

Dr. Wolfgang Lutterbach, head of the International Division of the DGB (Federation of German Trade Unions), visited the Palestinian Territories at the end of August at the invitation of the FES East Jerusalem, as part of a dialogue program.

The visit came about a few weeks following the conclusion of an historic agreement between the Israeli federation of trade unions, the Histadrut, and the Palestinian PGFTU (Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions) about the contributions of Palestinian trade union members in Israel. Dr. Lutterbach, the first high-ranking DGB official to visit the Palestinian Territories for many years, welcomed this agreement as a step in the direction of reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians, and promised to support the two parties in putting it into practice.



Dr. Wolfgang Lutterbach (left) with the General Secretary of the Federation of Independent and Democratic Trade Unions in Palestine (right).

The goal of the visit was to give Dr. Lutterbach an overview of current developments in the Palestinian trade union landscape, and to find out about the potential for cooperation between



Shahir Saed (2nd from left), General Secretary of the PGFTU, in conversation with other trade union representatives.

Palestinian trade union associations and the DGB. Dr. Lutterbach also gained an insight into the obstacles confronting the Palestinian organizations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip above all. Tense political circumstances complicate effective development work, which is urgently required in light of the weak economic situation and high unemployment, especially among young Palestinians.

As a result of this exchange, agreements were reached on further forms of cooperation. One example is the idea of the DGB sending experts to the Palestinian Territories to run training courses there for Palestinian trade unionists. Dr. Lutterbach also promised DGB support in international circles.