

To the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission,
Mr Josep Borrell

Brussels, 29 October 2021

Subject: The listing of six Palestinian organisations as ‘terrorist organisations’

Dear High Representative,

We, the undersigned European and international organisations, are gravely concerned about the decision by the Israeli Defence Ministry to designate leading Palestinian human rights and civil society organisations as ‘terrorist organisations’. The targeted organizations include Al Haq, Defence for Children International-Palestine, Addameer, the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees, the Bisan Centre for Research and Development, and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees.

The listed organisations have been internationally recognised for their indispensable work investigating and publicly reporting on human rights and humanitarian law violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by all parties, and have long-standing partnerships with the UN, European foreign ministries, EU institutions and international humanitarian and development NGOs.

As a consequence of this decision, taken without due process, the six listed organisations are now at high risk of arrests of their staff and board members, freezing and confiscation of financial and physical assets and permanent closures of their offices under Israel’s domestic Anti-Terrorism Law of 2016.

We take note of the statement issued on 28 October by the Spokesperson. However, we are very disappointed about the lack of recognition that the criminalisation of the Palestinian NGOs and their human rights work is the latest culmination of the longstanding campaign by the Israeli government to undermine and defund the work of human rights defenders and civil society in Palestine.

In contrast, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has described the listing as an attack on human rights defenders and freedoms of association, opinion and expression, and ‘the latest in a long-running series of actions to undermine and restrict human rights defenders and civil society organisations working for the human rights of Palestinians, including using military regulations to declare groups unlawful.’

The former HR/VP Federica Mogherini already firmly rebuked similar accusations in 2018 brought forward by the Israeli Ministry of Strategic Affairs, stressing that ‘vague and unsubstantiated allegations serve only to contribute to disinformation campaigns.’

Now, the EU should once again stand firm in support of human rights organisations in Palestine. This includes publicly condemning and clearly rejecting repeated and unsubstantiated allegations against Palestinian civil society and all attempts to criminalise human rights and humanitarian work.

A firm EU stance would be in line with the commitments made in the EU's 2020-2024 Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy which addresses the global misuse of counter-terrorism measures to close civic space.

We strongly urge that you as the EU's High Representative lead the way to:

- Call on the Israeli government to immediately reverse the decision
- Make clear that repeated attacks aimed at delegitimising civil society and unfounded attempts to effectively criminalise human rights and humanitarian work in Palestine will have serious consequences for relations with the EU
- Reiterate the importance of partnerships with and confidence in the targeted Palestinian organisations and the broader human rights community in Palestine
- Address the misuse of digital technologies and counter-terrorism measures as a priority in the next EU Human Rights and Democracy Country Strategy for Israel
- Initiate comprehensive and regular reporting by the EU Heads of Missions on shrinking space on both sides of the 'Green Line', including policy recommendations

List of signatories:

1. ACT Alliance EU
2. Amnesty International
3. Asociación Paz con Dignidad
4. ASOCIACION AYUJARA
5. ASPA (Asociación Andaluza por la Solidaridad y la Paz
6. Association Belgo-Palestinienne WB
7. Associació Hèlia
8. Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS)
9. Belgian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (BACBI)
10. British Palestinian Council
11. Broederlijk Delen
12. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
13. Christian Aid Ireland
14. CNCD.11.11.11
15. COMITÉ POUR UNE PAIX JUSTE AU PROCHE-ORIENT
16. Cultura è Libertà una campagna per la Palestina
17. DanChurchAid
18. Defence for Children International
19. Diakonia
20. docP - BDS Netherlands
21. EuroMed Rights
22. European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine
23. European Legal Support Center
24. European Middle East Project (EuMEP)
25. European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine
26. FIDH, within the framework of The Observatory for The Protection of Human Rights Defenders
27. Front Line Defenders
28. Fundación Mundubat
29. German Palestinian Association
30. Gibanje za pravice Palestinev
31. Gruppo Ibriq per la cultura e la causa Palestinese
32. Human Rights Watch

33. Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign
34. Makan
35. Medico International
36. Ne našim jménem! - Za spravodlivý mír na Blízkém Východě
37. Netherlands Palestine Committee (Nederlands Palestina Komitee)
38. NOVACT
39. NWRG-onlus
40. ODV Salaam Ragazzi dell'Olivo Comitato di Trieste
41. OMCT, within the framework of The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
42. Oxfam
43. Palestine Legal
44. PAX
45. Rumbo a Gaza
46. Servei Civil Internacional de Catalunya
47. Slovak Initiative for a Just Peace in the Middle East (Iniciatíva za spravodlivý mier na Blízkom východe)
48. Unadikum
49. Union syndicale Solidaires
50. Unión Sindical Obrera (USO)
51. Women in Black Vienna
52. Židovský hlas solidarity (Jewish Voice for Solidarity)
53. 11.11.11