

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
To the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. H.P.M. Knapen
Postbus 20061
2500 EB The Hague

Re: The Netherlands must condemn the unfounded accusations against six
Palestinian organizations

Datum: 04 november 2021

Dear Minister Knapen,

Thirty-two organizations in the Netherlands are deeply concerned about and condemn the decision of the Israeli Ministry of Defense on October 19th to declare the Palestinian NGOs Addameer, Al-Haq, Defense for Children Palestine, Union of Agricultural Work Committees, Bisan Center for Research and Development, and Union of Palestinian Women Committees as terrorist organizations. This decision has major consequences for these organizations, which have been partners of both Dutch NGOs and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for many years. The Israeli authorities have provided no evidence to substantiate these allegations. The Netherlands must publicly condemn this unfounded accusation and call on the Israeli government to immediately withdraw its decision.

This decision is unfortunately part of a long-standing pattern of repression of Palestinian civil society. By implementing strict NGO legislation and constant false accusations, the Israeli government is making it increasingly difficult for them to do their work. This recent attack threatens the very existence of six prominent Palestinian human rights organizations. While this designation does not automatically apply in the Palestinian territories, with reference to the 2016 anti-terror law on Israeli territory, their offices and assets can now be seized, and funding can be made impossible. It also gives the Israeli government the ability to arrest and imprison employees of these organizations on Israeli territory. This contributes to an unprecedented infringement of civic space. With this decision, the Israeli government has crossed a line. Al-Haq General Manager Shawan Jabarin has framed it as following: "This decision comes in a series of institutionalised practices aiming at smearing Palestinian human rights NGOs and human rights defenders, silencing them on the international level, draining their work, and targeting their resources."¹

Allegations of terrorism, especially if they are based on non-public and unverifiable information, should never be misused to silence critical organizations. Earlier this month, the UN rapporteur on counterterrorism and the protection of human rights, Fionnuala Ni Aoláin, warned that many counterterrorism measures are at odds with human rights and the rule of law.² In her report, she argues that civil society is essential for both addressing and preventing terrorism. Ni Aoláin and other UN

¹ Palestinian Civil Society Organisations Host Press Conference at Al-Haq, Calls on International Community to Intervene to Protect Against Israeli Attacks
<https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/19058.html>

² Counter-terrorism measures increasingly diverging from human rights standards, UN expert warns www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27653&LangID=E

rapporteurs have condemned the Israeli government's decision, calling it an attack on the Palestinian human rights movement and on human rights everywhere.³

Civil society is an important and indispensable part of building a free and democratic society and deserves to be protected. The undersigned organizations support the Palestinian organizations' request for international solidarity and call on the Netherlands to:

- Speak out publicly against this decision by the Israeli government and to condemn it as an unlawful infringement of civil society;
- Call on the Israeli government to revoke the decision with immediate effect;
- Continue its (financial) support to current Palestinian partner organizations and ensure that Dutch banks and financial institutions do not follow this condemnation by the Israeli government;
- Openly support the work of the six affected organizations;
- Give priority to protecting civil society and human rights defenders who stand up for the rights of Palestinians everywhere in the world.

If the international community does not condemn this decision, it will encourage states to believe that criminalizing human rights organizations has no consequences. The way in which the international community responds to this far-reaching attack on human rights organizations will show how important it truly deems human rights.

Yours faithfully,

Oxfam Novib
Amnesty Nederland
PAX
The Rights Forum
SOMO
Partos
ActionAid Nederland
Cordaid
Both ENDS
Transnational Institute
Human Security Collective
Nederlands Juristen Comité Mensenrechten (NJCM)
Plan International Nederland
Defence for Children Nederland
Save the Children
War Child
Terre des Hommes
WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform
Platform Vrouwen voor Duurzame Vrede
Vrouwenorganisatie Nederland Darfur (VOND)
Women's Initiatives Network
Stichting Kifaia
Een Ander Joods Geluid (EAJG)
Gate 48 – Kritische Israëli's in Nederland
Palestine Link
Kairos Sabeel

³ UN experts condemn Israel's designation of Palestinian human rights defenders as terrorist organisations
www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27702&LangID=E

Plant een Olijfboom
Nederlands Palestina Comité
Diensten en Onderzoek Centrum Palestina (docP)
European Legal Support Center (ELSC)
Milieudefensie
Friends of the Earth International