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# Israel. WAC Maan signs a collective agreement in Musrara Art College in Jerusalem

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**The agreement's main achievement was moving the teachers from a system of 8 months employment as contractors to 12 months employment with full social benefits**

**Nir Nader – a member of WAC Maan's National committee: "we hope that soon other schools will follow Musrara's example and enter into similar agreements"**

**Avi Sabag – Musrara School's manager: "The agreement was an expression of the school's spirit and its role as a leading force for social involvement and progressive change."**

After negotiations lasting a year, a collective agreement was signed last week between the Workers Advice Center (WAC) and Jerusalem's Musrara College of Art. The agreement covers the employment terms of some 70 lecturers and staff members, who will now be employed in a 12-month framework and be granted full social benefits. As part of the agreement, a teachers' committee was elected, chaired by Gaston Zvi Yitzkovitch. Thus Musrara joins Tel Aviv's Minshar Art College which has a similar agreement with its staff.

Until now, Musrara staff members have been employed on temporary contracts of one or two semesters (up to eight months) without long-term social benefits, as is generally the case in colleges throughout Israel. "Because of their character and the partial disconnection from the (education) system, the colleges permit themselves to get lecturers to sign such contracts – it's legal, but it stinks," said Nir Nader, a member of WAC Maan's National Committee who pushed for the new agreement. Even some of the university institutions employ lecturers under similar temporary contracts.

According to artist Yossi Mar-Haim, who teaches at Musrara and other art institutions, "In most schools, any teacher who has no permanent position signs a form in which he acknowledges there is no employer-employee relationship (between him and the school), even though he might have worked 12 years in the same institution." Many artists teaching in various schools at the same time are employed at each institution for a very few number of hours. "The problem is especially with those who work the minimum such as three hours, who have no status as waged workers in most places," Mar-Haim added.

The process that led to an agreement at Musrara began with the organization of the lecturers about a year ago, when they turned to WAC for assistance in opening negotiations with the management. Avi Sabag, Musrara's founder and manager, said this week he tried to promote a similar agreement in the past, but the attempt failed because some of the lecturers were not willing. He said he saw the agreement as an expression of the school "leading change and being socially involved."

"We are working together now, the management and teachers," he said. "Because most of the teachers are artists and producers themselves, their income is mostly unstable, and the agreement should provide security and stability." Nader expressed his hope that soon other schools will follow Musrara's example and enter into similar agreements.

*Post-scriptum :*

*This article was written by Michael Rorchberg and published in Haaretz, Gallery Supplement, 27 Oct. 2010.*