att: Esther Lynch

Dear Esther Lynch,

The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions is alarmed by the horrors unfolding in Gaza. We are deeply concerned about the situation in the occupied West Bank, and we are appalled by the attacks on Israel.

An occupying power has a duty and obligation to protect the civilian population. What we are witnessing now is a collective punishment of the entire population in Gaza. Several days ago, the UN Secretary General said that Gaza is becoming a "graveyard for children". Five weeks into the war, more UN aid workers had been killed in Gaza than in any other single conflict in the organization's 78-year history. We are most likely talking about war crimes. We are witnessing a collapse of the Western morality and a lack of application of International Humanitarian Law. And the ETUC is almost silent. We urge you to speak up loud and clear.

We call on the ETUC to urgently demand a cease-fire; to call for de-escalation of the war by securing the immediate release of the Israeli hostages and arbitrarily detained Palestinians; the restoration of water, fuel, electricity, and other basic services; and the passage of adequate humanitarian aid.

The war is not only a regional issue but also a matter that resonates with the most fundamental principles of international law, humanitarian law, human rights, and democracy globally.

We refer to the ETUC Congress resolutions and action programme and ask on that basis ETUC to step up the advocacy for regulatory measures that stop EU legal entities both importing products originating in illegal Israeli settlements and exporting to occupied territories, aiding, or assisting such unlawful situations in conformity with EU Treaties and compliance with international law.

As a proponent of the above-mentioned values and aims in the ETUC-programme, the trade union movement should be particularly alarmed by the ripple effects this conflict has on civic freedoms – also within Europe, particularly the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

LO-Norway is concerned by the actions, the dangerous rhetoric, and proposals of some European governments in the context of this war. Authorities have banned pro-Palestinian rallies in several European capitals, Palestinian symbols such as the flag, the Keffiyeh scarves and "free Palestine" stickers have been questioned and prohibited in some schools. Slogans such as "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", banners referring to genocide or the Holocaust have been enough to apprehend or arrest protesters.

Such measures, aimed at maintaining public order, risk creating an environment where people are hesitant to express their views or engage in peaceful demonstrations, for fear of legal repercussions or social ostracism.



Moreover, these restrictions can potentially marginalise certain groups and perspectives, leading to a homogenised discourse that does not reflect the diverse tapestry of opinions and beliefs within our societies. This chilling effect on free speech and assembly is antithetical to the democratic values that trade unions stand for.

We urge the European Trade Union Confederation to take a stand against the blatant violation of the right to live in Gaza and take a clear stand against the encroachments on civil liberties in Europe. We must not sacrifice our values on fear of dissent.

Our voice and action in this matter can significantly influence public discourse and policy, ensuring that the values of freedom, equality, and solidarity remain at the heart of our societies also in times of crisis.

I am hopeful that you will consider these concerns and take appropriate measures to address them. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely

**LO NORWAY**

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Peggy Hessen Følsvik'.

Peggy Hessen Følsvik  
President