

**Another step to improve the safety in the construction industry:
The Histadrut and the Israel Builders Association signed a new collective
agreement -27.11.18**

In a new agreement between the Construction and Wood Workers' Union and the Israel Builders Association, the parties agreed to establish a joint safety committee that will assist in the implementation of safety promoting standards among workers at construction sites, with an emphasis on the obligation to use personal protective equipment. * The committee, which will include the representatives of the parties, can impose monetary fines on employees who violated the safety procedures. *** Histadrut Chairman Avi Nissenkorn: "Another layer that joins the important agreements reached between the Histadrut and the State of Israel on November 6." *** President of the Israel Builders Association, Roni Brik: "The agreement is nothing less than a revolution." *** Yitzhak Moyal, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers' Union: "An important stage in the labour relations and a joint commitment to change the reality on the ground."**

The contractors are joining the Histadrut's efforts for increasing the safety in the construction industry. In a new collective agreement that was signed on 27.11.18, in the presence of Histadrut Chairman **Avi Nissenkorn**, Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers' Union, **Yitzhak Moyal**, and President of the Israel Builders Association, **Roni Brik**, the parties agreed on establishing a joint safety committee whose composition would include a representative from the Histadrut, a representative from the Israel Builders Association and an agreed external safety expert.

The committee that will be established will act to increase the enforcement in construction sites, with emphasis on the obligation of workers to comply with the safety procedures and ensure proper and permanent use of personal protective equipment. The importance of ensuring protective equipment, such as a helmet and safety harness, which is already anchored in regulation but until now had an absence of adequate enforcement, lies in the fact that this is a protective device of utmost importance when working at a high altitude. It is noteworthy to mention that close to 70% of all accidents currently in construction sites are accidents of falling from a high altitude, and with the permanent use of protective equipment, not only the number of accidents but also their fatal consequences can be significantly minimized.

The current agreement, which expresses the mutual desire of the parties to work in cooperation to increase the safety in the construction industry, an industry in which thousands of Palestinian workers are employed, is a complementary step to the agreements reached on 6.11.18 between the Histadrut Chairman and the Israeli government ministers. Among the agreements that the State of Israel obligated itself with the Histadrut: a significant increase of the supervisors' standards in the Labour Safety Administration, turning the European standard for scaffoldings into a binding standard, the regulation of the field of cranes in Israel, binding safety specifications in the Accountant General's tenders, adding safety assistants in construction sites, an obligation for basic training in the field of safety for every construction worker, and other measures aimed at significantly reducing the number of accidents and safety

violations in construction sites.

According to the new agreement, the committee will be authorized to impose monetary fines in cases of safety violations by workers regarding their obligation to use personal protective equipment. On the basis of the worker's refusal to use protective equipment, and as long as the employer has fulfilled his/her duties, including the supply of proper equipment, ongoing safety training and giving explicit instructions to use the equipment, the committee will be able to implement a series of sanctions against the worker who has risked himself/herself or his/her surroundings: starting from a reprimand and a warning and up to a monetary fine which will stand at a multiplication of the worker's daily rate wage, according to the level in which s/he was assigned.

For example, if a worker refuses to use personal protective equipment or there is a severe life-threatening safety violation, such as not wearing a harness during working at a high altitude, the committee can impose a fine on the worker which is double his daily rate wage. If it's a repeated severe safety violation within six months from the date of the previous violation, the amount of the fine may be up to four times the worker's daily wage, according to the level in which s/he was assigned.

Within this, the parties agreed that all the money from the fines which will be imposed by the safety committee and collected from those committing the violations, will be transferred to the Fund for the Encouragement of the Construction Industry in Israel, for purposes that serve the promotion of safety in the industry.

At the signing of the agreement, other partners in the drafting of the agreements were present, including: General Manager of the Israel Builders Association, **Eliav Ben Shimon, Adv.**, Deputy Director General of the Israel Builders Association and Chairman of the Manpower and Labour Relations Division, **Itzik Gurevitch**, Director General of the Economic Division of the Histadrut **Shai Biran**, and **Hila Geber, Adv.**, from the Legal Department of the Trade Union Division of the Histadrut. Also among those present at the signing ceremony: Acting Chairman of the Histadrut **Michael Cohavy**, Vice President of the Association of Contractors, **Vered Tsarfati, Adv.**, Chairman of the Action Committee of Foreman, **Amnon Schindler**, and Chairman of the National Employees' Committee of Tower Crane Operators, **Dan Varshavsky**.

Histadrut Chairman Avi Nissenkorn said at the signing ceremony: "Following a long struggle led by the Histadrut to increase safety at work, and in the construction sector in particular, we are witnessing a change in the general conversation and the commitment of all parties to one common goal: to ensure the safety of the workers. I welcome the willingness of the contractors to cooperate in this matter and see this as another layer that joins the important agreements reached between the Histadrut and the State of Israel on November 6. The current agreement regulates another enforcement mechanism to reduce the number of accidents in construction sites, while encouraging the personal responsibility of workers and preventing conduct that does not comply with the safety rules. The bleak reality whose fatal consequences we have been exposed to in recent years must change and today we have taken another step for this to happen. We will continue to work to increase the safety at

work because it is our obligation."

President of the Israel Builders Association, Roni Brik, said: "This agreement is nothing less than a revolution. In recent weeks, the foundation has been laid in the Israeli construction industry for a real change in the field of safety at work, with a series of tools that all the natural partners are committed to: the employers, government and workers. Alongside the agreement of the State of Israel and the Histadrut, and the addition of a law that will enable the training of safety assistants which was promoted by the Israel Builders Association in conjunction with the Knesset, came the decision of the Histadrut Chairman to join us and to ensure the recruitment of workers to the effort to prevent the accidents. As someone who knows the industry, this is an important tool, without which the other tools would not have worked. I hope very much that the State of Israel will keep its promises in investments and action to increase the safety at work."

Chairman of the Construction and Wood Workers' Union, Yitzhak Moyal, said: "The agreement that was signed today with the Israel Builders Association is an important stage in the labour relations and expresses the joint commitment of the parties to change the reality on the ground. On the one hand, the Histadrut caused the government to take responsibility for everything that happens in the construction industry, and on the other hand, we made sure that also the workers will be partners in the struggle whose goal is to save lives."