
DIALOGUE

**REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE**

IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT OF RETURN, FOR THE ONE STATE SOLUTION

END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, ARABIC, HEBREW AND FRENCH

Special issue : International campaign to support Nazareth's Palestinian Women

**— Extracts from the minutes of the session held in
Paris on December 5th and 6th in preparation of the
International Conference to support the Palestinian
women held in Algiers (December 9th, 10th & 11th,
2006)**

— Algiers conference's decisions

JANUARY 2007

3\$ 2£ 3€ NUMBER 16

Presentation

This edition of *Dialogue* is intended to supply public opinion and first of all subscribers and readers of our review, with excerpts from the 4th and 5th December 2006 Paris Session, which prepared the International Solidarity Conference with Palestinian Women, held in Algiers the 9th, 10th and 11th December 2006 and chaired by Louisa Hanoune, Member of parliament at the Algerian National Popular Assembly.

Following these five days of discussion in Paris and Algiers, the participants at this conference, on the proposal of Abdelmajid Sidi Saïd, General Secretary of the *General Union of Workers of Algeria*, adopted a declaration which concluded in these terms:

“We call upon the international labour movement, the international trade union organisation, the regional and national trade union organisations and the International Labour Organisation to work to ensure that the right of the Arab working men and women who live within the 1948 borders to organise freely and to form trade union organisations of their choice, as well as the right to affiliate to those organisations in order to defend their social rights, is respected.

Also, we resolve here in Algiers to constitute ourselves as an international trade union committee of solidarity with Palestinian working men and women, and call upon workers, trade unionists and democrats to support our initiative.”

We intend to publish all the communications and the entire debate held both at the Paris Session and the Algiers Conference, in a brochure. You will find an order form on page 3.

As you will be able to see, the facts set out by the reporter and those that took part in the discussion, speak for themselves. We would just like to complement this with a point, that shows objectively how the support the international labour and democratic movement must give to the protection of the Palestinian people, is not founded on a sectarian dogmatic position.

This is an excerpt from an article published on the official web site of the Franco-Israeli Chamber of Commerce¹ which reads as follows:

“This favourable climate has meant that the Israeli government has been able to pursue the liberal reforms started by its predecessors: private agencies helping the unemployed find jobs (Wisconsin Plan), free competition between banks (Bahar reform), privatisation (like the Ashdod oil refineries).

Faced with these exceptional results, have the 7.1 million Israelis accounted for in the census on the 1st January 2007, reason to be satisfied? This is not quite so sure. Because the contradiction between an efficient economy and a society suffering from social fracture has never been so great. How can one not react to the shocking profits of the 5 biggest banks in the country (10 billion shekels in 2006) when 12 000 municipal employees went without wages for several months? How can one accept the bonuses and dividends that shareholders of the big companies are accumulating while 800 000 Israelis have to be content with the minimum wage?

¹ <http://www.israelvalley.com/edito/2007/01/01/7607/israel-economie-bilan-2006-exclusif-i-economie-israelienne-affiche-une-forme-insolente-le-social-reste-a-la-traine>

In spite of good economic results, Israeli society has registered this last year records that are far less enviable: almost 1.6 million poor (22% of Israelis), among whom there are 738 000 children (33% of Israeli children). Unemployment is stationary at 8.5% of the active population, that is 220 000 families with no resources. And those who have managed to find a job in 2006 have found themselves in a precarious condition: 30% of Israeli wage earners work half time, 10% work in interim jobs.

(...) The State has once again been absent, calling on public generosity and philanthropy to guarantee the vital needs of many Israelis, by way of medicine, meals or simple comfort during war time. In 2006, once again social expenditure has lagged far behind while defence expenditure has eaten up the biggest part of the budget.

That is what the Israeli government has chosen (...), rather than letting the most unfortunate benefit (from the revenue surplus) by increasing social redistribution, the government has given its preference to reducing taxes even more, a measure which is always to the advantage of those who are richest.

If the economic year 2006 has been a good one for speculators, investors, real estate

promoters, it has been far less good for the poor, the unemployed and the minimum wage earners.”

Is there any need for comment?

The facts — and especially those communicated at the conference, that you will find in this edition of *Dialogue* — speak for themselves. The results of the Wisconsin Plan which are a catastrophe for the Palestinian population, affect the Jewish populations too, according to Israeli officials.

Doesn't that justify the democratic combat for the unconditional right for Palestinian populations to return to the lands they were chased from by wars and unceasing repression?

Don't these facts show, that the positive solution, let's repeat it, is for a Palestine liberated from imperialist Zionist oppression, with equal rights for the Jewish and Arab populations?

Doesn't this justify the initiatives that the editors of the review *Dialogue* will continue to propose?

Pierre Lambert



Abstracts from the Paris Conference

In his introduction, Pierre Lambert, editor of the review *Dialogue*, recalled the following points:

(...) I believe it is necessary to say a few words on the reason why we have set up this meeting under the sponsorship of *Dialogue*. *Dialogue* is neither a party nor an International; in the very framework of the principles which we hold dear but also which should govern the international labor movement and which we are fighting for. *Dialogue* is a gathering of activists who have decided to discuss freely on the problems posed in the Near- and Middle- East, and more specifically in Palestine. It would be dishonest to say that *Dialogue* is an organization which is not committed. We stand for – and we have always done so – a single State with due respect for the two components: Arab and Jewish. In this respect, we condemn the idea of two States as this can only entail the crushing of the Palestinian people as is happening today.

Besides, this is a position we have always held. During years we have explained that we are for reciprocal independence between parties and trade unions, therefore any regrouping must, on the trade union level, abide by this principle. This means that every one has their own political opinions and, in this respect, the trade union regroups workers whatever their political, philosophical or religious opinions. Therefore, any expression that fights on the level of the working class must respect this principle. That is why we have repeatedly tried to characterize, to concretize this fight from the point of view of

what is one of the spearheads of the fight for the liberation of peoples: the most exploited people and its working class, the Palestinian people, where the women from Nazareth are pariahs among the pariahs.

Many hurdles have been and are still thrown in our way. But from the very moment when we learnt of the facts of facing Palestinian women, exploited in Nazareth and of the situation in which they were placed, we unconditionally decided to support them. We did not exactly know about their positions but we did know they were overexploited and, that, we could not and would not accept. That is the reason why we decided to convene a Conference in Algiers with our comrade Louisa Hanoune, a M.P. in Algeria. The official, plenary session will therefore be the one that meets in Algiers with the UGTA, the Algerian trade union federation. I believe this is a step forward and we, here in this pre-Conference, have to be equal to this.

In conclusion of his presentation, Pierre Lambert proposes that the chair of the conference be held jointly by Wehbe Bardane, representative of Sawt el-Amel, and Daniel Gluckstein, on behalf of the editorial board of the review Dialogue. (Proposition adopted by the participants).

Abstract of the report by Wehbe Badarne, general secretary of *Sawt el-Amel*

(...) During this meeting, I am going to explain what this regime is for workers and for the poor, I am going to speak of the situation of Palestinian workers, and also of the situation of the Palestinian workers who have remained within the 1948 boundaries. What I mostly intend to speak on is the Wisconsin Plan, a plan devised by the government against the workers. This anti-worker plan was implemented by the Israeli government in 2005. Its purpose is to hit Arab Palestinian workers as well as Jewish workers in some zones.

(...) *Sawt el Amel*, the Laborer's voice, constituted itself in Nazareth in 2000. This was the first experience of creating a trade union for the workers who remained in their home country after 1948. The association was created out of the utter necessity to defend workers. It helps organise Palestinian workers and is in charge with legal advice to help workers have their rights abided by. It organises workers to defend their rights and wrench their demands from the bosses and the government. I remember my first experience when defending workers' rights in 2000, when the second Palestinian Intifada sparked up; I remember the massive feeling of Palestinian workers and of brutal aggressions against Arab workers in Israeli towns. In 2000, several workers from Arab towns were working in a restaurant in Jerboa. They were assaulted just because they were Arabs. I remember a Jewish boss in Tel-Aviv saying on TV that he did not want Arab workers in his restaurant. That was the first time *Sawt elAmel* joined the struggle in defence of workers. The association started campaigning against the bosses who had assaulted workers. Physical assault of Arab workers is a mark of the Israeli State's racism. We campaigned to the Labour Office and we won on some demands despite the opposition of Jewish bosses. That was the first experience.

Since then, the Association has taken its full share of the struggle in defence of workers. Other experiences will be reported by the comrades afterwards.

(...) Now, I am going to make a detailed report on what the Wisconsin Plan is. It is a plan that hits the country but especially targets the working women of Nazareth, a town pioneering the implementation of the plan. This plan is totally relevant with the racist policies against Arabs; it cannot be distinguished from the continued process of robbing Arabs of their lands, of the false statements that Arab workers are not in their homeland. This is closely connected with the history of the 1948 war.

The Hebrew State stole the lands; we have been deprived of our lands that have been used solely for production purposes. Tens of thousand Palestinians have been forced to become workers in Israel. After losing their lands, they lost their jobs. That is what happened to building workers as well as women working in the textile and garment industry. Just because the Israeli bosses sent for workers from abroad to occupy their working positions. These workers came from Turkey, China and Romania; they too are the victims of the capitalist regime as they too are exploited and have to undergo the working conditions prevailing in these companies. The working women in the textile and garment industries lost their jobs after the second wave of outsourcing of mills to Jordan where wages are still lower. I have data here showing that 12,000 Palestinian men and women workers were sacked after the factories were off-shored.

(...) The Wisconsin Plan was brought to Nazareth in August 2005. The Israeli government claims that this plan will help create jobs in Nazareth. The Israeli government and the

Israeli budget minister have handed out the fate of 5 000 workers of Nazareth into the hands of private capitalist companies. This shows why the Wisconsin plan is a capitalist plan; that is why we stand up against it and resist it; because the fate of 5 000 working men and women has been delivered into the hands of private companies and foreign, especially Dutch companies.

The agreement between these private companies and the Israeli government stipulates that the companies must pay 35% of the unemployment benefits instead of the government. For instance, if the Israeli government pays Palestinian workers \$1 000, these companies must hand 35% of those benefits to the Israeli government. They must pay up within 5 months. If they succeed, they are granted money and subsidies by the Israeli government but if they fail, the Israeli government can replace them with other companies. These companies claim they succeed by creating jobs for women and workers. If that was true, why should so many fight the plan ? Why are we launching an international campaign against this plan? Why are we here organizing this Conference? The answer is simple: these capitalist companies are there just to rake in profits. They are not concerned with job creation for women and workers. They have managed to force workers out of the structure where they were and after that, they will be even poorer than before. From a financial point of view, the plan cannot work. The companies summon thousands of working men and women. The men work eight hours a day. Some of them are handicapped, others are mental or drug or alcohol addicts. Actually, the motivation is to try to make them drop their jobs. When the workers drop the jobs, the company helps the government drop the benefits. I wanted to make this quite clear because it is really important. Every day, the government tells the workers that if they want their benefits, they have to join the companies' structures. If they are too often absent, they never get their benefits. It is on this

point that the companies have succeeded. Not because they have created jobs for working men and women but because they have managed to make them drop their jobs. That is why they pay a 35% share of the benefits which the government should pay. You will shortly hear the testimony of women who worked in these companies. To make the situation clearer still, I'll give another example similar to what affects hundreds over hundreds of working men and women subjected to the Wisconsin plan. Here is a 60 year old man; he worked 40 years in the building trade and can no longer work in any job. It is the government's responsibility to help this worker by paying the benefits he is entitled to after contributing during 40 years of his working life. After his accident, the government must pay what he is entitled to. Today as he unable to work but is subjected to the Wisconsin plan, he loses his entitlement to his benefits.

(...) We say that the solution to poverty in Nazareth can only come through fighting the racism and discrimination that hit Arab Palestinians. We are saying that if the government were not discriminating jobs, it should create industrial zones in Nazareth and create true jobs for workers who then would be able to work in dignity.

It is always the same problem and we have to go 55 years back. After the '48 war, the Palestinians lost their country and their land. Since, they have been living in a State that daily organises and implements discrimination. And today, an Arab worker who worked with dignity and respect and has been made jobless gets his benefits that never exceed \$200; at that point, via those companies, the government tells this worker who has lost his land, his job, his dignity, that if he wants to continue being paid his dues, his benefits, he has to accept to be tormented and oppressed and lose his dignity so the government can continue paying his benefits.(...)

Testimonies by Palestinian women from Nazareth

A first testimony by a Palestinian woman from Nazareth is presented to the Conference

“The companies that carry out the Wisconsin plan will take away my unemployment benefits for taking part in this conference”

Thank you for taking part in this international conference. First of all, I must point out that the companies that carry out the Wisconsin plan, i.e. the Dutch and Israeli companies, will take away my unemployment benefits for taking part in this conference. However, I'm very happy with having the opportunity of talking to a working-class audience today. I'm happy to be talking to those who have helped us when we really need it. We couldn't get that sort of help from institutions and parties, let alone the Israeli trade-union The Histadrut in Nazareth, which totally supported the Wisconsin plan.

(...) I'm from Nazareth and live with my parents. I have qualified as a secretary and an accountant (standard 1+2). I worked for a travel agent's for two years but it closed down for financial reasons. I've also worked at one of my relatives' photo studio and have held various other jobs where I've been exploited. In most cases I had to leave my job because I was exploited and the boss didn't pay my wages.

This is the situation of Arab Palestinian women in most branches of industry. Arab Palestinian working women in Nazareth face all sorts of exploitation, they even go through sexual harassment from employers and bosses.

I looked for a job within the field of my degree but couldn't find one. I accepted to work outside the field of my degree and experienced the employers' savage exploitation.

(...) I'm a hard-working woman but there's no way of earning a living, there's only unemployment. Today I get a small

unemployment benefit from the national welfare insurance company.

The Wisconsin plan came into being at the beginning of August 2005. To call a spade a spade it has created concentration work camps for the workers of both sexes involved in it. If you can't believe this go to Nazareth to see and listen of the people who are in the centers of the companies in charge of this government plan. The story of my daily suffering starts early in the morning when I deal with the housework - my mother is ill and needs constant help and care.

Yet these companies don't provide me with a job as planned. Nor do they take into account my mother's illness. What matters to them is that I be idle at the centre 8 hours a day and there's no professional training either. I'm merely imprisoned there and if I protest my unemployment benefits will be cut off.

When I arrive at the prison in the company I'm searched before I can get in then sent over to one of the groups set up by the management to get to the second prison where I suffer the worst treatment from employers.

Dear comrades, the Palestinian working women's situation in Nazareth within the Wisconsin plan is more difficult and dangerous than that of women in the rest of the world because of the cruel treatment inflicted upon the Palestinian people wherever they are and of the oppression and racial segregation policy forced on the Palestinians who stayed at home after the Nakba in 1948 by Israeli companies.

These people had their lands taken away through the expropriation policy of Arab lands, especially in Galilee. Things got even worse for the thousands of workers who lost their jobs because of the Russian immigration to Palestine and because thousands of foreign workers came and took over the Arabs' jobs, especially in construction work.

As for the oppressed Palestinian woman she suffers twice __ on the one hand, she's an Arab Palestinian woman, on the other hand, she is jobless while she traditionally used to work in agriculture or the textile industry in Galilee. She also pays the price for being a wife and a mother. Hundreds of women involved in the Wisconsin plan are married women and mothers, elderly women who have never had a job. Their one and noble occupation was to bring up their children well. Then the cursed plan came up and forced women to spend all day in the company centers, not to work as the plan claimed but because their husbands got unemployment benefits and Israeli legislation confines the Arab woman within the framework of the Wisconsin plan. Whatever I say, you can never imagine the suffering caused by the Wisconsin plan. The constant humiliation and contempt experienced by Palestinian women in these capitalist company centers had me flare up in rage. We shall never surrender our dignity.

I can't begin to describe the pressure on my colleagues and me to prevent us from attending this conference. I hold onto the memory of working-class martyr Kheir Khalayla from Nazareth, who died only a few hours after leaving work when the management refused to provide him with health care when he felt seriously faint. Martyr Kheir Khalayla fell on his doorstep before the eyes of his relatives. His wife is now struggling on her own, to support the children. I'll never forget the martyr's funeral - hundreds of workers attended with the help of *Sawt el Amel*, a unionist association, all the more so as the martyr and his wife were always at the fore of demonstrations and the protest movement against the Wisconsin plan.

Confining Palestinian working men and women in the headquarters of the companies enforcing the Wisconsin plan is a crime that can't be passed over in silence. We working men and women shall not remain idle in the face of the humiliation and torture experienced by the Nazareth women. We have come here to take action against this capitalist plan. A lie called work (...)

Allow me to speak from my painful and bitter personal experience with these companies. All the women in Nazareth want a real job, a job that gives them dignity and real wages but we won't have the Israeli government give our future and that of our families over to companies for them to exploit us and make profits. That is what I and all the workers confined by the Wisconsin plan think.

They took away my unemployment benefits for two months because I refused to work nightshifts and leave my sick mother on her own at night. My father also works and he's a night watchman. Legislation has it that the Wisconsin companies have to give the necessary help so that people can find jobs and the company promised to send someone to look after my mother while I was out if I accepted to work nightshifts. I did indeed take up the job and worked in a dairy factory for 4 nights but the company didn't keep their promise so I had to leave the job. My unemployment benefits were therefore suspended for two months.

(...) In most cases women are sent to companies that don't want them or employers that don't pay out wages. Besides, these women are often sexually harassed, which leads them to quit on the first day, to be considered to refuse the job and be denied their unemployment benefits. I have with me fifty job offers that come from phoney companies - either nobody answers the phone or the applicants are asked to meet the employer at the railway station. The women's names are taken down and they're sent away without a job. The luckier one's get a fixed-term contract, sometimes for only a few days.

A few months ago I was sent to work in a kibbutz as an onion-picker. After working hard for several solid hours we asked for the toilet and were told there was none. We walked about half a mile to find a toilet in the kibbutz. On refusing to work under such conditions we were accused of refusing to work and our unemployment benefits were taken away.

We asked the trade-union association *Sawt el Amel* to help us to lodge a complaint against the company before an industrial tribunal in Nazareth. We learnt a few days ago that the government had decided to accept the appeal

lodge by *Sawt el Amel* on behalf of the women.

Working conditions for women are inhuman and if the Wisconsin plan is continued it would be sheer hell for the whole Palestinian working class and the people who stayed at home after the Nakba in 1948.

I appeal to you, from these premises, for you to support our cause. Down with the Wisconsin plan. Long live the working class. Let's keep fighting the Wisconsin plan. Thank you for your attention

Second testimony

“I decided to come in order to make my voice heard: mine is the cry of my sisters and comrades of Nazareth who are being held prisoner by the Wisconsin Plan companies !”

(...) Despite the difficulties aimed at preventing us from coming to your conference, despite the threats made to myself and all of my colleagues here today of stopping our social security payments, I decided to come in order to make my voice heard: mine is the cry of my sisters and comrades of Nazareth who are being held prisoner by the Wisconsin Plan companies.

I worked in a textiles factory for 14 years. For 14 years, I worked properly but in return received a humiliating pittance of a salary that barely covered my daily shopping. Nevertheless, my job was the most important thing for me: it allowed me to have a certain status in the family and society. In 2001, my life was completely turned upside down after being unfairly dismissed with dozens of other Arab working women. The factory closed down after an offshoring operation to Jordan, just like all the other textiles factories that set up in poor countries where the workforce was cheaper. That was the first time I came across the organisation *Sawt el Amel*. Together with a few other women from the textiles factory, we asked *Sawt el Amel* to help us get compensation, our other entitlements and our trade union rights.

I've been trying to find work since the textiles factory shut down. Despite the abusive exploitation, the non-respect of working women's rights and the low wages, I was ready to work anywhere just to avoid staying at home. Every door was closed to me. Working in the textiles sector had become impossible because of the offshoring of factories to Jordan, Egypt and countries in East Asia.

I became unemployed, and now I live with my father, who is very sick with cancer. Nobody takes care of us. Nobody helps us in this difficult life. In view of this tragic situation, and

after 14 years of working, I was forced to turn to the National Insurance Institute of Israel to get social security benefits. It is my right as an unemployed person. I made my national insurance contributions all the years I was working, so it isn't charity. Well, when I tell you how much I get a month, you'll laugh: just \$250 a month. I spend what I get on my family. Whatever is left I set aside for the water and electricity bills. Dear comrades, in order to receive those meagre miserable benefits, I have to pay a heavy price in terms of suffering. (...).

(...) Hundreds of working women and men suffer humiliations when going in and out of those Centers. Going in, you have to show your day's programme. If someone is unlucky enough to forget his or her programme, s/he cannot go in and is deprived of one month's benefits. Those are the strict and cruel rules. Not a day goes by without workers being roughed up and taken away to prison.

On arriving at one of the Plan companies' premises, I have to go to the room where I have to be to carry out my day's programme. There I find men, women, old people, sick people and disabled people who have lost the capacity to work, all crammed into small rooms that look like prison cells. When you ask people on the Plan who are heading towards Wisconsin company premises: "Where are you going?" They reply "I'm going to Guantanamo", because of the slave conditions in those centers. They have to go to those centers, or else they lose their social security payments.

If you ask me what is it that I do for 8 hours a day in those centers, I can simply tell you: nothing. We are there to do nothing. We are imprisoned, taken hostage. We don't receive any kind of training. There is no work to do. People's lives are worthless in those centers. They don't take on any workers, and also don't

take into consideration the health conditions of ill people and women. As far as the people running those centers are concerned, mothers who leave their kids at home in order to come and be imprisoned are of no importance whatsoever.

I've been on the Wisconsin Plan since 2005. I spend the whole day in a miserable little room with nothing to do. When I ask them for some work to do, they tell me they aren't responsible for finding us a job. When I ask them why they shut us in, they tell me that this is a government programme and they are applying the law. Yes, it is the law. It is in the name of this law that they shut men and women in all day. It is in the name of this law that the Wisconsin Plan companies have forced the masses, and especially women, to give up their social security payments in order to avoid being made to suffer in those centers. Yes, it is in the name of this law, in the name of democracy and slogans that falsely claim to find work for Arab working men and women, that people are repressed and made to lose their jobs. Unfortunately, these companies have been able to make a profit out of depriving the masses of working men and women of their social security benefits, turning them into poor, miserable people.

Dear comrades, I don't want to speak too long, but I'm going to tell you how these companies sent me to work. These companies work in collaboration with other local companies by robbing workers of their rights, when they don't even receive the minimum wage. They send women to work in agriculture or for cleaning companies that hire out work-gangs. It is well-known that these companies swindle workers out of their rights. Generally the work is seasonal, covering a few days and without any rights. When the women protest against the slave conditions they are forced to work under,

the Wisconsin companies stop their social security payments for two months. This way, dozens of my comrades have been forced to accept slave conditions so that they aren't considered to be refusing to work. The more these companies sack workers, the more money they get from the Israeli government. That's the criminal Wisconsin Plan !

A few months ago, they sent me to a dressmaking workshop in an Arab village near Nazareth. The person who sent me is a civil servant who is also a member of the boss's family. I know a lot of women who work in that workshop. They don't even earn minimum wage. They don't have sick-leave or sick-pay, or even one rest-day a week. When I first arrived, in winter, I realised that, in all the 14 years I worked in the textiles industry, conditions in the workshop didn't even come close to work conditions in a pigsty. There was no heating. There was place for taking breaks. The women workers weren't even allowed to use their chairs when taking a break. The toilets were filthy. When I told the employer that I couldn't work without heating because of a plate I use for my leg since having an accident, he replied that these were the working conditions, and if I didn't want to work in these conditions he would inform the Wisconsin people that I had refused to work. In fact, that is what happened. They notified me that I had refused to work and cut my social security payments for two months.

I contacted a labour tribunal through the Sawt el Amel organisation, which supports me and defends me to this day.(...)

Down with the government's Wisconsin Plan!
Down with all government projects aimed at driving us from our land and depriving us of work! Long live the workers' struggle around the world!

Third testimony

“Palestinian working men and women who are sons and daughters of those who did not leave their homes after the Nakba in 1948 have no trade union framework or organisation to defend their interests”

I am a working woman from Nazareth, and I was forced to participate in the Wisconsin Plan, given that I receive social benefit payments. Basically, I work in the education sector, to be precise in children’s crèches and nurseries. I have qualifications for working in this field. I became unemployed because of the terrible exploitation I suffered from the bosses who run a network of private nurseries with the aim of making profit and exploiting workers. Up to now I haven’t found any chance of working. The Wisconsin Plan, which is supposed to provide work, has only brought me suffering and unhappiness instead of a proper job.

(...) I would like to talk to you about the Wisconsin Plan and the suffering of Palestinian women from another point of view, which you may find interesting. I would also like to have your support, the support of the trade unions represented here and of those organizations that wanted to be here today but couldn’t.

As a working woman, I have learned that Palestinian working men and women who are sons and daughters of those who did not leave their homes after the Nakba in 1948 have no trade union framework or organisation to represent them, defend their interests or speak in their name, whether at the local or

international level. Nobody is representing them as Palestinian Arab workers, while the Histadrut, the Israeli workers’ union, turns its back on them. What is more, the workers suffer racial segregation twice over. First of all because they are Arabs who chose to stay on their property in their homeland, and then because they are workers whose land and jobs have been confiscated. Today, within the framework of the Wisconsin Plan which claims to create jobs, they are being deprived of their right to receive social security benefits.

The application of the Wisconsin Plan in Nazareth has formally demonstrated that the organisation *Sawt el Amel*, which is represented here in this conference today despite all the difficulties, is the only organisation that has supported the workers and organised them against the Plan.

I remember the first day the Wisconsin Plan began to be applied in Nazareth. I remember the demonstrations organised by *Sawt el Amel*, the daily and weekly forms of protest. I remember seeing the *Sawt el Amel* activists distributing leaflets and public statements... I remember so many things, and I will always remember the support given by *Sawt el Amel* to the Palestinian working women who are victims of the Wisconsin Plan.(...)

Fourth testimony

“Wisconsin plan aims at destroying our society, at taking away our rights to work and live with dignity.”

I come from Nazareth. I'm 38 and the mother of 7 children who are all under 18. My husband and I are prisoners of the Wisconsin plan - we have to stay in the recruitment centre for hours on end every single day. I suffer a lot as a woman and as a housewife in charge of the household. The sisters who spoke before me have told you about the deep suffering this plan causes.

(...) I'll talk about my own experience of this plan and about how it has destroyed my life and that of my family. I'm an Arab woman like so many living in Nazareth. I'd never had a job. I used to be a housewife, do the housework, cook the meals and look after the children's schooling. I used to spend most of my time with the children, helping them with their homework. It was hard work but I was happy. I felt fulfilled when the children came home with brilliant school reports at the end of term. What a great feeling to provide a sound upbringing to your own children and whole generations! Life was nice at that time. But then came the Wisconsin plan and it upset everything. My life and that of my family have turned into unbearable hell. Everything has changed. My relationship with the children has been altered because of the Wisconsin plan.

Here's my story : my husband worked as a mason for 25 years but he had to stop on account of diseases caught while working. He was unemployed for 5 years and was entitled to a small unemployment benefit even if he never stopped looking for a job, his health allowing.

Nowadays, under Israeli legislation, I have to be part of the Wisconsin plan, to remain idle for hours on end in their centers - and so has my husband - for my husband to get the scrawny unemployment benefit. If I don't go to the headquarters of the companies that enforce the

Wisconsin plan my husband's unemployment benefits will be suspended for 2 months and if I went out without a valid reason he would lose his benefits for a month, which would leave us and the children with no income at all and no way of living with dignity.

The question is : what do they expect from me through the Wisconsin plan? Why are they keeping me in recruitment centers 6 to 8 hours a day? What do they expect from me when they haven't offered me a single job opportunity in over a year? 'What do they expect from me when there are no training courses or no jobs? Why are they keeping me there, along with hundreds of Arab Nazareth women, including sick and disabled women?

Why all the oppression and torture? Before you and before the whole world, I wonder why they're keeping my husband and hundreds of workers. Why? Why?

They're claiming the plan aims at training Arab women for the labour market. Yet is it possible to train women by keeping them prisoners, thus torturing them for hours on end? If the plan can't provide me and other women and mothers with jobs, why then are they keeping us by the hundreds in recruitment centers?

(...) this plan is a crime. It has destroyed thousands of families in Nazareth. It has brought nothing but destruction and shame upon us. The Arab family has been dismantled. My children are the main victims - their results at school are getting poor because of the Wisconsin plan because they're now on their own at home without anybody to feed them, look after them and supervise their homework. Indeed, I'm being kept away in those companies and my husband is too ill to look after the children and do the housework.

The most dangerous thing of all is the local agents from the bourgeoisie who are accomplices to the Wisconsin plan and are only concerned with their personal interests and don't worry in the least about the fate of the Arab workers of Nazareth. Dear brothers, dear sisters, this is my point of view on the Wisconsin government plan as well as that of the women and mothers who are part of the

plan. The plan aims at destroying our society, at taking away our rights to work and live with dignity. The plan aims at nothing less than dehumanising us. Yet that shall not happen because the struggle goes on. I suggest you all join us to fight the Wisconsin plan together, to fight this capitalist government plan that stands against the working class and against humanity.(...)



Daniel Gluckstein co-chair of the session, on behalf of the review Dialogue

I should like to draw the participants' attention on three documents: two have been prepared by the *Sawt el Amel* trade union association. The first one under the title "*When the cost exceeds the benefit*"; it gives a detailed insight into how the Wisconsin plan works with the help of two concrete examples, notably those shown here and others. A second brochure also published by *Sawt el Amel* is titled "*Separate and unequal*". It explains why and how the Arab Palestinian workers within the 1948 boundaries are denied the same rights granted to Jewish workers; and also the multiple procedures that are put to work to discriminate them not only regarding their national rights like all the Palestinians but also, more specifically regarding their social rights as wage earners.

A third document prepared by *Dialogue* establishes the connection between the two previous ones: it examines the situation of Palestinian workers within the 1948 boundaries in the light of the main ILO (International Labour Organisation) conventions. I should like the comrades who are trade union delegates to take the time to read and examine this brochure and to make use of it because what it deals with is concrete issues: for instance, take ILO convention 111 that forbids any discrimination on the workplace for religious or ethnic reasons; is it true to say – in the light of the fact that are exposed here in writing – that this ILO convention is systematically flouted through the Wisconsin plan, and more generally concerning Palestinian Arab workers within the 1948 boundaries? Now, take ILO convention 88 on employment agencies; it provides that all the workers can have access to free public employment agencies: is it correct to consider

that this so-called job service, which actually is private and founded on the free exploitation of the labour force, is a violation of convention 88? Other ILO conventions are examined in this paper. Here, only the major conventions have been examined; besides, they have been ratified by the Israeli government. What makes them special is that they are systematically violated by this same government as regards the Palestinian Arab working class within the 1948 boundaries.

The international labour movement has every justification to demand that the ILO conventions be abided by concerning the Palestinian Arab workers within the 1948 boundaries, including convention 87 that recognises the right to freely organise trade unions under forms that workers themselves freely determine.

(...) I wish to thank the Palestinian sisters for their testimonies. We are all deeply moved and indignant when we hear of what amounts to imprisonment together with forced labour, casualised, without any guarantees and exploitation. In a certain way, what is going on with the Wisconsin plan heralds what the capitalist class keeps in store for all the workers in the world. Our brothers' and sisters' situation in Palestine simply anticipates on the situation that is kept in store for all the workers world wide, with the objective of having at hand a slave-like workforce, deprived of guarantees, discrimination being used as a weapon to achieve overexploitation.

I would like to suggest something. Among the decisions that will be proposed for the Algiers Conference, I would recommend an appeal, endorsed by all the comrades who are attending this present conference expressing

² <http://www.laborers-voice.org/english/publications/reports/ArabLabour.pdf>

their solidarity with the workers hit by the Wisconsin plan. I also believe that this solidarity should be expressed by a fund-raising effort. The women who have come here will lose two months benefits; about 2,500 shekels

for each, - about 450€ I propose that, at the end of this session, as is traditional in the labour movement, we have a collection. This is an expression of international labour solidarity.

Discrimination and racial segregation against the Palestinians living inside the boundaries of Israel

Abstracts of the report by Awni Bana, lawyer, a member of *Sawt el Amel*

(...) It is impossible to talk about the situation of the Palestinians, of the suffering of the Palestinian women in Israel of specifically, and not refer to the foundations of the State of Israel and all that has happened since 1948.

(...) It must be said that the creation of Israel was a colonial plan, based on ideology that discriminate and segregate between Jewish and non-Jewish. This is an important element if we are to understand the way the State itself is working.

And that ideology, based on the separation of two populations, was expressed through the institutions themselves. That is what I intend to examine. Since 1948, the State has repeatedly passed legislation and laws aimed at depriving Palestinians of their basic rights. These laws enabled the state to 'steal' the Palestinian land and to control the Palestinians lives in all fields: education, employment and welfare. And I am going to sum up what I have to tell you now: All those laws, especially those concerning workers 'rights and particularly Palestinian women, are not the product of sheer coincidence. They are part of a clear and well defined strategy whose purpose is to marginalize and weaken Palestinian society. When you weaken women, you are weakening one of the pillars of society. And Israel is well aware that Palestinian women can be a driving force in bringing down society.

Through all its policies, Israel intends to weaken Palestinian society so as to make it unable to challenge Zionist society or the State apparatus. In that respect the "*Jewish race*" should always be superior to all other races. The State is built on that relationship.

To hit the Palestinians internally of course involves the need to interfere with that population's means of subsistence. The Israeli authorities started this in the Land field. Let us mention some of the most important laws that have been introduced in that field since 1948 that aimed to deny the Palestinians rights over their lands. It should be made clear that all those segregationist policies are legal within the framework of the Israeli State. The most important law was passed in 1950. It gives the state the right to seize Palestinian land and is called the "*Absentee Property Law*." It is a well-known law. It aims to steal all the land that had been owned by Palestinians. According to the terms of the law, every Palestinian who was not present on his land when the State of Israel was established is considered to be absent. Everybody having left their land even temporarily is affected. All those who were regarded as absents by the law had their land literally sequestered and administered by a trustee. It should be explained that the Palestinians who had left their lands and their properties had not gone to France for a holiday; it was Israel that had deliberately moved them away from their land, expelled them from their land through well organized removal schemes. In some areas, in some villages, there were massacres and in other areas and villages, it was the fear caused by the knowledge of these massacres that forced to population to run away. It was a well-thought out policy. The Israeli authorities perpetrated a massacre in some village and sent a few agents, even among the Palestinian population of the surrounding villages, to spread the news of what had happened I am referring to well-established facts to conjure up images of blood and massacre and thereby frighten the population

away from their land. And the law said that everyone who had left their village for another nearby village was also regarded as absent. Those affected were not only the Palestinians who had left the historic territory of Palestine for Lebanon or Syria but also all the others. For example when the village of *Safure* was occupied, many inhabitants went to Nazareth. But afterwards they were not allowed to recover their houses and property in *Safure*, which was only two kilometers away from Nazareth. Many people found themselves in a similar situation. They are now called the present absentees.

In accordance with this law, Israel was able to get hold of thousands of square kilometers, mostly arable land which helped people make a living.

(...) Another device to keep Palestinians away from their native land is to transfer directly ownership of that land through the medium of the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund, which therefore develop projects on this land only for the good of Jewish people. And it is all very legal and official. Those institutions do not care about the problems it can pose. The

State is out of reach: those institutions act in its place. The State can say: "We do not discriminate against anyone. We have only handed over the administration of the land to the Jewish Agency." In fact it is those very agencies that organize segregation. They are non-governmental organizations; officially, they are not public bodies but operate as some sort of subsidiaries. Concerning the agricultural sector, the successive governments have introduced laws and ordinances that make it very hard for Palestinians to exploit this type of land. For example the Lands Administration has laid down conditions for any person wishing to exploit a piece of land, especially in the Negev and in Galilee. Those two regions keep coming up because as far as population is concerned, they are the two regions that pose a problem to Israel: Palestinian citizens are the majority. Thus in some cases the question for any farmer who wished to exploit the land was: "*You need to belong to a cooperative or a Kibbutz.*" The Palestinian could not belong to such institutions, which are colonizing agencies, set up thanks to help and subsidies from the Jewish agency. In the end they could have no access to the land.

"Racism and segregation are institutionalized in the State of Israel"

(...) Let me once more repeat what I said at the beginning: racism and segregation are institutionalized in the State of Israel. They are founded on laws that have been passed by the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. When a law has been passed, you could think to yourself: "*True, the majority has decided, this is democracy.*" Nevertheless if you want to know the real segregationist truth of those laws, you have to go into details and study them closely, see what they mean in practice. And in many cases when something has been in dispute the Israeli Supreme Court has confirmed a lot of these discriminatory laws. In some cases, some laws have been called into question but the Supreme Court has made a decision, adopted and confirmed those laws and made them even more legal. And that applies to the Wisconsin Plan. It is not part of a well- defined and open

segregationist policy. It is a legal law passed by the Knesset with an overwhelming majority.

Let us now talk about segregation at work and in social fields. In one hour we cannot possibly summarize the discriminatory and segregationist laws and policies that have been implemented over the past fifty years. I therefore selected a few points and then I will let you speak if you want to ask questions and we'll be able to discuss all the subjects you wish to raise.

Concerning Social Security the laws that have been enacted and institutionalized by the State affect the citizen's human dignity. The purpose was to weaken and weary the population and the Palestinian citizens in particular, to prohibit or prevent the development of that society. And

the problem of Palestinian women is a recurring question. It is a very important and very unsettled question.

(...) Israel has managed to shift the focus of the debate on the role of the Palestinian woman saying, to put it briefly, that the problem of the Palestinian woman is only the Palestinian man while at the same time the successive Israeli governments did everything to forbid and prevent the development of the Palestinian woman.

A question was asked yesterday about women's vocational training. I did not answer then because I knew I would deal with it today. Vocational training entails some differentiation which is not especially connected with Palestinian society or with the Palestinian woman in particular. In primary and secondary schools, high schools and some colleges, the curricula enable children and students to receive vocational training they have chosen and to specialize in some subject. But in that context, the Arab education system- which is

full controlled by the Israeli authorities- incites the Arab woman to go for 'traditional' women jobs. All Palestinian women are expected to be seen –I come from the working-class and I have respect for all jobs, this debate is about women's status working as dressmakers, secretaries, hairdressers. But it is harder if you want to study in some precise modern fields, scientific research or high-tec for example, because those subjects are not taught in the schools Arab citizens and Arab women attend. In other high schools there are real vocational training courses (for modern and profitable jobs) that could offer women more up-to- date openings. There are committees in the Social Security system which are in charge of women's vocational training. They also start from the notion that the Palestinian woman is good at the traditional jobs which are so common. By these ways, Israel prohibit the social and the economic development of the Palestinian women. I therefore have to say very humbly that Israel committing a great crime against Palestinian people when it freezes their status, thwarts their evolution and development.

Over 50% of the Palestinian population in Israel is below the poverty line

(...)With regard to poverty and unemployment, the unemployment rate in Arab towns and villages is much higher than in Jewish populated areas. Over 50% of the Palestinian population in Israel is below the poverty line. In Consequence the annual income of a Palestinian family is not half the Israeli income of the Jewish population. Palestinian children are on average three times poorer than Jewish Israeli children. And more than 60% of Palestinian children suffer from extreme poverty and malnutrition.

This data is essential if you want to understand the nature of the Wisconsin Plan. Yesterday's debate and our comrade's intervention showed in what way the Wisconsin plan affects the whole society, including the Israeli society, as a sector of Jewish society is hit by the process, e.g. the Ethiopians and the Oriental Jews.

(...) In 2002 for example, the law on National Social Security was changed and the amendment stipulated that family allowances were to be cut by 25% for the children when one of their parents had not served in the army, which raises the problem we mentioned earlier. The amendment was not regarded by Israeli society as being specifically directed at the Palestinian population. But you can easily understand that it affects us directly. It does affect the Palestinians who do not do military service.

(...) When you go to Tel-Aviv for example or to some parts of Haifa, or any other Jewish locality, you will clearly see on the posters in shop windows the advertisement: "*Workers or skilled workers required, having completed their military service.*" which means: we do not want Arab workers. Very often there will be no

connection between the job itself, the task, and military service.

(...) For women the lack of child-care facilities and nursery schools for children under three years of age is another cause of discrimination. It prevents Palestinian women from looking for work since they have to look after the children. Is the Palestinian man responsible? The social framework, which as has been said is determined by all sorts of laws and ordinances, is not his responsibility. Today in Israel there are more than 1600 crèches or child-care centers. Only 20 of them can be found in Arab towns and villages, thus 1.5%. Due to a difficult social context, women and families cannot leave children in the care of baby-sitters or private child-care centers while at work: they just cannot afford it. The consequence is that for material reasons the Palestinian woman stays at home.

(...) There is a point I have not brought up so far, which is discrimination in the workplace. A few years ago building workers were required to renovate the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament and its surroundings. The contractors employed

Arab workers on the site. Those workers who came from Galilee– and this might bring back to you some distant memories were marked with "X" that was drawn on their yellow helmets. All those who were present on the site and were wearing these helmets could thus be identified as Arab citizens.

(...) We must not forget to mention the law on citizenship, which is one of the most segregationist laws of these past few years. It was passed four years ago and stipulates that Palestinians living on the Israeli territory are not allowed to start a family if the wife was born in the Palestinian territories of Gaza or the West Bank. It means that the Palestinian women who live with Palestinians on Israeli territory are deprived of any social right that would allow them to get social security, medical Service and various benefits. It is quite inherent in the system and connected with the problem of population growth, which is a 'real' problem in Israel. In this regard we should mention that the Israeli State has a special Council in charge of population distribution that keeps populations on the collecting statistics (...).

On the history of the Palestinian Labour Movement

Presentation of the report “Separate and Unequal” by Marie Badarne, in charge of international relations within the association *Sawt el-Amel*

(...) The report “*Separate and unequal*” provides an alternative view on labour history in Palestine before 1948 and links these historical developments with the situation of the Arab working class in Israel today.

The findings of the report may provide answers to some of the questions that comrades asked yesterday about the Histadrut

(...) I started research about four months ago, using only English language resources. And as some of you may know, there is not too much choice. I used a number of articles and one full-length book to produce the first draft.

Then, with the help of my colleagues, we completed the existing skeleton with information from Arabic sources. And this turned the whole report upside down (...).

Just to give you an example of what changed : in the original draft, Chapter III on the Histadrut used to be Chapter II. Simply because the historical information available establishes the Histadrut as the driving force and the foundation of all labour activism in Palestine.

“*Separate and unequal*” provides an alternative view on this historical narrative.

Unfortunately, the archives of the pre-1948 Palestinian trade-unions did not survive the war that established Israel. But we think that by

counterchecking different sources, we got quite reliable information. Moreover, for the statistical back up, we used official data from the United Nations and the Israeli Bureau of statistics.

(...) But let’s first go back to the early years of the 20th century. Then, about 800,000 people lived in Palestine and more than 90% were Arabs. Most of the Jews lived in Jerusalem, and their native language was Arabic.

Palestinian society was rural and dominated by a few powerful landowning families. The majority of the local population were peasants who cultivated land of owners who lived in the towns.

Economic life was organised in small family businesses that seldom had more than 10 workers.

In this semi-feudal, pre-industrial society, no collective working class conscience existed.

But the local Palestinian population should soon be confronted with new challenges — namely mass immigration and a Western colonial ruler who rapidly developed large industries and infrastructure in Palestine, which was strategically a crucial connection between the Suez Canal and Britain’s other colony: Iraq.

However, the local Palestinian population took on the challenge.

A report from the British High Commissioner for Palestine stated that by 1919 — one year before the establishment of the Histadrut, there were four trade unions active in Palestine, and more than half of the 1,300 unionists were Arab workers.

In 1920, these joint Arab-Jewish unions were absorbed by the Histadrut, and then became Hebrew unions.

In 1923, a group of Arab railway workers from Haifa filed a request with the British authorities to establish a Union institution. British mandate Palestine had no comprehensive legislation for the protection of the rights of workers — including the right to form unions. So the Arab activists requested the licence to establish an association for workers. The founders of the Histadrut were not bound by these restrictions, as the Jewish community in Palestine, basically administrated itself.

Despite heavy lobbying activities by the Histadrut against the establishment of an Arab union institution, the first Palestinian trade union was founded in March 1925, under the name “Palestinian Arab Workers Society”.



PAWS logo

The Arabic text reads: Palestinian Arab Workers' Society in Haifa – We progress towards: – Work – Knowledge – Serenity. – Established in Haifa, March 21, 1925.

(...) Now, once more I want to move back in time and say something about labour Zionism and the Histadrut.

(...) Most of the Jewish immigrants who came to Palestine in the early 20th century were socialists — but they believed that Jewish national liberation was a necessary step to a true, socialist society. And this struggle was to be fought in Palestine. So the labour Zionists became the driving force behind the Jewish nation building efforts, and all institutions that significantly contributed to the establishment of Israel were labour Zionists — the Hagana, later to become the Israeli army, the kibbutz movement, and the Histadrut.

From the day of its founding the Histadrut was confronted with serious conflicts of interest. For instance, it identified itself as an institution of the working class, but it was ethnically exclusive. Only Jews were allowed to join.

Moreover, the Histadrut was also an employer. After the establishment of Israel, the Histadrut became the second largest employer after the state itself.

Histadrut owned companies, banks, and insurance companies, and this changed only 10 years ago. Still ties to employers.

The Histadrut allowed Arabs to join only in 1959. And before that, the Histadrut had for decades campaigned for Hebrew labour in Palestine, trying to replace all Arab workers with Jewish workers. So traditionally, the Histadrut has been the enemy of the Palestinian working class. Histadrut sabotaged Arab labour activism, notably during Arab revolts, with strike breaking, and it picketed for Jewish only work place.

(...) Official statistics on the Arab labour force suggest that there is an invisible colour bar in Israeli economy that divides the unskilled, cheap and nowadays often unemployed Arab labour force from a high wage Jewish Israeli

labour force which also dominates the Histadrut.

By the way, this colour bar also goes for many new immigrants from the Russian speaking countries and Ethiopia — and certainly for migrant workers from Eastern Europe, Africa and South Asia. It would like to add here that migrant workers are not allowed to join the Histadrut and have thus not even a theoretical chance to organise in trade unions.

Here, I think I should add something on the specific situation of Arab women as this is the central issue of this Conference. Only a tiny percentage of educated, middle-class women are members of the Histadrut as the vast

majority of working Arab women either work in unorganised work places under appalling conditions, or are out of work. In 2005, only 25,000 Arab women in Israel held full-time jobs. Out of 400 000 Arab women aged 15 and older.

(...) After the first six months of the Wisconsin Plan, *Sawt el Amel* conducted a survey among 100 unemployed from Nazareth who had come to *Sawt el Amel* to ask for advice. 16 out of the 100 had first approached the Histadrut because they thought it would be the suitable address in their situation. All 16 were turned away with the explanation that they are not “workers”. The other 84 people came directly to *Sawt el Amel*.

Conclusions of the Paris Conference, by Daniel Gluckstein, on behalf of the review Dialogue

(...) A comment after the two presentations. It must be said here that we simply cannot accept the yellow-painted hard hat of the Arab building workers on the building site of the Knesset any more than the yellow star that the Jews had to wear on their clothes during Nazi occupation.

As was explained in the presentation, all the discriminatory measures taken within the 1948 boundaries are legal since they result from laws that were voted by a majority in parliament. But the question is: is everything done according to the law legitimate? What is legal - insofar as it is founded on a law that is embedded in racism and discrimination – can be considered as legitimate? From the angle of democracy, it must be said that it can recognize as legitimate only that which is based on equality. Democracy can consider as legitimate only that which steers away from any discrimination based on culture, language, or religion. In this respect, obviously, in Palestine as any other place in the world, there can be no democratic solution unless it is in a State that drops any form of discrimination. There can be a solution conforming to democracy only in the framework of a State that established and guarantees equal rights for all its components. About this, in her report, the comrade mentioned the major role played by Histadrut and the so-called Zionist labor movement in the constitution of the State of Israel's institutions. It should be added in truth that historically the immigration current that claimed they were laying the bases of a very specific "socialism" through Zionism were a minority among Central Europe's Jewish populations. In their

majority, they held to the position that the solution to the Jewish problem was political democracy, i.e. equal rights for Jews in the countries where they lived and not emigration to Palestine.

This brings us back to the problems raised in the two reports that have been given here. They give information that should be made public on the discriminatory foundations of the State of Israel. Besides, those contributions suggest practical campaigning measures. If one agrees with what has been said, it raises two questions. First, how can the demands of the Palestinian working women against the Wisconsin plan make headway, because obviously an international campaign to impose a setback on this plan would be a blow against all this discriminatory machinery against Palestinian working women and, beyond, against all the Palestinian workers within the 1948 boundaries. Second: I agree with what has been said on the nature of Histadrut that, through its own history has given up the possibility of being and instrument of defence of Palestinian Arab workers' interests such as helping Palestinian Arab workers within the 1948 boundaries have their unalienable rights, especially ILO convention 87, the rights to freely organise trade unions of their own choice abided by. To win acceptance, this demand must get support from the international labor movement. It was proposed that the American comrades should call on their own trade union to start publicising this issue. The Algiers Conference will meet a few days from now. What proposals should be submitted? That is the purpose of this Paris session.(...).

To conclude I will say that, from the discussion that has taken place during the Paris preparatory session, some observations emerge; those who took the floor agree on them.

- During this session, we came to the conclusion that the general situation inflicted on the Palestinian Arab population within the 1948 boundaries, to the Palestinian working class within the 1948 boundaries and more specifically to the Palestinian working women within the 1948 boundaries rests on and takes support from a whole legal apparatus which rests on the discrimination targeting the whole population within the 1948 boundaries by a series of processes that are described here.
- Concerning working men and women, these discriminations come as a violation of a series of ILO conventions that, however, have been ratified by most of the States in the world, State of Israel included.
- The Wisconsin plan purposes to impose forced labor negating all the workers' rights and especially the rights of Palestinian working women and, at the same time it is a factor of disintegration of the entire Palestinian society.
- The fourth conclusion, such as has been shown here, is that it is fact that the specific interests of Palestinian workers within the 1948 boundaries are not taken in charge of as such by Histadrout.
- Democracy cannot genuinely be established nor abided by unless in a given State, laws are not embedded in any form of discrimination by culture, religion, language and democracy can only rest on laws that enshrine equal rights for all citizens.

Those are the conclusions of our discussion.

A piece of information: we have learnt that the 4 Palestinian working women, because they are here with us, were deprived of two months benefits amounting to 420€ each. We have made a collection as is traditional in the labor movement, over 1,000€ have been collected. We must record the fact that of course the International Solidarity Fund that exists in France, whose purpose is to help labor activists across the world, will complement the collection we have had here to the amount that

is needed to replace the two months benefits that have been cut.

We should also record that, with the agreement of the comrades, all those contributions, once they have revised them, will be published in a special issue of *Dialogue* review as they give highly valuable information to wage the international campaigns that will be proposed in Algiers

On the basis of these conclusions, here are the 3 recommendations that we propose to submit to the Algiers Conference.

- We propose to the Algiers Conference to start an international campaign against the Wisconsin plan as a discriminatory plan. This international campaign will especially address all the actors of the plan, the Israeli Ministry, the administrations and companies involved, under any form (messages, petitions and so on). This implies material, financial and active support to the information campaign engaged by Sawt elAmel as of January 2007 and also, through Sawt elAmel, addressing the foreign

companies especially Dutch, US, British that are involved in making use of the free and forced labor force.

- We propose to engage an international campaign to have ILO conventions abided by, especially all those (conventions 87, 88, 111 and others) that are flouted by the Wisconsin plan and more generally by the situation of the Palestinian Arab working class within the 1948 boundaries.
- We recommend that the Algiers Conference calls on the international labor movement, trade unions, starting with those who will attend the Algiers Conference to propose that they take charge of this international campaign: to take the responsibility of calling on all the trade unions across the world. We already record the proposal of our American comrades here to call on their trade union Federation the AFL-CIO which opposes the Wisconsin plan in the United States and which, though they will be informed on the implementation of this plan on Palestinian Arabs in Israel and will be asked to take a stand on this plan.

International Conference in Algiers in Solidarity with Palestinian women of Nazareth

Excerpts from the introductory speech made by Louisa Hanoune, Member of Parliament and spokeswoman for the Algerian Workers Party.

(...) This Conference, placed under the patronage of the President of the Republic which I submitted to my party and then to the President of the Popular National Assembly who immediately gave his approval, has its origin in the Solidarity Appeal launched by the Palestinian Arab women workers, living in the occupied Arab village of Nazareth. These women figure among the 1 300 000 Palestinians who remained in that part of Palestine after 1948. These women suffer double discrimination within the frame work of an inhuman plan of American origin, called Wisconsin. Listening to the following reports, you will be able to judge for yourselves.

The independent trade union association Sawt el Amel, "The Laborer's Voice", which organises Arab workers in Galilee struggling against discrimination and in favour of social rights, has taken up this appeal, circulated it, launched many actions mobilising women workers against this plan and has called on the international labour movement, on women and men all over the world, attached to justice.

The review *Dialogue*, which as it's name indicates, is a free debate tribune on the democratic solution which is necessary to put a stop to the tragedy of the Palestinian people, replied to Sawt el Amel's appeal and has launched an intense international campaign throughout more than 70 countries;

The editorial board of *Dialogue* review is a participant in this conference after having taken a full part in its preparation at international level, including organising a Paris session on the 4th and 5th of this month of December where

many French trade unionists were present together with the working women of Nazareth and the Sawt el Amel association. The conclusions of this meeting will be presented to you.

For my part, I took this initiative because solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people has always been supported in my Arab/Amazigh country and it is part of the programme of my party. But, above all, it is as an Algerian woman, a member of what is called the Arab world and therefore concerned by the fate of women in these countries and as an activist in favour of equal rights for women and men, that I signed the international appeal, where among the first Algerian signatures at the ILO Annual General Assembly in Geneva, figure the General Secretary of the GUWA, Abdelmadjid Sidi Said and the General Secretary of the ICATU, Hassen Djemam.

(...) It is my duty to add, that, as well as the National Popular Assembly, whose President and instances have spared no effort, several institutions of the Republic have given us great help in organising our conference in only five months and we must not forget the precious contribution of state companies. To all these Algerian officials I express again my pride in being Algerian. Some could wonder at the reasons that explain this national position.

It is because , beyond the fact that the peoples of the Maghrib and the Mashriq share the same fate, the Algerian people suffered the misery of national oppression for a long time, the privation of its political and social rights under the colonial yoke.

Before national independence, we were deprived of the most elementary rights afforded any human being.

So yes. We support the Palestinian people, because we consider that all peoples have the right to self determination, the right to take their destiny into their own hands and to decide

for themselves the form and the content of the institutions they need, in order to exercise their sovereignty. In its revue *Sawt el Amel* explains that:

“20 % of Israeli citizens are Palestinians but they get just 3% of the State budget spent on development.

“In 2001, out of 47 villages with an unemployment rate higher than average, 46 were Palestinians and one had a mixed population.

“In 2003, 46% of Palestinian families lived below the official poverty threshold as opposed to 15% of Jewish families.

** In 2003, 54% of Arab children were poor whereas this figure was 20% for Jewish children.*

** In 2003, the social protection safety net allowed only 16% of Palestinian families to escape from poverty as against 49% for Jewish families.*

These abnormally high poverty rates among the Palestinian population of Israel are the result of systematic discrimination in the allocation of budgets, for instance in education, social services or infrastructures (roads, water and electricity supplies).

And this situation is perpetuated in a language which is more and more hostile, excluding Arab citizens from jobs in the public sector as well as the private sector where the employers are Jewish. (...)

** 30% of the Arab population have been to school from 0 – 8 years, whereas only 11% of the Jewish populations are in this category. (...)*

** Only 19% of the Arab population continues studying after secondary school (After 15 years old); and 24. 6% in the Jewish community.*

** It must be underlined that about 70 000 residents of villages so called not recognised are not included in these statistics; the government does not take into account this group of citizens. (...)*

** The Israeli social protection safety net works fairly well for Jewish citizens: 49% of these families avoid poverty thanks to State transfer. Nevertheless the social security safety net has only worked for 15.9% of Arab citizens.”*

Are we not faced with segregation set up in a system? Can we talk of democracy when laws are not implemented identically, or when they do not apply at all to one of the components, when they vary according to ethnic origin, language or religion? What free woman or man, who sets store by democracy, who is attached to the universal values of human rights can accept such practices?

Our conference must establish and assert that our sisters and brothers residing within the 1948 frontier must be able to exercise their right to union organisation, to found their

unions as Arab workers, in order to defend themselves.

Like Moroccan and Tunisian workers, under colonisation rule, Algerian workers, who automatically, in spite of themselves, held French nationality with “Muslim” written on their identity card, indicating they were natives, never stopped looking for ways to get organised calling out for support from the international labour movement. The combat of workers from the Mahgrib resulted in the setting up of the Tunisian General Workers Union (UGTT) and the Moroccan Labour Union (UMT) and the founding of the General

Union of the Workers of Algeria in 1956 in the middle of the war for liberation. Sincere trade union activists of different countries, including France helped contribute to this end within the frame work of labour solidarity. After independence and overcoming difficulties, the Algerian State ratified many of the ILO conventions, among which workers' right to form independent trade unions and convention N° 03 which assures maternity protection at work. The Algerian constitution and labour laws proclaim equality for wages and other union and social allowances.

That is certainly the reason that the GUWA, in any circumstance, stands on the side of the Palestinian unions representing the workers of the Gaza strip and the Left Bank in international union meetings.

I should like to take this opportunity of saluting the General Secretaries of the ICATU and the GUWA who did not hesitate to brave the bombs, when they went to the Lebanon to bring help and support to Lebanese workers during the Israeli attacks.

To-day too, with the case of the Palestinian workers who live within the 1948 frontiers, the international union movement is called upon, for it is a case of democracy. As far as I am concerned, I am convinced that the GUWA, the ICATU, OUSA and all the leaders and activists of the countries represented here, on the basis of labour solidarity, will give a strong helping hand to Palestinian workers living within the 1948 frontiers, in order that their rights be recognised, like those of all workers in the world, just as the ILO conventions define them.

On the agenda of our conference's work there are fundamental democratic questions, among which there is the question of the Palestinian refugees, chased from their land and homes in successive waves since 1948 and who demand the right to return. That is another aspect of the Palestinian drama. Who could deny such a political, natural, human right?

The dramatic situation in the Palestinian territories (Gaza and the West Bank) as a result of the criminal quartering off and constant aggressions will be mentioned. If the situation of Palestinian workers, unable to leave Gaza and the Left Bank to go and work in towns situated within the 1948 frontiers, and that of those within these territories who are deprived of their wages as a result of the blockade, is unacceptable for any worker, any trade unionist or democrat, as a woman I am particularly revolted by the murdering of women and children.. Because through knowingly killing women, who carry new life, a will is expressed, a will to stop the reproduction of the human species, to exterminate the populations living in that part of the world. Isn't it an abject crime to starve women and children, to murder babies? To imprison mothers with families because they aspire to liberty, doesn't that mean that one aims at destroying families so as to break down Palestinian society?

Thus all the components of the Palestinian people are faced with the same denial of rights, with the same savage oppression since 1948. These are the established, unavoidable facts.

But if these segregationist practices, these repeated massacres, the massive confiscation of land and homes, entailing forced exile for 2/3 of the Palestinian people, have not succeeded after 60 years of misery in making this martyred people accept things, isn't it obvious that this bloody impasse threatens to blow up that whole region of the world like a barrel of gunpowder? Isn't it then time we looked for a solution through democratic means, through free unrestricted debate respecting a universal central principle, that which claims that all men are born free and equal and should be treated as such, whatever their race, colour of skin, religion or language ?

We shall discuss all these questions, quite freely, because from the point of view of democracy, rights cannot be disassociated.

It remains nevertheless, without neglecting the importance of any of these questions which all go to show the extent of the tragedy, that our conference being convened in reply to the appeal launched by Palestinian women workers of Nazareth for international solidarity, everyone can understand that the question they have brought up, be at the centre of our discussion.

If the debate among ourselves must be as free as possible, on all questions figuring on the agenda, our conference has neither the vocation to open up a solution to the very complex Palestinian question, nor that of taking a stand on the positions of the different Palestinian political organisations concerning the internal questions of the Palestinian authority : it must , that is a fact and an essential question, deal with preserving the integrity of our Palestinian brothers of Sawt el

Amel, here with us, taking into account the conditions in which they live. Many among us come from countries which have been through similar situations in recent history...

(...) In this context, because women and children in every country are the most vulnerable sector of society and because women meet with particular difficulties in Arab and African countries as a result of wars aimed at pillaging their resources , supporting the Palestinian women , victims of double discrimination as Arab women , submitted to living and working conditions that are insupportable for any woman or any worker, opening up the way to using the arms of international solidarity to demand the recognition of their rights, the rights of Palestinian Arab workers , living within the 1948 frontiers , this means in the end taking a step forward for the whole of humanity.

FINAL DECLARATION

We trade unionists, activists and democrats, meeting in Algiers 9-11 December 2006 in an international conference in solidarity with Palestinian women:

Alarmed by the situation of the Palestinian working women of Nazareth and the situation of all workers within the 1948 borders, which goes against basic democracy, against the ILO Conventions for which the labour movement has fought for decades, because they constitute a leverage-point for obtaining labour rights in each country;

Because we consider it our duty, we call upon the international labour movement and the International Labour Organisation to support the legitimate demands of the Palestinian workers within the 1948 borders, so that the ILO Conventions are applied:

- Conventions 87 and 98, in other words the right to set up organisations, the right to strike and to demonstrate and the right to negotiate freely;
- the ban on any kind of discrimination and full equality in accordance with ILO Convention 111;
- the right of women to decide to remain at home and take on the responsibilities that entails, or to work freely in accordance with ILO Conventions 29 and 105;
- the right to a minimum wage and the right to regulation of the working day in accordance with ILO Conventions 30 and 131.

We call upon the international labour movement, the international trade union organisation, the regional and national trade union organisations and the International Labour Organisation to work to ensure that the right of the Arab working men and women who live within the 1948 borders to organise freely and to form trade union organisations of their choice, as well as the right to affiliate to those organisations in order to defend their social rights, is respected.

Also, we resolve here in Algiers to constitute ourselves as an international trade union committee of solidarity with Palestinian working men and women, and call upon workers, trade unionists and democrats to support our initiative.

FIRST ENDORSERS :

Abdelmajid Sidi Saïd, General Secretary of the UGTA (General Union of Workers of Algeria); **Hacène Djemam**, General Secretary of the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU); **Abdoulaye Diallo**, Permanent representative of the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity (OUSA) at the ILO in Geneva (Guinea); **Louisa Hanoune**, Member of Parliament, General Secretary of the Workers Party of Algeria; **Daniel Gluckstein**, Dialogue Review; **Julio Turra**, Member of the Executive Council of the CUT (United Confederation of Workers) (Brazil); **Vahitha Parveen**, All India Trade Union Congress AITUC (India); **Alan Benjamin**, Trade unionist (United States); **Isabel Cerda**, Nazareth Women support committee (Spain); **Boualem Bouzidi**, Member of the National Secretariat of the UGTA (Algeria); **Mohamed Lakhdar Badredine**, Member of the National Secretariat of the UGTA (Algeria); **Saada Rahmani**, Chairperson of the Working Women Commission-UGTA (Algeria); **Khadijé El Husaini**, Trade unionist (Lebanon); **El Ilmi Nafissa**, Trade unionist UMT/CISA (Morocco); **Yassine Haouchet**, Trade unionist (Algeria); **Lucia Victor Jayaseelan**, Committee for Asian Women, Bangkok (Thailand); **Meriem Belmihoub Zerdani**, vice-chairperson CEDAW (Algeria); **Kali Akuno**, Peoples Hurricane Relief Fund (United States); **Olga Neto**, PDA (Angola); **Carmelinda Pereira**, Trade unionist (Portugal); **Misa Boito**, PT (Workers Party) (Brazil); **Naamate Ahmed Hassan**, Chairperson of the Women and Children Commission- ICATU (Sudan); **Pascal Samouth**, Trade unionist (France); **Khadija Yamlahi**, Moroccan Association in Support of the Palestinian People (Morocco); **Shana Griffin**, Incite! Women of color against violence (United States); **Pinar Erol**, Party of Workers' Fraternity, IKP (Turkey); **Jean Pierre Barrois**, Dialogue Review; **Louis Dilasser**, Trade unionist (France); **Pilar**

Prat, UGT FSP (Spain); **Leïla Khaled**, Member of the Palestinian National Council (Jordan); **Abdel Hamid Bouberghla**, PT Parliamentary Group, (Algeria); **Malika Boutaoui**, CISA (Algeria); **Celia Hart**, Writer, Cuba; **Tiyani Lybon Mabasa**, Socialist Party Of Azania (Azanie –South Africa); **Mohamed EL-Ouahed**, Writer, journalist (Algeria); **Ouahiba Mekaouche**, Journalist (Algeria); **Jacky Bara**, Trade unionist (France); **Yolanda Anhasco**, Permanent Committee for Women’s Rights (Ecuador); **Julian Kunnie**, Voices of opposition to war, racism and oppression (United States); **Nadia Chouitem**, GP, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **François Lazar**, Dialogue Review; **Frédéric Bochard**, Trade unionist (France); **Arfoutni Abderahamane**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Ramdane Tazibt**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Monadel Herzallah**, Arab American Union Members Council (United States); **Karim Labchri**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Tetevi Gbikpi-Benissan**, UNSIT (National Union of the Independent Trade Unions of Togo); **Loubna Abou Daka**, General Union of Palestinian Women (Palestine); **Rachid Zarat**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Carla Boulboule**, former SPD Member of Parliament-Trade unionist (Germany); **Bousmaha Houaria**, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **Mahmoud El Ali**, Aïdoun (Lebanon); **Zoubida Kherbache**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Samira Kachka**, Member of Parliament (Syria); **Kamel Djaffar**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Samy Hayon**, Trade unionist (France); **Michèle Simonnin**, Trade unionist (France); **Djelloul Djoudi**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Djamil El Madjdelouï**, Chairman of the Commission on Refugees (Palestinian Legislative Council); **Tahar Benhoumar**, PT Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Hammouche Habiba**, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **Hossain Sanzeed**, Democratic Workers’ Party (Bangladesh); **Benbessa Rahima**, Trade unionist-UGTA-(Algeria); **Zaglène Mohamed**, Union of Palestinian Teachers in Algeria; **Salah Salah**, Member of the Palestinian National Council (Lebanon); **Marie Claude Schidlower**, Dialogue Review (France); **Dr Malika Ladjali**, (Algeria); **Safia Saed Ahmed Abd Elhalim**, First Secretary of the Commission on Women and Children of the FTU trade union (Egypt); **Mekaouache Ouahiba**, Journalist (Algeria); **Boudekhane Souad**, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **Khellil Abou Dharifa**, (Palestine); **Kheira Azizou**, UGTA (Algeria); **Rabéa Djalti**, Poet (Algeria) ; **Jacques Girod**, Trade unionist (France); **Lamri F. Zohra**, UGTA (Algeria); **Samira Salah**, Member of the Palestinian National Council (Lebanon); **Paul Nkuzimana**, Union of the Workers of the University of Burundi; **Raji Sourani**, Head of the Palestinian Centre of Human Rights (Palestine); **F. Zohra Flici**, Member of Parliament (Algeria); **Erwin Salazar**, CGTP General Confederation of the workers of Peru); **Rania Madi**, Committee for the Right to Return (Switzerland); **Ali Chakchak**, General Union of Palestinian Doctors (Palestine); **Sadika Selmane**, Working Women Commission of the Workers’ Party (Algeria); **Lucien Gauthier**, (France); **Philippe De Menten**, Trade unionist (Belgium); **Hayet Fouial**, UGTA (Algeria); **Albert Neto**, PDA (Angola); **Salah Soum**, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **Zaïnab Hifni**, Writer, (Saudi Arabia); **Paul Barbier**, Trade unionist (France); **Fatiha Mahmoud Saed Ahmed**, Trade unionist FTU (Egypt); **Mohamed Ben Henda**, Association of the Tunisians in Switzerland (Switzerland); **Dan Moutot**, Dialogue Review; **Khadra Zerrari**, Trade unionist-UGTA, (Algeria); **Nadine Negleman**, Trade unionist (Belgium); **Tayeb Ould Aroussi**, Institut du Monde Arabe [Institute of the Arab World] (France); **Zebeïda Hanoune**, National Council of Higher Education Teachers-CNES (Algeria); **Fatiha Nécir**, Working Women Commission of the Workers’ Party (Algeria); **Farida Yakoubi**, Member of the National Assembly of Algeria (Algeria); **Samia Driès**, Militant of Women’s Rights (Algeria); **Rahima Benbessa**, UGTA (Algeria); **Dalal Farej ElSaed**, Trade unionist FTU- (Egypt); **Salah Mohamed**, (Palestine); **Khane Rachid**, Lawyer (Algeria); **Hayet Bousdira**, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **Malik Bine**, (France); **Fazia Mokrani**, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria), **Nora Khenioui**, Lawyer (Algeria); **Farès Nasri**, Trade Unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **Jacques Borensztein**, Teacher Trade unionist (France); **Djouambi Amar**, Trade unionist-UGTA, (Algeria); **Nouria Hafsi**, National Union of Algerian Women (UNFA), (Algeria); **Ferial Ali Salim**, CNP (Palestine); **Lakhal Djillali**, Member of the National Assembly of Algeria (Algeria); **Lamri F. Zohra**, UGTA, (Algeria); **Tehami Mohamed**, Trade unionist-UGTA (Algeria); **Bouaziz Ahmed**, Deputy Headmaster (teaching sector), (Algeria); **Ahmed Fettoumi**, Trade unionist UGTA, (Algeria); **Abou Nasr Falistine**, General Secretary of the General Union of the Palestinian Women (UGFP), (Palestine); **Khadra Alaidi**, UGFP (Palestine) ; **Bousbah Meslem Aïcha**, Member of Parliament. (Algeria); **El-Bassiouni Tatyana**, (Palestine); **Afir Rabah**, Member of Parliament. (Algeria), **Chahine Chafika**, Palestinian lawyer (Algeria).

I ENDORSE THIS APPEAL

NAME - FORENAME :

COUNTRY :

ORGANISATION :

EMAIL :

I SUPPORT THIS CAMPAIGN (*) : (IBAN : FR76 3000 4012 5300 0100 1880 873)

Contact address : dialoguereview@yahoo.com

Please send copy to: laborers@laborers-voice.org

DIALOGUE

**REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE**

**IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT OF RETURN, FOR THE ONE STATE SOLUTION
END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, ARABIC, HEBREW AND FRENCH**

dialoguereview@yahoo.com

CONTACT ADDRESS : REVUE DIALOGUE, 87, RUE DU FAUBOURG-SAINT-DENIS, 75010 PARIS, FRANCE