



**Industrial Relations Research Association of Israel
In collaboration with the International Labour
Organization (ILO)
And Friedrich Ebert Stiftung**

Conference held on November 21, 2024

**Migrant Workers and Labour
Market: Focusing on their Status
and Rights in Selected Countries and
in Israel**

**Edited by
Adv. Joseph Gattegno
Coordinator**

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Introduction

For over three decades the Industrial Relations Research Association of Israel (IIRRA) has held conferences regarding issues of labour and employment in all its many aspects¹. IIRRA is comprised of a tripartite structure and includes representatives of unions, employers, and ministries and government agencies working in collaboration to enable delving deeply and presenting varied points for discussion. Another central aspect of Association activities is collaboration with academia and promotion of research, and researchers constitute an inseparable part of Association management.

This is the third consecutive conference that addresses emergency or crisis issues. The 2022 conference centred on first line and emergency personnel and their employment conditions, selected following research conducted by the ILO research department. The following year we focused on the broader second circle of workers and the way they function during crises, specifically concerning civilian resilience during emergencies.

The 2024 IIRRA international conference focused on:

Employment of Migrant Workers During Crises: Focusing on their Status and Rights in Selected Countries and in Israel

This subject was chosen through mutual consent with all conference partners, the ILO and FES in Israel. In addition to providing professional assistance, logistical cooperation, and the overall design of event content, the ILO also provided expert to review current events in selected countries and practices to better enforce and further expand existing rights. Moreover, researchers and professionals in relevant fields from Israel attended the event, as well as representatives of all factors within the tripartite framework. All attendees contributed to the discussion. We also heard from the Labor

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Ministry, representatives of various government ministries involved in labour world, unions, and employer organizations.

Government policies concerning the growing need for migrant workers

There are some doubts regarding whether or not the State of Israel has a clearly defined policy regarding the employment of migrant workers. There seems to be little consistency in policymaking, and changes are made and impacted in response to fluctuating periods of demand and pressure exerted by certain sectors. As this is routinely the case, crisis situations necessitate addressing the matter with greater urgency.

The path to citizenship in Israel is a central theme in Israeli and Jewish discourse, particularly in view of the accepted principle that Israel requires a Jewish demographic majority which represents the State. This also raises discussion of cultural and other implications on Israel's minority populations. Thus, the general perception of migrant workers is that of temporary employees, a view evident in a bureaucratic system that dictates predetermined periods enabling workers to stay in Israel. With monitoring and enforcement conducted in a manner that is neither comprehensive nor effective, the reality is such that there are thousands of workers with invalid work visas or those who entered the country on tourist visas and remained to work in partial or temporary employment. Another population who had not constituted a significant numerical component in the past were refugees and displaced people came to Israel primarily as a place of refuge and then were forced to seek employment. The state of these populations has continued over the years with the relevant bureaucracy dragging its feet, so many have gone in search of even temporary or partial employment to earn the minimum required for their lives. They also do not meet the criteria for migrant workers legally employed in Israel in order to send money to their families abroad. These additional groups add to the overall number of overseas workers, becoming a larger percentage of foreign workers arriving and working in Israel. It is noteworthy that despite governmental attempts to impose numerical restrictions on these specific populations, the total number of foreign workers in the country is significant when compared to the

total local workforce. Therefore, the worker shortage is a consequence of some returning to their countries of origin due to security threats, and government decisions to stop granting work permits for Palestinian workers, which has impacted and slowed down the construction industry and various agricultural fields work. The current wartime reality has again brought to the fore the demand and need for such workers.

Despite the many difficulties, there is still a real need for migrant workers in various physical vocations often disdained by the local workforce, some requiring manual toil in construction and agriculture or round-the-clock positions caring for an elderly person. The escalation on the war dealt a harsh blow to the already insufficient number of workers in these professions, with many foreigners choosing to leave Israel and not suffer the risks of a conflict which is not their own. This poses an immediate, physical, and obvious danger to agriculture in Israel's periphery. For reference, approximately half of Israel's construction workers are foreigners, mainly Palestinians. An insufficient number of construction workers, some of which have extended their vocational options over the years, slows down residential construction. The vast majority of nursing carers are foreigners (working night and day in homes and care institutions), all of whom are indispensable to the workforce. In agriculture, crops have been laid to waste. All this is occurring while a significant proportion of the local workforce is absent due to their reserve military duties.

A recent attempt has been made to provide alternatives to replace workers who have left, but thus far efforts have been slow and do not seem overly too productive. Moreover, there is an increasing number of complaints of workers arriving from India and additional countries who do not have the necessary professional training for the jobs to which they have been assigned. Israel has traditionally relied on Palestinian workers in construction and agriculture, as there were obvious advantages: the relatively close proximity of where these workers reside and work and the fact that employers were not required to provide lodgings as workers returned to their homes at the end of each workday.

Migrant worker employment conditions - The need for improvement

It should be noted that a large number of the workers detailed above are employed under the conditions of collective agreements, meaning legal protections that prevent their discrimination compared to local workers. The great majority of migrant workers make minimum wages, and their salaries and social benefits are identical to standard Israeli minimal requirements by collective agreements relevant to each specific industry. Therefore, focused efforts by unions through collective agreements to address the needs of this population will increase their income, reduce gaps, encourage professional training, and consequently improve their professionalism and efficiency.

Specifically, there is a need to address training for these workers. As technology continues to advance there is a need to provide further training. This is necessary in nursing care where carers are sometimes required to respond to acute life-and-death situations, vital in construction in matters of work safety, and required in agriculture as it continues its technological development.

A significant proportion of these workers are employed on an hourly basis, a fact that automatically and significantly reduces standard work conditions when compared to others employed on a monthly or even daily basis. Salaries are calculated according to actual work hours with none of the standard and mandatory breaks awarded in monthly salaries. Proactive engagement in this matter by unions can improve these conditions by amending agreements and enacting legislation.

Discussion questions

Is it possible to consolidate a consistent policy regarding migrant workers or should we accept a fluctuating policy reliant on changing demand, particularly in times of emergency, such as war or pandemics?

Should we change the view of such workers as temporarily in Israel for a predetermined time while ignoring the ongoing reality of many staying for long periods, settling down, and establishing families?

What additional tools (legislation, collective agreements, and others) can be used to promote a stable policy that improves work conditions and provides solutions?

What efforts and what scope of resources should be dedicated to professional training for these workers, particularly in field-related work safety?

Conference schedule

- **Plenary** - A review of the labour market, the role and status of work migrants in Israel and other countries during times of national crisis. Reviews provided by ILO expert and senior representatives of the tripartite Association structure.
- **Three roundtable discussions** - with construction and agriculture, nursing industry and a third table discussing issues of class, common dilemmas, and recommendations for improving existing rights of migrant workers.
- **Plenary** - presenting issues and disputes of roundtable discussions aiming to applicable recommendations.

Conference discussions – Summary

Opening plenary remarks

Dr. Roby Nathanson - thanked committee members and partners, including ILO representatives, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and the Histadrut for providing the event venue. He emphasized the important involvement of the tripartite structure in Israel and the international engagement that brings with it the expertise of the ILO. He then discussed the importance of the day following the end of the war, "the day after" as it is vital to now address the needs of the labour market. The labour market is undergoing the difficulties of an insufficient number of foreign workers and Palestinian workers in many industries, the focus of this year's conference. Dr. Nathanson voiced the hope that in the near future the ongoing collaboration with the ILO will continue to grow, as well as the activities of its representatives in these difficult times. He critiqued the existing gap between vision and reality, specifically the need to ratify additional conventions and increase methods and resources of enforcement. Finally, Dr. Nathanson called for closer relations between all involved parties to address the many issues of employment throughout crises.

Mr. Emmanuel Julian, ILO representative – presented the ILO Declaration on the value of Social Justice and the great importance it places on labour. He also quoted the ILO principle by which overall peace is the foundation for true social justice, then referencing the State of Israel's Declaration of Independence, which also makes note of similar universal values. Mr. Julian expressed the hope of establishing even closer ties of collaboration in the following years and apologized for the partial representation of experts relevant to the matters of the day. He noted that Israel conducts these matters in a fashion quite similar to that of many other countries offering lesser employment conditions and pay for women when compared to men, and disparities of the equal rights between local and foreign workers. Employment in the fields of agriculture and construction is often physically difficult and subject to a high degree of risk. This is compounded by a language barrier, disorientation in a foreign environment, and other factors. Mr. Julian reviewed the conventions Israel has ratified and specifically noted

those that Israel has yet to ratify, agreements pertaining to workers that complete the citizenship process: equality, prevention of discrimination, disclosure of information prior to employment, etc. The ILO committee responsible for overseeing standard application requested that Israel submit data regarding the wages and social benefits provided for foreign workers and yet received no reply. It was also impossible to ignore the unique situation of Palestinian workers and their social conditions. Understandably, the matter of Palestinian workers is related to that of foreign workers at large and these two populations have mutual impact. One can also not deny that Palestinian workers pose a security concern for Israel. In extreme situations, such as war, one must impose monitoring and enforcement measures while always steering towards bilateral agreements. The worker populations and sectors discussed in this conference constitute one of the most exposed but also high risk in terms of safety and physical hardship. Dealing with immigration has always been a delicate and complex endeavour. Many countries struggle to report or avoid making accurate reports when asked to reveal information regarding rights violations and sectoral statistical analysis.

Mr. Micky Drill, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - presented the Foundation's main areas of operations and the social-democratic approach it employs in all its branches across the world. Professional collaboration and coordination between the Foundation has been ongoing with the ILO headquarters in Geneva . In his remarks Mr. Drill expressed appreciation for the collaboration between the initiating entities and the event organizers. Conference topics are selected by all representative parties due to their relevancy and urgency in the labour market in current times. ILO representatives and experts add a broader perspective and comparative data that help raise solutions and possible conclusions through strong ties between worker unions, government ministries, and employers.

Tripartite panel moderated by Dr. Lilach Litor

Adv. Libka Halabi Hasson, Ministry of Labour - listed the disadvantages of foreign workers from overseas: dependency on a single employer, lack of proficiency in the local language, ignorance of their rights, being far removed from their families, and often very little support. Furthermore, one should note the physical harm and often loss of life undergone by foreign workers as a result of a direct strike, as well as workers who were taken hostages in the events of October last year. The injury and harm to such workers is exacerbated during the war. Some have returned to their countries of origin, while others remain and continue employment in construction and nursing. Another segment of this population was evacuated along with local residents to areas of relatively less danger, increasing their sense of alienation and insecurity. Generally speaking, address of this population is egalitarian in that legislation and collective agreements do exist in relevant industries and are generally imposed, as are equal terms for salaries and social benefits. Such workers are also provided with medical insurance and are entitled to appropriate standards of living. This being the case, the cost of maintaining a foreign worker often exceed the costs of maintaining an Israeli resident. In times of crisis, foreign workers and their families are also awarded identical rights in situations of harm or injury due to an act of war. This is also the case when there are tragic fatalities of workers or in the case of those taken as hostages throughout the war. The Labor Ministry disseminates information and provides training for workers regarding their rights, consultancy regarding claims against employers, receiving due benefits, and ministry representatives often participate in legal proceedings. The Ministry also addresses worker complaints and conducts inquiries. These sometimes result in restrictions being imposed on employers demanding permits for foreign workers. In summary, the State of Israel recognizes the contribution of these workers to the country's economy.

Adv. Hila Sheinok, Histadrut Economics and Policy Division - emphasized the importance of the work by unions to employ more effective enforcement on this workers. Important these workers become organized and structured within the umbrella of unions. The number of foreign workers employed by private factors continues to

increase as worker shortages worsen, and this correlates with a rise in the number of complaints and very partial enforcement. The interministerial Special Committee on Foreign Workers (“Director General’s Committee”), comprised by government ministry directors, does not include relevant experts and conducts no consistent or productive dialogue with people who specialize in various relevant factors. In his address to the Prime Minister, the Histadrut chairman stated that unions should be included in determining criteria for the number of workers per industry so that it does not impact overall unemployment numbers, enables the improvement of enforcement, strengthens union activity in managing manpower/placement companies (specifically those responsible for direct and indirect employment of foreign workers), establish a benefit fund for workers, and form parity committees to review the injuries to worker conditions among worker and employer representative bodies. The Histadrut guides the relevant workers by supporting them in procedures concerning court petitions.

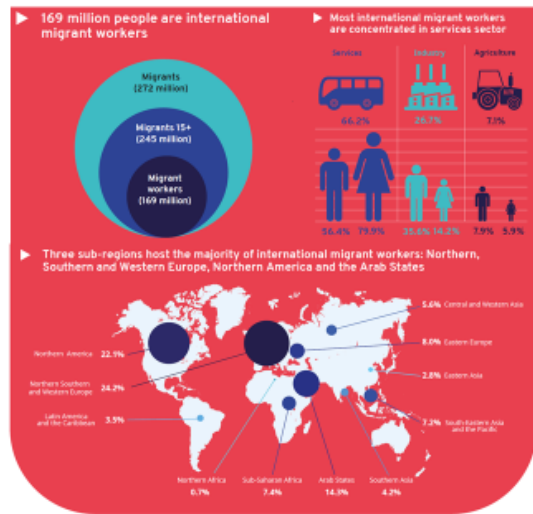
Adv. Michal Waxman Hili, labour and Human Resources Division, Manufacturers Association of Israel – noted a shortage of 19,000 industry workers, a lack made more difficult due to the war. Wartime legislation has expanded bans on firing workers, a decision that should be discussed. Promoting employment should also entail the provision of grants previously given but which were invalidated last October. Professional training and an integrated approach should be adopted. Furthermore, there are many difficulties in rehabilitating workers who have completed reserve military duty during the war, were injured, and then returned to their place of work. The costs of commissions and deductions imposed on employers should also be reviewed, as these often hike up the cost of labour even beyond the average salary of Israeli workers. The Director General’s Committee that was established generally operates efficiently and eliminates redundancies due to the high rank of its members. However, in the Knesset there is currently one committee that deals with the high cost of living and another that addresses matters of foreign workers. The work of these two committees should be combined as these areas are interrelated.

Dr. Daniel Ittah, Prime Minister's Office - in response to the demand for workers in a reality of continued security threats, the Director General's Committee was established with representatives of every government ministry related to employment and those specifically assigned to address the needs of foreign workers. The committee has been assigned to examine the needs of various industries and the economic implications of providing permits. This is done with an understanding of real needs, impact on the economy, impact on the labour market, unemployment, immigration, and other considerations. The committee invites representatives of employer organizations and worker representatives to hear their assessments and predictions for economic impact. A key parameter guiding these considerations is the overall percentage of foreign workers in Israel's labour market. The work entails increasing oversight and enforcement policies while also addressing bilateral agreements with countries of origins in order to oversee arrival here. The main industry where permits are provided is construction. 422 supervisor positions allocated to improving overall enforcement.

Mr. Dan Smith, ILO representative – presented ILO policy and standards that address migrant workers and their rights. The following presents data on immigrants, migrant workers, and the unique difficulties entailed in their employment.

► Labour Migration: global figures

- There are currently an estimated **272 million international migrants** and **169 migrant workers** in the world.
- **Women** make up nearly half of all international migrants.
- **Regional distribution** is uneven but MWs present in all regions.
- Migrant workers are often **concentrated in specific sectors**: construction, manufacturing, agriculture, hotel and catering, health and care work, domestic work.



Why do migrant workers need protection?

- Labour is **not a commodity**
- At risk of **exploitation** in the **recruitment** process
- Non-citizens of the country in which they work
- Rarely benefit from full **equal treatment** in employment and access to **social rights**
- Frequently in low-skilled precarious employment sectors, **excluded from national labour law**
- **Multiple forms of discrimination**, especially women migrant workers
- More at risk if in **irregular situation**



► ilo.org

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► ILO approach to labour migration

- ILO mandate: promote employment and protect workers
- ILO does not promote or discourage migration – migration as a fact of labour markets worldwide
- Most migration is directly or indirectly related to the world of work
- Migration is often the result of decent work deficits in the COO; migration should be a choice, not a necessity
- Interest in migrants as **workers** – and applying **labour migration tools** to improve governance + protection
- There is a disconnect between labour market realities and labour migration policy
- Promote protection of migrant workers via equality principles + recognize unique vulnerabilities/specificities
- Include refugees and forcibly displaced people: Focus on access to the labour market



► ilo.org

The following presents ILO principles:

C97 and C143 : key features

- ▶ • Do **not** affect prerogative of States to determine admission of nationals for employment
- Relevant for **both** countries of origin and destination
- Taken together, the instruments recognize:
 - All migrant workers should enjoy **basic human rights**
 - Migrant workers should enjoy **minimum standards of protection** in case of loss of employment, expulsion and payment of wages and social benefits due
 - Once admitted to employment, regular status MW should enjoy **equality of (opportunity) and treatment with nationals**
 - **Social consequences** of labour migration need to be addressed
 - Labour migration processes need to be regulated within a **rights-based** framework

▶ ilo.org

It is important to note that the ILO generally avoids dealing with matters of immigration. This is a historical and international phenomenon, and each country has the responsibility to formulate its own policies. However, the ILO is aware of the complexities involved in immigration and the necessity of determining general rules to prevent wrongdoing to immigrant populations, preserving basic human rights and understanding that undermining basic standards may create a negative ripple effect in other countries who also employ migrant workers.

The ILO addresses issues related to migrant workers, providing consultation, training, and professional guidance in core matters of work migration. Some topics, such as mediation fees and unfair employment, relate to the ILO's Decent Work program and activities. Such rules apply to the period prior to workers leaving their homeland while others address conditions of employment in the destination country. A comprehensive list has been compiled of the costs amassed by fraud and exploitation of workers. Furthermore, such rules forbid the imposition of fees on workers which do not benefit their personal interest and have not been agreed on through consultation. It is important to note that representatives of the tripartite structure are aware of the unique difficulties of this specific population and will sign collective agreements that address the core issues at hand to establish clear standard guidelines. It would be appropriate and

expected that relevant countries ratify relevant ILO conventions and enforce their principals.

Roundtable discussions – Major dilemmas and insights

Table 1: Chaired by Dr. Lilach Lurie

Topic: Agriculture and construction

On October 7, 2023, there were 30,000 foreign workers employed in Israel's **agriculture**. Prior to that, a decision had been made to expand that number to 40,000 overall. The outbreak of war made this impossible. In the early days of the war, this number dropped to 20,000 and Israeli farmers were assisted by local volunteers. Currently the agriculture industry requires 70,000 workers, in contrast to the 40,000 being employed, and additional permits that have not been granted. This is an ongoing and growing need, particularly for Thai farmhands. Bilateral agreements have been signed with Sri Lanka, Ecuador and Malawi but the shortage is still a persistent problem.

Key problems: high costs for employers and a shortage of workers. Israel's agriculture is dispersed throughout its peripheral areas, a fact that makes them more difficult to track and provide guidance.

Construction - prior to the war, there were 85,000 Palestinian workers with permits and an additional 30,000 without permits employed in this industry. There were also an additional 15,000 workers from other countries. Currently, there are 30,000 foreign workers and plans to bring in an additional 55,000 from overseas. There are collective agreements that apply to all of them. Bilateral agreements with specific countries were signed. The Israeli government has been asked by the unions to take responsibility for Palestinian worker's rights denied the ability to work due to the security situation. These workers are in the unclear state of being fired or resigned. There are issues and complaints regarding workers who have been fired and the Histadrut is addressing the matter. Also, there is a parity committee with employers to resolve problems created in recent circumstances. Dozens of man power agencies have been established to bring in workers. The Histadrut signed contracts with dozens of new corporations to provide professional training for such workers, as well as safety instruction. A multilingual call centre has been established to provide information for workers, with interpreters

provided from countries of origin through bilateral agreements. The Histadrut is examining the proper housing for workers and managing housing payments. There is also the matter of poor selection processes conducted in the country of origin, a problem clear in their lack of relevant professional background. Some HR corporations have made use of the training provided by the Histadrut. Also, there have been reports of severe issues due to the high commission fees demanded of workers in their countries of origin. This has led to underreporting of work hours as workers need to earn extra income in order to pay such fees. On Chinese workers specifically, they show no intent of settling in Israel due to cultural and language barriers. However, they do constitute a proportion of this population and should be organized or unionized to strengthen their status. Workers fear to lodge complaints of violations and often only do so just prior to leaving the country. Employers struggle with a complex and overburdened system that entails dealing with multiple factors.

The development of many new sub-industries has also diversified the labour market and its management. This has increased the number of countries from which workers arrive, all speaking different languages, and all struggling with basic daily communication. This past year and currently, they have also been under the threat of war and cannot leave due to the debts they have committed to pay. Conversely, calculation of costs for employers of foreign workers indicates costs higher than those of local workers, had they been available.

Suggested solutions: Subsidizing farmers to maintain food security. The Director General's Committee that was established is a step in the right direction, but employer and worker organizations should be included in ongoing talks, specifically in the determination of criteria for workers and the question of imposing payment on workers for housing costs.

Table 2: Chaired by Dr. Gadi Nissim

Topic: Nursing care

This is a unique field in the context of foreign workers. The Nursing Law determines that those entitled to nursing care may receive 24-hour services in their home, subject to various articles. The number of workers in this field has risen dramatically; overall, this industry is dominated by foreign workers as Israelis are unwilling to seek this form of employment. There is a current shortage of approximately 20,000 workers, and the market currently includes 15,000 who had valid work visas which have since then expired. The recent year and ongoing emergency situation have worsened existing problems and created new ones. One partial solution to address this shortage is to employ workers who are here with expired visas and are in a “grey” zone in terms of their official status. Many workers receive no institutional backing and meanwhile the war has provoked fears and added hardships. With the evacuation of many residents from their home due to security threats, many elderly people with at home care were sent to nursing homes, making many caregivers redundant. The nature of this work, working closely and often alone with care receivers, means workers often lack community support. There is no clear source of oversight for their relations with employers and no clear destination to lodge complaints or receive advice. The situation is different for foreign workers employed in nursing hospitals or institutions. There is some unclarity among workers as to who is their actual employer- the State, a HR company, or the family of the person for whose care they are responsible. This close proximity to patients and their families also opens the door to potential exploitation, and also sexual abuse. Problems have been raised about long home leave vacations and weekends on which contracted workers are replaced with those without valid visas. Also, there is the problem of many families of the elderly requiring governmental aid and forced to deal with protracted bureaucratic demands. Employing foreigners entails significant costs. Furthermore, the institutional separation between the Labor Ministry, managing workers employed in nursing homes, and then the hospitals employing foreigners under the purview of the Health Ministry, is also producing a lack of clarity. Several workers

coming from various countries participated in the conference and had the opportunity to speak along the discussions.

Table 3: Chaired by Dr. Roby Nathanson

Topic: Migrant workers – Status and rights

Immigration waves are a familiar and recurring historical phenomenon, while current work migration is the younger and more specific development. The correlations among the various immigration groups that have been mentioned thus far have become evident in recent years. Displaced people and refugees or those fleeing their country of origin arrive in various destinations and naturally seek employment, thus becoming impromptu migrant workers. The majority of destination countries demonstrate a significant gap between their official policies and reality on the ground. Means of oversight and enforcement are naturally limited and this gap continues to grow. Furthermore, the matter is politically and socially volatile and many international organizations, including the ILO, choose not to focus on immigration in general but rather specifically on labour migration. Improved standards of living and salaries are an incentive for foreign workers to stay in their destination countries, enabling them to send income back to cover debts or to their families. Others settle down and establish families of their own in their destination country following a period of adjustment.

In Israel, the cost of employing overseas workers has increased due to the imposition of the Payment of the Foreign Worker Deposit on leaving Israel. This is a way to address the provision of an accrued pension, severance pay, and savings entitled to all workers. Discussion participants agree fully that signing updated and relevant collective agreements that address the needs of the hour will provide stability in the industry and are achievable through representative organizations. This is a path to increasing engagement and answering real-time needs.

The following presents several findings from a study regarding union policies on foreign workers:

The level of organized labour among this group of foreign workers and lack of unionization is a problem. This stems from various reasons, including the fear of workers to organize during working in the destination country, and many unfamiliar

with the benefits of being part of collective representation. Existing unions are focused on the needs of workers who are citizens and residents and are therefore far removed from the needs of foreigners, a difficulty exacerbated due to the differences in lifestyle and language (the need for multiple languages, translation, terminology, etc.), workers' ignorance regarding which institution to turn to (the National Insurance Institute, hospitals, Deciphering pay checks, and more).

Worker unions are currently experiencing a period of decline and do not have the resources to address the needs of foreign workers. Three models of unions and their characterizations were presented to show the measure of interest and efforts made for foreign labour organization. The US model focuses on infrastructure and community care and is guided by the principle of inclusion. The British model relies on local labour organization and a corporatist approach designed to provide all workers an umbrella of protection.

Recommendations for action

- As reality stands in the foreseeable future, Israel cannot maintain its economy in an optimal or even reasonable fashion without addressing migrant workers' issues.. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the relevant factors engaged in employment and the labour market to take practical steps to significantly improve management and oversight.
- A clear and official policy must be formulated for times of emergency and crisis. Coordination between ministries and public service units must be improved, including removing bureaucratic redundancies and initiating efficient management of foreign worker employment, enforcement, and oversight.
- Relevant ILO conventions should be ratified and disseminated in the appropriate languages.
- The tripartite framework must be included in decision making and policy consolidation by the government. An intense collaboration between employers and workers organizations is likely to produce broader collective agreements, better oversight and supervision, and reduction of fraud and exploitation of this workers.
- Despite the profound crisis of trust between Israelis and Palestinians, the renewal of Palestinian worker employment should be examined, subject to comprehensive background checks.
- To meet the requirement of realizing the rights of Palestinian workers from the period prior to the war, mutual frameworks should be established to address workers' complaints regarding salaries due to them for work hours, severance, and additional rights. The tripartite framework should be utilized as a mechanism to address such complaints.
- Conference discussions revealed that bilateral agreements are preferable over private initiatives to bring in foreign workers to Israel. It would also be appropriate to reduce the number of countries of origin from which workers

arrive, facilitating oversight of employing agencies. This reduction will also reduce the need for translation and communication/mediation costs.

- Through negotiation with origin countries, it is important to insist that steps be taken to reduce the exorbitant commission fees demanded of workers in their homelands. This financial burden produces unreasonable pressure on workers to defray debts, it disrupts employment in their destination country, often leads to exploitation, has resulted in work injuries, and produced underreporting of additional work hours.
- The involvement of unions in providing information regarding the benefits of worker representation is a valuable practice. Signing collective agreements creates stability in the system overall while also ensuring reasonable work conditions. The involvement of employer organizations and worker representatives is the collaboration that produces conflict resolution mechanism.
- Therefore, the dissemination of information to foreign workers regarding their rights is crucial and these efforts should be expanded.
- Training in work safety is also profoundly important and certainly should be expanded in high-risk industries, such as construction.
- In terms of social relations, the interrelations of foreign workers should be supported through informal meetings, particularly in professions such as nursing care in which workers spend the majority of their days alone with no community contacts.
- Workers should have a clear place to call with questions on various topics. Promoting organized labour, among others, will make efforts to help make this possible.
- Some of the workers from Thailand who have since left Israel may be returned to support agriculture as these are workers who stayed in Israel and have already adjusted to life and work here.

- The proposed solution to revalidate visas of those already here to address the shortage is possible and should be applied for a predetermined period of time. This solution would also reduce the number of workers currently in Israel but in the grey zone of official status and will return them officially to the system.



Migrant Workers and Labour Market

Focusing on their Status in Selected Countries and in Israel

IIRRA Conference in Cooperation with the ILO and FES

21/11/24 – Hybrid Mode

Venue - The International Institute of Leadership, Kfar Saba

***9.00-9.30-** Getting together and registration

9.30-11.00- Plenary- Opening speeches- **Dr. Roby Nathanson**, D.G., Macro, the Center for Political Economics, Chairperson, IIRRA Steering Committee

Mr. Emmanuel Julien, ILO, Deputy Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia

Mr. Micky Drill, Project Manager, FES - Israel

Panel – **Labour Market Needs and Migrant Workers**,

chair- **Dr. Lilach Litor**, Dep. of Sociology and Political Science, the Open Univ. of Israel

Participants: **Adv. Hila Sheinok**, Director of Macro Economics and Policy Dep., Histadrut, **Adv. Michal Hili Waxman**, Head, Labour Relations and Human Resources Div., Manufacturers Association of Israel, **Adv. Libka Halabi Hasson**, Commissioner for Labor Relations, Tel Aviv and Central Districts, Ministry of Labor.

Decisions taken by the Ministries Directors General- **Mr. Daniel Ittah**, Economy and Infrastructure, Senior Team Manager, Prime Ministers' Office

International labour standards for migrants. An international perspective -

Mr. Dan Smith, ILO

Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia

11.00- 11.20 - break

11.20-13.20- 3 round tables:

Round table 1- Agriculture and Construction Sectors, Chair, **Dr. Lilach Lurie**, Labor Studies, Tel Aviv Univ.

Mr. Itzhak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction Sectors, Related Industries Workers Union, Histadrut, **Adv. Zuri Zanzuri**, Commissioner for Foreign Workers Labor Rights, Ministry of Labor, **Dr. Yahel Kurlander**, Senior Lecturer at Tel Hai Academic College,

Mr. Uri Dorman, General Secretary, Israel Agricultural Association, **Adv. Michal Tadger**, the Workers' Rights' Clinic, Tel Aviv Univ.

Round table 2- Nursing Sector, Chair, **Dr. Gadi Nissim**, IIRRA chairperson, Ruppin Academic Center,

Dr. Sharon Remer Biel, Sociologist and anthropologist Researcher. Family Studies, Tel Aviv Univ. **Ms. Orit Benvenisti** , CEO, Tigbur Group, **Ms. Tsaffy Hillel Diamant**, National Div. of Implementation of Nursing Standards, Div. of Geriatrics, Ministry of Health, **Adv. Amir Yaron**, Deputy Chairman of The Trade Union Division In The Histadrut. **Adv. Hadas Glazer**, qualified and experienced social worker working in Geriatrics.

Round table 3- migrant workers' rights and their status, Chair, **Dr. Roby Nathanson**
Presentation- **Union Policy concerning Migrant Workers' Rights - Dr. Assaf Bondy**, Bristol Univ. UK, Haifa Univ., senior researcher Arlozorov forum.

Mr. Gershon Gelman, Manpower Agencies Migrant Workers by Nomination, Histadrut, **Mr. Itzhak Gurevitz**, DDG, Human Resources, Taxation and Economics Israel Builders Association, **Adv. Joseph Gattegno**, labour law and labour relations

13.20-14.00- a lunch break

14.00-15.00- Plenary

Closing session, Chair, **Dr. Gadi Nissim**,

Chair persons of Round Tables,

Discussion on main issues and setting practical

Recommendations out of round tables discussions

- **All hours presented in Israeli time**