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Hebrew Labor without Hebrew Workers: The Histadrut, Palestinian Workers, and the Israeli Construction Industry

Sai Englert 

ABSTRACT

The Histadrut was founded in 1920 to organize the so-called Zionist conquest of labor, which aimed to exclude Palestinian workers from the economy. While this ideology was central to the Yishuv, labor shortages and settler-colonial expansion following the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 led to the integration of Palestinian workers in the workforce. Focusing on the construction industry, this article explores the ways in which the Histadrut's contemporary membership structure, collective agreements, and relationship to the Israeli state serve to further institutionalize a highly racialized and segregated sector. Palestinian and migrant construction workers toil in dangerous circumstances for low pay, without union protection, and under the supervision of unionized Jewish managers and engineers.

KEYWORDS

construction industry; Histadrut; Construction and Wood Workers' Union; Zionist Labor Movement; Hebrew labor; Palestinian workers; migrant workers

IN 2010, THE ISRAELI CONSTRUCTION AND WOOD WORKERS' UNION (CWU), a member union of the Histadrut—Israel's largest trade union federation and a historic institution of the Zionist movement—signed a collective agreement with employers in the construction industry. Union officials celebrated it as a groundbreaking achievement.¹ The 2010 agreement covered roughly 300,000 workers thanks to an extension order issued by the Israeli government, which imposed the agreement's provisions on the entirety of the construction and related industries across the country. The text of the agreement claimed that its provisions cover Israeli Jewish, Palestinian, and migrant workers equally;² provide the highest minimum wage in Israel; create a broad spectrum of training and career improvement opportunities; generalize seniority, pension, and sick pay benefits across the workforce; and set up new and more rapid forms of dispute resolution. The 2010 agreement, as well as subsequent iterations signed in 2015 and 2018, highlighted the development of an internal disputes procedure to address worker complaints and resolve failures to implement the agreements' provisions.³ The CWU and employer organizations also set up joint arbitration committees, made up of representatives of both, with the stated purpose of addressing disputes before they reached the labor courts.⁴

Not only did CWU officials in Israel celebrate what they claimed was a major achievement, they also touted the agreement internationally as a demonstration of the supposedly equal treatment that Palestinian and migrant workers are afforded in Israel. This focus on the international sphere appears to have been meant as a challenge to the growing popularity of the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which is gaining increased traction across the world, including within the labor movement.⁵ In the CWU's thirteenth congress report, for example, Itzhak Moyal, the union's general secretary, stated that many European countries view Israel negatively due to a "misguided view." He continued: "We prove

proper care and true concern for the rights of Palestinian workers insofar as possible.”⁶ Moyal then lauded the 2010 collective agreement, saying that “the equalization in status among construction workers ... aroused wonder among trade unions around the world.” And to highlight his main concern, Moyal added: “The acknowledgement that Israel, for all its political complexity, does not discriminate against Palestinian workers attracts special interest and a point in its favor in many countries in Europe.”⁷ This attempt at Israeli “labor diplomacy” is certainly not an isolated instance. In 2022, for example, Moyal supported a deal to include Moroccan workers in the Israeli construction industry as part of the normalization agreement signed between the two countries.⁸

The 2010, 2015, and 2018 collective agreements were positively—if cautiously—received by some, within scholarly circles as well.⁹ In particular, some scholars emphasize that the reestablishment of more centralized labor relations, after years of state- and employer-led assaults on the power and influence of trade unions, has the potential for greater inclusion of Palestinian and migrant workers in the Israeli labor movement and its institutions. They also view the development of joint arbitration committees as especially important. For example, while recognizing that the collective agreements “kept the basic exclusionary principles of Israeli [industrial relations] intact, eschewing bottom-up inclusive strategies such as organizing among the sector’s most precarious workers,”¹⁰ Assaf Bondy and Jonathan Preminger argue that these changes enabled the union and employer organizations to “legitimately represent their constituencies—(noncitizen) Palestinian workers and their employers—in keeping with efforts by unions elsewhere to broaden their constituencies.”¹¹ Even more emphatically, they claim that collective agreements have “spurred organized labor to change,” whereby “formerly excluded and suppressed workers (Palestinians)” are given increased “access to rights and the effective exercise of their social citizenship.”¹²

This article challenges this view. It argues that, far from providing Palestinian and migrant workers with greater avenues for inclusion in the CWU, the Histadrut, and the Israeli labor movement more generally, the collective agreements further entrench discrimination within the construction industry. To show this, the article examines the agreements within the contexts of: 1) the history of the Histadrut and the Israeli labor movement; 2) the political importance of the construction industry in Israel and the segregated nature of its workforce; 3) the dire working conditions of Palestinian and migrant workers within the industry, including in the aftermath of the collective agreements; and 4) the ways in which the structures of the union reproduce the segregation of the workforce.

The article argues that the CWU, as part of the Histadrut, plays two important roles in the construction industry and within the Israeli settler-colonial project more generally. First, it participates in reproducing the racial segregation of the workforce, both through its membership structure and its implementation of the collective agreements. Indeed, its members are primarily made up of a minority of Jewish workers in construction who occupy stable, often permanent jobs, in managerial, supervisory, and skilled positions.¹³ The majority of the workforce is made up of Palestinian and migrant workers who are concentrated in often outsourced, temporary, dangerous, and badly paid so-called wet works—jobs like cementing or plastering that require the use of water.¹⁴ This paper shows that while the 2010 agreement was imposed on the entirety of the construction industry through a governmental extension order, theoretically covering workers employed in wet works, in practice, its provisions are largely limited to the minority layer of privileged Jewish workers.

Second, the article argues that the CWU plays an important role in reproducing the existing settler-colonial order by dominating labor organizing in a key strategic sector. That is, the construction industry is critical to sustaining Israel's settler-colonial project through the continued construction of settlements, separation walls, and other infrastructure of occupation. And since it is primarily composed of Palestinian and migrant workers, the workforce in the construction industry poses a potential significant threat to the Israeli regime.¹⁵ These workers could strike, as they did briefly in 2021, bringing a halt to the sector and costing the Israeli economy a great deal. In fact, due to the restrictions imposed on Palestinian workers during the COVID-19 pandemic alone, the Israeli Builder's Association estimated that "the sector's monthly loss due to the decline of Palestinian manual labor could reach NIS 4.56 billion and disrupt the employment of over 125,000 Israelis."¹⁶ Existing potential is not the same as its realization, of course; however, the dominance of the CWU in the construction industry continually suppresses the potential of Palestinian and migrant workers to disrupt the Zionist settler-colonial project.

The article proceeds in three steps. First, it gives a historical overview of the relationship between the Histadrut and Palestinian workers. Second, it discusses the key features of the construction industry today, showing its structural reliance on a cheap, commuting, and majority Palestinian workforce, which carries out its work under extremely dangerous conditions. Finally, the article discusses the CWU's role in the construction industry and argues that it actively reproduces racial segregation between Palestinian and migrant workers on the one hand, and Jewish workers on the other. It does so through its membership structure, its collective agreements, and its trade union activity.

The Histadrut and the Zionist Conquest of Labor

An Israeli man and his grandson are driving from Haifa to Ashdod. On the way, the man says to his grandson: "Do you see that bridge? When I was a young man, I built that bridge." A little while later, he says: "Do you see that road? When I was a young man, I built that road." Some time passes, and again, he says: "Do you see that building? When I was a young man, I built that building." His grandson looks increasingly confused and after a while, he turns to the man and says: "Grandpa, tell me, when you were a young man, were you an Arab?"

This "joke," recounted by an Israeli labor activist,¹⁷ a former subcontracted teacher and a member of the Israeli Coalition for Direct Employment, reflects stark transformations within the Israeli construction industry—and the Israeli anxieties surrounding them—from the 1920s to the present.¹⁸ Once a central focus of the so-called conquest of labor campaign waged by the Labor Zionist movement was to rid the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine before 1948) of its dependence on Palestinian workers, the construction industry in Israel has largely depended on Palestinian workers since the 1960s. The "joke," then, also captures a striking aspect of Israel's settler-colonial project: its infrastructure and expansion are dependent on the labor of the very population it displaces and dispossesses.

The place of Palestinian workers in the Israeli construction industry has received considerable scholarly attention.¹⁹ The same is true for Israel's largest trade union federation, the Histadrut,²⁰ many aspects of which have been studied in great detail, including its participation in developing both the Yishuv and the Israeli state's state and economy, its role in fighting for the so-called conquest of labor,²¹ and its trajectory from the zenith of its power in the direct

aftermath of the Nakba, to its fall from grace half a century later.²² However, much less has been written about the nature and activity of the Histadrut in the aftermath of the wave of privatization in the late 1990s, and in the construction industry in particular. Indeed, the relative dearth of coverage the topic has received reflects the dramatic weakening of the Histadrut throughout the 1990s when it stopped being a major employer and lost its status as a quasi-state institution—with its own bank, health care services, and industries. Effectively, it was shorn of both its economic and welfare wings in the course of several waves of privatization. And by the turn of the twenty-first century, the Histadrut appeared to have become a “traditional” union federation,²³ which has attempted since the late 2000s to rebuild its membership and influence through a series of more militant unionization campaigns.²⁴ This section gives a brief overview of this history in order to contextualize the discussion of the CWU and its labor agreements over the last decade or so.

The Histadrut was founded in 1920 by the emerging Labor Zionist movement in Palestine. Its prime focus was to facilitate the settlement of the land and to coordinate the campaign for the conquest of labor, also referred to as the campaign for Hebrew labor. Its founders defined its goal as follows:

[To] unite all the workers and laborers in the country who live by their own labor without exploiting the labor of others, in order to arrange for all settlement, economic and also cultural affairs of all the workers in the country, so as to build a society of Jewish labor in Eretz Yisraël.²⁵

This language clearly reflects that the Histadrut’s membership would be exclusively Jewish—a reality that would remain unchanged until the 1960s. Indeed, it was an explicitly Zionist organization, open to Jews only, with the goal of facilitating and organizing Jewish settlement in Palestine as effectively as possible.

The Histadrut, and the Labor Zionist movement more generally, understood this task as needing to be carried out against both the indigenous Palestinian population as well as against the Zionist bourgeoisie. This is because the latter’s vision of Zionist settlement in Palestine included an economic model based on landowning Jewish settlers exploiting cheap Palestinian labor in cash crop production. Several comparative models were mobilized to justify this approach, such as the French colonization of Algeria.²⁶ The issue for the Labor Zionists was that this model left no place for the integration of Jewish workers in the economy. Indeed, the wages offered to Palestinian workers by Jewish landlords were so low that they were unacceptable to Jewish workers. In fact, throughout the 1920s, it was not uncommon for the numbers of Jews leaving Palestine to be higher than those arriving.²⁷ This was a major issue for Labor Zionists who considered that the failure to attract enough settlers to Palestine would render the labor movement a small minority and, therefore, unable to establish political dominance in the Yishuv.

The campaign for the conquest of labor was the response of the Labor Zionist movement to Jewish employers’ refusal to hire more expensive Jewish workers. Its aim was to displace Palestinian workers out of the so-called Jewish economy. In practice, this translated into pickets, boycotts, and public delegitimization campaigns against Palestinian workers and Jewish-owned businesses that employed them or sold the goods they produced. The campaign reached its peak during the 1936–39 Arab Revolt, when the Histadrut provided British Mandate authorities with strikebreakers, and its militias participated in securing key British infrastructure, such as pipelines and railways.²⁸ In fact, Labor Zionists referenced other settler-colonial

contexts, such as South Africa, as examples of why developing an economy dependent on Indigenous labor would be a mistake for the Zionist movement: to do so would make the project vulnerable to resistance by Indigenous workers.²⁹

The Histadrut and the Labor Zionist movement never managed to actually exclude Palestinians from the Yishuv's and then Israel's labor market,³⁰ with the partial exception of a brief period immediately after the Nakba.³¹ If it took the expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians to establish some level of Jewish exclusivity in the workforce, the "achievement" was short-lived. In the aftermath of the Nakba, the Israeli state imposed military rule on the roughly 150,000 Palestinians that remained within the new state's borders. These Palestinians that now had Israeli citizenship were contained in areas from which they could not leave without explicit authorization, such as work permits, largely—but not exclusively—in the Galilee and the Naqab.³²

While this policy geographically segregated Palestinians within the new state, it did not fully exclude them from the labor market. In the period between 1948 and 1967, Palestinian workers made up "a quarter of the Israeli construction and agricultural workforce."³³ Instead, it turned them into a reserve army of labor that the Israeli state could dip into or close down, depending on the needs of the labor market.³⁴ This system was regulated by a military government in which Histadrut representatives served. Palestinians were issued work permits in periods of labor shortages, allowing them to leave their areas to work in Israeli industries, but the permits were withdrawn when these workers competed for work with new Jewish arrivals.³⁵ Histadrut officials even offered Palestinians work permits in exchange for votes for the Labor Party.³⁶ In addition, the Histadrut set up the Israeli Labor League, which served as a sort of labor exchange for Palestinians, as well as a form of political control. Indeed, Palestinian union organizers or political activists could be excluded from the league and thereby from receiving permits.

But chronic labor shortages, which reached a peak in the mid-1960s, and increasing political activity among Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, led the Israeli state to lift existing restrictions. As a result, Palestinians were allowed to join the Histadrut as members starting in 1959, were granted voting rights in the federation in 1965, and were released from military rule in 1966. Their membership, however, remained largely nominal; union representation was geographically organized around workplaces, and therefore, geared toward serving residents in the majority Jewish cities in the center of the country.³⁷ Palestinians were thus integrated more fully within the Israeli economy than they had been before, but remained largely excluded from trade union representation.

Israel's occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights in 1967 moved practices tried and tested on Palestinians with Israeli citizenship—such as geographic segregation, military rule, and labor flows regulated by work permits—into the newly occupied territories. By this time, however, the Histadrut's role in managing the occupation was more limited, albeit not absent. For example, directly after the occupation began, the Histadrut set quotas for the number of Palestinian workers who would be allowed to work across the Green Line.³⁸ As Leila Farsakh shows, the process of integrating Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza into the Israeli labor market after 1967 followed the same pattern as that imposed on Palestinians who remained in what became Israel after 1948: Dispossessing them of their land in order to make way for Israeli settlement and infrastructure, leaving them with few other choices than to seek employment

in Israel's economy.³⁹ As more workers were pulled into the Israeli labor market, their active and continuous presence on the land lessened, which in turn facilitated further waves of dispossession.⁴⁰ From the 1980s onwards, these workers, much like their counterparts within the Green Line before them, were disciplined through the distribution and withholding of work permits.

The Histadrut benefitted from this process in two ways. First, as an employer, it profited from the downward pressure on wages in the private sector that the entry of workers from the occupied territories represented. This was especially the case through its ownership of Israel's largest construction company, Solel Boneh, which became increasingly dependent on flows of Palestinian workers.⁴¹ This was no small matter. In fact, during World War II, Solel Boneh became the "largest contractor in the Middle East,"⁴² and by the end of the 1950s, it "generated 8 percent of Israel's national income."⁴³ With the benefits it received as an employer, the Histadrut therefore presided over the growing racial segmentation of the workforce, and the rapid decline in union coverage and power in a key industry.

Second, the Histadrut collected "organizing fees" to cover the cost of the alleged representation these workers received from the federation, as well as contributions for a "provident fund," deducted directly from the workers' paychecks without their consent.⁴⁴ It did so despite the fact that the workers from the occupied territories could not join the union and did not receive these benefits. In the same way, the state extracted social security payments from their wages—services that, as noncitizens, they could not access either. To this day, the federation continues its practice of extracting union dues from all workers that are covered by its collective agreements, including those from the West Bank—a coverage which is, at best, theoretical. In fact, in 2008, the Histadrut signed an agreement with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) outlining a plan for the transfer of at least 50 percent of the dues collected from workers from the West Bank and Gaza to the PGFTU. The agreement also included the transfer of contributions collected since the beginning of the 1993 Oslo Accords. Not only does this agreement allow the Histadrut to continue levying the dues, and therefore, hold leverage over its Palestinian counterpart, but there is strong evidence that it repaid less than 20 percent of the promised sum,⁴⁵ and that none of the money collected before Oslo was returned. Therefore, although the Histadrut's economic empire was privatized throughout the 1990s, and its direct economic and political power over the lives of Palestinian workers consequently waned,⁴⁶ the case of the union dues is indicative of ongoing discrimination.

The role of the Histadrut thus shifted from campaigning against the employment of Palestinian workers in Jewish-owned businesses in the pre-1948 period, to managing their inclusion in sectors where Jewish workers were absent or underrepresented. This process started early on after the creation of the Israeli state, and it accelerated from the 1960s onwards, first through the lifting of military rule on Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, and then after the 1967 occupation of the whole of historic Palestine and the subsequent flows of Palestinian workers across the Green Line. Importantly, as a union, the Histadrut profited from this shift through collecting dues from workers it never intended to represent, and as an employer, through the downward pressure on labor costs in the private sector. This historical trajectory is important in order to understand the Histadrut's contemporary relationship to Palestinian workers, as well as the current shape of the workforce in the construction industry—a vital industry in Israel's settler-colonial project.

The Israeli Construction Industry Today

The Israeli construction industry is politically and strategically significant. In order for the settler-colonial project to develop materially, expanding, and deepening its control over Palestinian land, it has to build the necessary infrastructure. Many of the images most commonly associated with the structural violence perpetrated against Palestinians—including settlements, separation walls in the West Bank and Gaza, Israeli-only roads, and check-points—are the product of this industry. In addition, construction is linked to housing new Jewish settlers, thereby further increasing Israel’s control over Palestinian land. Certainly, construction is not the only industry that serves the purposes of the settler-colonial project. Agriculture was key to settling Palestinian land during the Yishuv and in the aftermath of the Nakba,⁴⁷ while the high-tech industry is crucial in maintaining Israel’s military rule over Palestinians.⁴⁸

The construction industry’s contribution to the Israeli economy is not insignificant either. In 2018, residential construction contributed “30.4% of the total gross fixed capital formation” in Israel,⁴⁹ whereas “capital formation in non-residential buildings and other construction work (industrial buildings, offices, educational institutions, roads, etc.)” stood at 22.8 percent.⁵⁰ In 2016, MarketLine claimed that the construction industry in Israel represented 25.1 percent of the overall revenues in construction across the region, placing it just after Saudi Arabia.⁵¹ Furthermore, the industry appears relatively resistant to crisis. For example, as the Bank of Israel (BOI) notes, the Israeli construction industry continued to grow at a time of general economic slowdown in the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis,⁵² which further underscores its political character. Even as the COVID-19 crisis brought many sectors of the Israeli economy to a halt—or at least forced them to considerably reduce production—as it did elsewhere, Israeli employers continued to require Palestinian workers from the West Bank to maintain production in the construction industry, despite catastrophic consequences to these workers and their communities.⁵³

Table 1. Workers (in thousands) in the Israeli construction industry.⁷⁸

	From within Israel (1)	From the West Bank and Gaza (2)	From abroad
2004	128.7	4.8	10.8
2005	127.1	6.7	10.8
2006	134.4	7.8	11.7
2007	150.2	12.1	10.1
2008 (3)	150.7	14.1	11.0
2009 (3)	143.6	15.5	10.2
2010	157.4	16.3	9.7
2011	162.5	18.2	10.3
2012 (4)	153.8	21.3	10.2
2013	165.8	26.9	11.2
2014	172.6	34.2	10.5
2015	181.2	39.8	11.6
2016	187.0	48.5	13.0
2017	196.9	57.3	15.2
2018	200.0	62.0	18.0
2019	205.8	66.6	19.7
2020	198.1	56.0	18.4
2021	195.4	67.2	18.4
Jews	114.4		
Palestinians	75.9		
with Israeli citizenship			

The construction industry's profitability is primarily underwritten by a very large dependence on "low-skilled" migrant and Palestinian labor (see [Table 1](#) for a breakdown of the labor force).⁵⁴ As the BOI laments, both labor productivity and workers' skill levels are strikingly low in construction, because the labor-intensive nature of construction in Israel has held back industrialization and technological development in the industry.⁵⁵ But it is this fact that guarantees the profitability of the construction firms.⁵⁶ The profits that are to be made by employing Palestinian and migrant workers with few—if any—rights, low wages, and little to no social protection, are too important and easy to come by. Construction companies are therefore not incentivized to invest in new technology or more costly Jewish workers.

This reality must be understood as the outcome of Israeli settler-colonial policies and the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Indeed, the expulsion of indigenous Palestinians from their lands, coupled with their geographic fragmentation across historic Palestine, turned them into a captive labor reserve for Israel, largely in agriculture and construction, but also in other sectors such as manufacturing. Moreover, as Salim Tamari shows, this logic locked Palestinians into a vicious settler-colonial cycle:⁵⁷ As the Israeli state dispossesses Palestinians from their land, it makes them increasingly dependent on its labor market. And the more dependent on the Israeli labor market they become, the more disconnected Palestinian workers become from their land, which in turn facilitates further dispossession.

To put this process in numbers, as Palestinians with Israeli citizenship were being integrated more fully into the Israeli labor market in the 1960s, they made up "17–20 percent of all workers in Israeli construction and 23 percent of those in agriculture."⁵⁸ By the 1980s, just before the outbreak of the first intifada, "Palestinians from the [occupied Palestinian territories] made up around 7% of the Israeli labor force. Around one-third of the West Bank labor force worked in Israel in 1985, with around half this number working in the construction industry."⁵⁹ In 1987, in the midst of the first intifada, the presence of Palestinians in such large numbers in key sectors gave them a level of power within the Israeli economy through strikes and stay aways.⁶⁰ In fact, Labor Zionists already warned against this in the pre-1948 period; through employing Palestinians as cheap labor in the Israeli workforce, they argued, Israel opened the door to their disruption of important sectors of its economy.

The state's response, which lasted throughout the 1990s and came to an end after the suppression of the second intifada in 2005, was to replace the majority of workers from the West Bank and Gaza with temporary migrant workers from abroad—migrants whose visas were controlled by their employers (not unlike the *kafala* system in several Arab states). The majority of these workers were hired in construction, which, at its peak in 1996, officially employed 76,000 migrant workers.⁶¹ These workers came principally from Romania but also from across Eastern Europe, China, Turkey, and Thailand (which became the largest supplier of agricultural workers in Israel).⁶² Unsurprisingly, a system where employers control workers in this way is highly exploitative: Workers pay large sums of money to brokers in order to gain access to the Israeli labor market, where they are then charged by their employers for housing, transport, and often bogus fines. Israel Drori summarized the relationship between employers and migrant workers as follows:

[It] is intensely paternalistic. It begins with the workers' recruitment in their countries of origin, continues by stripping away their legal identity by taking away their passports, and is maintained by shaping an environment in which workers have practically no independent means to take care of their basic needs.⁶³

Workers are locked into a debt trap which, in addition to their precarious legal status due to their employers holding their passports and being responsible for their work permits, makes the barriers to labor organizing virtually insurmountable.

While the increase in the number of migrants who stayed in the country beyond their visas led to xenophobic campaigns among the Israeli public, it was the end of the second intifada in 2005 that led to growing calls by the military and the security services to increase the employment of Palestinian workers. The logic was that employing Palestinians would allow for greater control over them through granting and withholding work. In addition, workers from the West Bank and Gaza commute daily, which means construction companies need not offer them housing, while their dependency on the Israeli labor market makes them highly disciplinable.⁶⁴ In other words, in this period, the Israeli state revived the approaches developed between 1948 and 1967 among Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, and between 1967 and 1987 in the West Bank and Gaza: a mixture of military rule, geographic segregation (facilitated through the expansion of the settlement project), and a permit regime. For Israel, linking work permits with political quiescence, alongside the influx of money from employment in Israel (chiefly in construction and agriculture), were considered important forces in pacifying the Palestinians.⁶⁵

Although the situation of Palestinians on opposite sides of the Green Line differs greatly, important similarities exist. For example, while Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are under military occupation and blockade, with limited access to basic needs and movement, the geographic fragmentation of Palestinians inside the Green Line is still severe: “only about 15 percent of all Palestinians live in mixed cities side by side with Jews, whereas the remaining 85 percent live in villages, towns, or cities inhabited by Palestinians only.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, Israel discriminates against Palestinians inside the Green Line, including through underfunding and de-development policies, as well as in educational and professional opportunities.⁶⁷ Palestinians with Israeli citizenship are thus often pushed to seek employment in Jewish cities. An organizer in the Arab Workers Union (AWU) explains:

Workers in Nazareth leave every night. You can wake up at 4 or 5 a.m. and see hundreds of workers going to work in Tel Aviv and other towns. They wake up at 4 a.m. and they come back at 8 or 9 p.m. because there are no workplaces here. People travel two hours to get a low salary. I’m not talking about the West Bank, but the situation is the same.⁶⁸

Hebatalla Taha made a similar point in her study of outsourced Palestinian workers in the information technology sector in the Galilee, pointing to wage differentials and core-periphery relations between the Jewish center of the country and Palestinian communities in the north.⁶⁹

Israel did not avoid employing migrant workers altogether, however. Instead, their presence became more regulated through bilateral agreements Israel signed with other countries, especially in agriculture and construction.⁷⁰ The first experiment with this model was developed with Turkey in 1996, but since the 2010s, China has become the preferred partner in these deals in Israel’s construction industry.⁷¹ This system outsources control over migrant workers—including their eventual return home—to the country of origin, while also bypassing local labor regulations.

The ongoing presence of migrant labor also maintains higher levels of segmentation of the workforce, undermines possibilities for joint organizing in the sector, and presents an ongoing threat to Palestinian workers that alternative sources of labor are available and easy to mobilize.

In 2021, the official number of migrant workers in the construction industry stood at 18,400 (see Table 1)—down from 75,000 in 1996.⁷² At the same time, the official number of workers from the West Bank and Gaza⁷³ has steadily risen since the end of the second intifada to 67,200.⁷⁴ In 2019, before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 107,200 Jewish and 89,600 Palestinians with Israeli citizenship worked in the construction industry.⁷⁵ In 2021, these numbers stood at 114,400 and 75,900, respectively. However, the number of Palestinian workers is overrepresented; Palestinians make up about 20 percent of the Israeli population but around 40 percent of the workforce in construction.⁷⁶ Moreover, 37.3 percent of economically active Palestinians with Israeli citizenship work in construction, as opposed to 12.5 percent of Jewish Israelis.⁷⁷

Out of 292,100 official construction workers in Israel in 2019, 184,900 were not Jewish, of which 156,200 were Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line.⁷⁹ In 2021, despite the general reduction in the number of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship who worked in construction due to the pandemic, out of a total of 281,000 workers, 161,500 were not Jewish, and of those, 143,100 were Palestinian. The actual numbers are likely to be more striking still, as the official data considerably underestimate the number of migrant and Palestinian workers from the West Bank in Israel. While small numbers of workers from the Gaza Strip might be included in the data, since the 2005 Israeli blockade, these numbers refer almost exclusively to those from the West Bank. Moreover, Kav LaOved, the Israeli nonprofit association working to protect workers' rights, noted that in February 2022, "approximately 80,000 permits [were] held by West Bank Palestinians employed in the construction sector," which is a stark increase from the previous year.⁸⁰

An official from the MAAN-Workers' Association points out that Israeli—often Russian—Jews dominate management and engineering positions in the construction industry, "but it is a branch of industry that [is] basically occupied by Arabs."⁸¹ Palestinian workers from both sides of the Green Line, alongside migrant workers, make up virtually the entirety of wet works. This situation is no coincidence. As Nimrod Ben Zeev points out, "Palestinian workers from the West Bank, like the migrant laborers officially dubbed foreign workers ... and employed in the Israeli construction industry—primarily Chinese, Moldovan, Turkish, and Bulgarian workers ...—are restricted to these trades by law."⁸²

Similarly, the former head of the Histadrut's Division for the Advancement of Equality (DAE), a Palestinian citizen of Israel, explained:

In Israel, there are 215,000 construction workers, 58 percent of them are Arabs—either Palestinian from the occupied territories or Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel—and there are 4 percent of foreign workers. And this 62 percent are working in the dirty works in construction and the others are managers and engineers.⁸³

This segregation is also visible in pay patterns. In 2016, the BOI found that:

[W]ages in construction were 24–33 percent lower than in the business sector. Wages of Arab [Palestinians with Israeli citizenship] construction workers were 20–28 percent lower than wages of Arab workers in the rest of the business sector ... Wages of Arab construction workers with 12 years of schooling are 2–7 percent lower than the wages of employees with comparable education in the rest of the business sector.⁸⁴

While this is partly a representation of what Sami Miaari and Nabil Khattab call "the gross ethnic penalty of the Palestinian worker"⁸⁵—that is to say, the racial pay gap in the Israeli labor

market, which they estimate to stand at 51.2 percent—it also shows that Palestinian workers are remunerated better in other private sector jobs. This indicates both the difficulty of entering other forms of employment because of discriminatory hiring practices, as well as the downward pressure on wages created by the exploitation of large numbers of Palestinian and migrant workers in the construction industry.

Part of this downward pressure, in addition to racial discrimination, is the high number of migrant and Palestinian workers from the West Bank who are dependent on working without permits. In 2016, the BOI estimated the number of migrant workers in construction at 33,000, roughly two and a half times the number officially registered at the time.⁸⁶ This is explained by the phenomena of workers refusing to return home after their visas run out, changing industry after arriving in Israel, or finding that more money could be made informally by cutting out intermediaries. It does, however, put them further at the mercy of employers. In 2021, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 26,000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza work without permits in Israel, and another 23,000 in the settlements.⁸⁷ Other estimates place the number of Palestinian workers in Israel without permits at around 30,000 during the pandemic.⁸⁸ In fact, a representative of the Israeli Builders' Association estimated that at least 50 percent of construction in private housing was completed by Palestinian and migrant workers without permits.⁸⁹ These numbers remain high despite Israel's attempt over the last decade to use bilateral labor agreements to stem the number of migrant workers in the construction industry who work without permits.⁹⁰

Another important factor causing downward pressure on wages is the rapid growth of outsourcing and subcontracting across the Israeli labor market in the last three decades.⁹¹ The construction industry was a pioneer of this process, leaving the vast majority of jobs in the hands of small subcontracted groups of workers. In the early 2000s, for example, “[i]n all large companies and most medium-sized ones, amounting together to more than 90 percent of cases, all the basic construction jobs were performed by subcontractors.”⁹² Laborers in wet works were largely subcontracted, whereas managers, office workers, supervisors, and skilled workers such as plumbers, electricians, carpenters, and operators of heavy equipment were largely employed directly.⁹³ As a result, subcontracted Palestinian and migrant workers are excluded from benefits such as minimum wages, pensions, health care, and sick pay—benefits that have remained available to their mostly Jewish counterparts in permanent employment.

This system puts great pressure on subcontractors to work quickly, limit the number of workers on each job, and cut corners in terms of health and safety, as well as quality, in order to minimize costs. The situation is similar to the way outsourcing and racialization has played out in the construction industry around the world. As Shmuel Amir points out, however, the difference is that “while construction technologies in most western countries became industrialized and labor-saving in response to rising labor costs there, those in Israel have remained low-skill labor intensive.”⁹⁴ Fundamentally, the strategic way in which the Israeli construction industry is set up, as well as the large pool of captive workers at its disposal, explain this situation. Indeed, the system of subcontracting has allowed large construction companies to limit their expenses while deflecting labor disputes, as subcontracted workers do not often demand better wages from the companies; instead, they push themselves to work faster, in worse conditions, and with fewer colleagues.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the construction industry's reliance on subcontracting makes the process of replacing entire groups of workers easier, as it is not necessary to dismiss them; switching contractors is enough.

This state of affairs has had catastrophic effects on the safety of Palestinian and migrant workers. In 2015, a report by the DAE noted that yearly, 40–60 percent of fatalities at work in Israel and 40–50 percent of nonfatal accidents take place in the construction industry.⁹⁶ The same year, the Coalition for Combating Construction Accidents (CCCA), made up of NGOs and workers’ organizations, reported that the numbers of deaths in Israeli construction, which average 30 annually, are proportionally “seven times higher than in Britain.”⁹⁷ The former head of the Histadrut’s DAE explains that, between 2006 and 2011, only 8 percent of cases of worker fatalities reached a court. When asked why this was the case, he answered: “Because ... [t]hey are Arabs [Palestinians with Israeli citizenship], and Palestinians, and foreigners.”⁹⁸ Echoing this conclusion, the CCCA noted that despite the absence of an exact breakdown of numbers by nationality, “coalition members are aware that most of those injured in construction accidents are Arab citizens, Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories, migrant workers and asylum-seekers.”⁹⁹ Indeed, the DAE reported that 63 percent of the accidents in construction involved subcontracted workers,¹⁰⁰ while both organizations claim that the actual number of accidents is likely higher due to the large number of workers in the Israeli construction industry working without permits.

In 2018, the Histadrut and the Builders’ Association claimed to be willing to remedy the situation, including through creating a new complaints procedure, holding safety workshops, and instating fines to be levied against workers—not construction companies—who fail to follow safety regulations.¹⁰¹ However, since then, little has changed. In 2020, Kav LaOved recorded 37 deaths and 243 injuries in the construction industry.¹⁰² And in 2022, the organization noted that:

[T]he accident rate across all labor market sectors was 14 accidents per 100,000 workers, and the fatality rate was 1.66 fatalities per 100,000 workers. In the construction sector, the accident rate was 112.66 accidents per 100,000 workers, and the fatality rate was 12.25 fatalities per 100,000 workers—far above the European Union fatality rate of 5 deaths per 100,000 construction workers.¹⁰³

Israeli union officials and analysts overlook these figures when celebrating the supposed advances made through the CWU’s collective agreements.

On both sides of the Green Line, Israel exploits Palestinian labor to advance its settler-colonial project, in turn, rendering Palestinians dependent on the Israeli economy and entrenching the oppressive Israeli structures under which they live. At the same time, the racial segmentation of the labor market assigns Palestinian and migrant workers to unsafe and poorly paid employment. The construction industry, then, lies at the crossroads of capital, settler colonialism, and labor relations in Israel. The question to which the paper now turns is how the CWU engages with these workers and responds to the appalling conditions they face.

The Histadrut as the Gatekeeper of Israel’s Construction Industry

Despite localized attempts at unionizing specific sections of the construction industry, such as those of the AWU in Nazareth and its surroundings, in practice, the Histadrut’s CWU is virtually the only trade union in the industry. Its monopoly was further entrenched through the collective agreements it signed with employers in 2010—and its later iterations in 2015 and 2018—which the state then imposed across the industry through an extension order. While Histadrut officials publicize the agreements internationally as indications of the

so-called equality between Israeli, Palestinian, and migrant workers, the stark and pervasive inequalities Palestinian and migrant workers face in the Israeli construction industry tell a different story.

A striking aspect of the 2010 agreement that underscores the CWU's prioritization of the minority of Jewish workers is the so-called Israeli Builders initiative, a collective initiative worth NIS 90 million between the Histadrut, the Builders' Association, and the Ministries of Finance and Defense to offer training to Jewish Israelis and encourage their recruitment in the construction industry. The agreement is presented in the Histadrut's report, *Reviving Hebrew Labor in the Construction Industry*, and is described as having "a Zionist aspect as well as a practical one."¹⁰⁴ In fact, the initiative has precedents: since the late 1980s, and throughout the 1990s, similar programs were established but discontinued because of the low rates of successful integration of trainees into the industry.¹⁰⁵ A representative of the Builders' Association, despite being supportive of its goal, believes that the initiative is likely to meet the same outcome as its predecessors:

It's very important, but history shows that it does not work. First, it is very hard work. In the summer, it is very hot. In the winter, it is very cold. And the Israeli people who come to work in the industry are working with Chinese workers. They are working with Arabs. They don't like it.¹⁰⁶

These campaigns highlight the ideological commitments of the CWU, and the way they fit into the longer-term political approach of the Histadrut and the broader Israeli labor movement. Indeed, given the appalling working conditions across the construction industry, the decision of the CWU to prioritize a joint initiative with employers and the government to "revive Hebrew labor" is altogether obscene. Importantly, reviving Hebrew labor in the construction industry does not mean replacing the majority Palestinian and migrant workforce with Jewish workers. Instead, as Andrew Ross points out, the primary goal of these campaigns is to encourage unemployed Jewish workers and recently demobilized soldiers to become supervisors in the construction industry.¹⁰⁷ The CWU's celebration of its collective agreement at home and abroad as a sign of equality in the Israeli construction industry thus deliberately obscures the stark inequities in hierarchy, pay, job security, and safety to which Palestinian and migrant workers are subjected, as well as its role in sustaining them.

To make sense of the discrepancy between the CWU's claims and the reality, it is important to examine union organizing in the Israeli construction industry. Far from the approximately 300,000 workers covered by the collective agreements, the ILO reported in 2011 that the CWU had 35,650 members, of which "less than a fifth ... were full members entitled to social and recreational services, benefits and discounts on top of being covered by the collective bargaining agreement."¹⁰⁸ Four years later, an internal document of the Histadrut's DAE put the number of CWU members at about 40,000.¹⁰⁹ There is thus a large gap between actual union members and those covered by the agreements.

This gap is racialized and reflects the geographic locations of union branches. It also reflects the different forms of employment of union members compared to those merely covered by the agreements. When asked about the location of union branches, a CWU official explained that they were located in the "big companies. There are 80 representatives of trade union branches in the large companies. The smaller companies choose all sorts of temporary workers."¹¹⁰ CWU branches are thus located where the permanent Jewish workers, who are hired directly by the larger construction companies, are employed. Meanwhile, the majority of

non-Jewish subcontracted laborers are covered by the collective agreements but without being members of the union. An official from the MAAN-Workers Association confirms this:

The union of construction workers within the Histadrut has been reduced to a small layer of management and engineers, while the workers are not in the union at all, because they work through companies or through subcontractors. They are not organized, not getting pensions, and not getting social benefits.¹¹¹

In practice, this means that the CWU receives a sum of money, directly levied from the workers' pay, without having to deal with the majority of workers themselves—either as members, participants in the CWU's institutions, or actively organized trade unionists in their workplaces. In fact, the CWU is inactive in the vast majority of the construction industry's workforce and is therefore unable—or unwilling—to implement the much-vaunted collective agreements in any significant sense. A trade union official summarized the situation as follows:

The sectoral agreement sets decent standards but with no real shop stewards that can enforce it. It's not completely ineffective because you have the courts and you have a certain level of awareness among the workers, but there is no real activity—no strikes, no labor disputes. It's all in the common interest to set up a sectoral standard which helps the employers to level the playing field. The better ones have the incentive to negotiate with us.¹¹²

The use of the collective agreements in construction, then, plays two roles, both of which have little or nothing to do with the majority of the workforce. On the one hand, it allows large companies to set a collective standard by coming to a national agreement with the Histadrut, which the government then extends across the industry. This limits the scope of action for the most unscrupulous among them. On the other hand, the agreement lays down excellent working conditions but only for a limited section of the workforce: the minority of directly employed Jewish workers in the big companies who are organized and actual union members. The rights of the vast majority of Palestinian and migrant workers, primarily employed through subcontractors and concentrated in dangerous wet works, remain illusory. This is not to say that no Palestinian or migrant worker has benefited from some of the collective agreements' provisions—individuals have, for example, gained greater access to dispute resolution boards. It is clear, however, that the overwhelming tendency in the construction industry is one of segregation in both the workforce and the union, and to the detriment of the non-Jewish workers in terms of safety, labor conditions, and pay.

This state of affairs is reminiscent of the Histadrut's response to the influx of workers from the West Bank and Gaza after 1967. Reflecting on this period, Guy Mundlak writes about the gap between the Histadrut's formal policy, which ensured equality between Israeli and Palestinian workers, and reality:

First, as is typical in regard to peripheral workers, the promise of equality was difficult to administer, lending itself in fact to only a very partial equality. Second, the promise of equality was not designed to reflect the view that Israeli and Palestinian guest workers were equal. It was an instrumental strategy aimed at ensuring the rights of the insiders (Israeli workers), and equality was extended to the outsiders only to the extent that it benefited the insiders.¹¹³

If the use of Palestinian or migrant workers risks endangering Israeli workers' wages and conditions, then the collective agreement can protect them. However, within the broader workforce, it means very little. There is thus an effective color bar within the industry, implemented by the employers and further facilitated by the Histadrut. Jewish workers are located

in more permanent, skilled, and unionized jobs, while their Palestinian and migrant counterparts are covered—in theory—by the collective agreement, but remain—in practice—un-unionized, in subcontracted jobs, and carrying out wet works in dangerous conditions for low pay.

The lack of genuine trade union organization in Israel's construction industry is also visible in the very low number of strikes in the sector. The table below shows the number of workers involved in strikes and lockouts every year between 1998 and 2019 by industry. As the figures demonstrate, trade union activity in Israel is concentrated within the public sector, while industrial action in the private sector remains extremely low throughout the period. In fact, this is a historical trend linked to the Histadrut's policy of wage restraint in the private sector, while allowing greater independent action and wage inflation in the public sector.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, the two industries with the highest levels of Palestinian and migrant workers—agriculture and construction—are constantly and considerably below the curve in terms of industrial action. Indeed, in both industries, the number of workers involved in industrial action is too low to register for most years. There was a brief period of exception between 2001 and 2003 in construction, though this reflected a broader upturn in labor militancy across the country. Even in those years, the highest number of workers involved in construction was 4,800 in 2003. In comparison, that same year, 1,187,200 workers in public administration, community, and social services were involved in industrial disputes, while 66,300 workers in the trade, transportation, accommodation and food, and business and administrative services were involved in such disputes.

The numbers in [Table 2](#) confirm the reality of a weak and poorly organized labor movement in the construction industry, an industry in which the Histadrut focuses on sectoral deals with

Table 2. Workers involved in strikes and lockouts (in thousands).¹¹⁵

	Total	Agriculture	Manufacturing	Construction	Mining and quarrying; electricity, gas, and water supply	Trade, transportation, accommodations, and food; business and administrative services	Public administration; community, social, and other services and activities
1998	265.8	0	3.6	0	2.0	20.0	240.2
1999	292.6	0	7.0	0	2.6	7.5	275.5
2000	297.9	0	1.1	0	0	8.8	288.0
2001	426.6	0	4.7	0.8	0	5.3	415.8
2002	1,647.8	0.2	6.2	0.2	0	20.2	1,621.1
2003	1,258.9	0.5	0.1	4.8	0	66.3	1,187.2
2004	722.9	0	1.1	0	0	16.7	705.1
2005	103.7	0	4.1	0	0	32.3	67.3
2006	125.7	0	1.8	0.2	0	5.8	118.0
2007	386.1	0	2.5	0	0	14.8	368.6
2008	19.3	0	2.4	0	0	3.9	13.0
2009	50.9	0	0	0	0.8	20.6	29.5
2010	35.8	0	0	0.1	3.2	23.3	9.2
2011	290.8	0.2	6.9	0	0	1.9	281.8
2012	169.0	0	4.9	0	0	7.8	156.2
2013	21.7	0	2.3	0	0	8.6	10.9
2014	38.8	0	0	0.1	1.3	14.9	22.5
2015	29.9	0	n/a	0	4.1	8.3	17.6
2016	88.4	0	1.8	n/a	n/a	16.38	70.9
2017	815.2	0	3.7	1.4	n/a	19.4	790.8
2018	42.9	0	1.6	n/a	n/a	7.9	33.4
2019	45.1	0	9.4	0.6	n/a	15.9	27.6

employers and protects the interests of a small group of workers through top-down negotiations. They further highlight the fact that the coverage of 300,000 workers in construction and satellite industries, achieved through state-extended collective agreements, does not translate into industrial action in practice. Commenting on industrial relations in construction, a trade union official stated: “When you have such, I would say, dubiously good labor relations, it is because there are no real unions.”¹¹⁶ While the point is valid, it is worth underlining the fact that the reality is worse than not having a union. Indeed, there is a powerful union in the sector—the CWU—that signs collective agreements with employers, which are then supported by the state. The same union then collects dues from workers without representing the vast majority of them, without taking effective action to stop the large number of accidents and deaths in the industry, and without organizing to challenge the proliferation of subcontracting. This situation is made all the more striking by the fact that the same union played an important role in facilitating the emergence of this state of affairs in the industry, and benefited from it as an employer. It is a union which mirrors the racial segregation of the workforce in its own membership structures, thus making it the gatekeeper of this reality in the construction industry.

Conclusion

Through its (in)activity as well as through its membership structure, the Histadrut’s CWU reproduces the patterns of exclusion that characterize the wider industry, and in so doing, participate in normalizing and stabilizing them. In this way, the Histadrut continues to contribute to the Israeli state’s control over Palestinians. It remains a partner in propagating one of the most striking contradictions in Israel’s settler-colonial project: its reliance on the very people it is dispossessing in order to develop the infrastructure necessary to make their dispossession durable.

These realities make it difficult to share the excitement—or even the cautious optimism—surrounding the collective agreements signed in the construction industry. Instead, this article has shown that the agreements are by and large insignificant for Palestinian and migrant workers, even though they make up the majority of the industry’s workforce and carry out its most dangerous jobs. Indeed, the agreements’ provisions are limited to the actual membership of the CWU: the skilled and managerial Jewish minority in the industry. This, in turn, explains the appalling and too often deadly working conditions that Palestinian and migrant workers continue to face, despite the supposedly groundbreaking achievements of the 2010 collective agreement and its successors.

Moreover, through signing these agreements and their extension across the industry, the CWU dominates the terrain that could otherwise be occupied by other, more progressive forces, such as the Palestinian New Unions who aim to rebuild the Palestinian labor movement on both sides of the Green Line.¹¹⁷ This is significant: given the importance of the construction sector, Palestinian and migrant workers occupy a potentially powerful strategic position. They could, if organized, shut down a key sector of Israel’s economy and settler-colonial project. Certainly, the presence of a powerful union opposed to such a development is a critical obstacle to its realization, albeit not the only one; the numerous realities of Israel’s structural violence against Palestinians and migrants—including the segregation of the workforce, military occupation, and permit regimes, among others—contribute to suppressing it.

Notwithstanding, the potential exists, as Palestinians demonstrated during the first intifada and again during their general strike in the spring of 2021.¹¹⁸ The long-term failure of the Israeli state to free itself from its dependence on Palestinian and migrant labor, especially in construction, reinforces the considerable industrial power these workers could wield. As Sobhi Samour remarks, this ongoing dependency also has implications for understanding Israel's relationship with Palestinians across the board: "a materialist appraisal of Israel's demand for Palestinian labor would acknowledge that as long as such demand exists ... Israel's settler-colonial strategy of elimination is kept in check."¹¹⁹

The Histadrut's top-down strategy in the construction industry plays an important pacifying role. It participates in stabilizing a potentially explosive contradiction, and in so doing, contributes to maintaining the status quo. At the same time, it protects the interests of its Jewish members in permanent, skilled, and managerial positions, while simultaneously allowing Israeli capital to profit from a highly flexible, disciplined, poorly paid, and barely protected Palestinian and migrant workforce. The fact that it does so while simultaneously presenting to the world its "achievements" as proof of its own—and Israel's—progressive nature, only adds insult to injury. The Histadrut continues to fight for the defense of Hebrew labor in construction, and does so at the expense of the majority of the industry's Palestinian and migrant workforce.

About the Author

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Endnotes

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2. When using "Palestinians" without further qualification, this article refers to all Palestinians in the construction industry, including Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, as well as Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. When referring to a specific group among them, the necessary qualifications are given.
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4. While in 2010 this provision was made compulsory on workers in the industry, it was downgraded to a voluntary alternative in 2015 after the courts found that it undermined workers' human right to freely access legal redress.
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10. Bondy and Preminger, "Collective Labor Relations and Juridification," 1273.
11. Bondy and Preminger, "Collective Labor Relations and Juridification," 1273.
12. Preminger and Bondy, "Conflicting Imperatives," 22.
13. It is important to point out that skill levels have more to do with political rather than technical consideration. In Israel, as elsewhere, the categories of low-skilled or unskilled labor are primarily ascribed to tasks in the labor process carried out principally by women and racialized workers, while highly skilled jobs remain the purview of Jewish and often male workers.
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17. Anonymous interview conducted by the author, October 12, 2015, Jerusalem. Interviews in this article were carried out during the author's doctoral fieldwork in the summer and fall of 2015, in English and Hebrew. The fieldwork was subject to the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) ethics guidelines and was approved accordingly. All interviewees gave their consent to be interviewed and all participants have been anonymized.
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 36. Rosenhek, "The Political Dynamics of a Segmented Labour Market," 237.
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 42. Jonathan Nitzan and Shimshon Bichler, *The Global Political Economy of Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 118.
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75. “Employment in Construction: Table 20.5” in “Annual Statistical Abstract of Israel 2020: Construction, Housing, and Real Estate,” Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS), August 27, 2020, https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/publications/doclib/2020/20.%20shnatonconstruction/st20_05.xls.
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