

Dutch NGOs call upon the international community to take action against Israel for targeting Palestinian human rights organisations

After the Israeli army violently [raided and closed](#) seven prominent Palestinian human rights organisations last Thursday, this weekend it threatened the director of Al Haq (Shawan Jabarin) by telephone and detained the director of Defense for Children International - Palestine (Khaled Quzmar) several hours for questioning. This escalation proves once again that statements by European governments expressing serious concerns are insufficient. This, together with the killing of critical journalists and other Palestinian civilians with impunity, has reached the point where the international community must set a clear boundary. This is the limit, according to a broad representation of Dutch organisations.

In October last year, 32 Dutch organisations [condemned](#) Israel's decision to designate six organisations (now seven) as terrorist on the basis of Israeli anti-terror laws. On 12 July 2022, the Netherlands and eight other EU countries expressed their support for the organisations. The EU countries have so far [not seen any evidence](#) of the terrorist designation and therefore rejected the Israeli allegations, as "no substantial information has been received from Israel that would justify a review of our policy towards the six Palestinian NGOs on the basis of the Israeli decision to designate these NGOs as 'terrorist organisations'".

What we warned about in October is happening: in an attempt to suppress the work of human rights defenders, Israel is raiding their offices, confiscating property and documents, then sealing them with metal plates and leaving a military order declaring the organisations illegal. This is a serious violation of the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association and assembly. This ever-increasing restriction on civil society is not in keeping with a country that claims to be a democratic state based on the rule of law.

Several of the seven organisations that have been affected provide evidence of alleged war crimes by Israel to the International Criminal Court. The Netherlands, as host country of the ICC, has an additional responsibility to ensure that civil society organisations, individuals and states can continue to provide the ICC with evidence and information.

Without significant action, the longstanding pattern of repression and undermining of Palestinian organisations will further deteriorate. This is unacceptable and it has become clear that statements alone are not enough to make Israel change its policy. The international community should immediately take the following actions in the face of the threat to the existence of Palestinian civil society organisations and human rights defenders:

- Urge at the highest diplomatic level that Israel withdraws the charges against the seven organisations and brings the underlying anti-terror legislation into line with international law;
- Protect Shawan Jabarin and Khaled Quzmar and other employees from interrogation, arbitrary arrest and detention, and ask Israel to cease all harassment practices and policies, including arbitrary detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, institutionalised hate speech and incitement;
- Add action to it, in line with the [2013 recommendations of the AIV](#), and attach (diplomatic) consequences to this escalation;
- Openly increase financial, political and where necessary logistical support to Palestinian organisations and civil society, guided by the needs of these organisations;
- Give priority in its policy towards Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories to protecting civil society and human rights defenders;
- Call on the Assembly of States Parties and the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to ensure the viability of organisations working to present evidence to the Court.

- PAX
- Amnesty International Nederland
- SOMO
- The Rights Forum
- European Legal Support Center
- Defence for Children Nederland
- ActionAid Netherlands
- Both Ends
- Human Security Collective
- Stichting Aflatoun International
- Right to Play Netherlands
- Transnational Institute (TNI)
- Stichting Kifaia
- Een Ander Joods Geluid
- MENA Werkgroep FNV
- Gate48
- Plant een Olijfbom
- Kairos Sabeel Nederland
- Nederlands Palestina Komitee
- Plan International Nederland
- Oxfam Novib
- International Child Development Initiatives
- Dutch Scholars for Palestine
- Het Grote Midden Oosten Platform
- Impunity Watch
- Friends of the Earth International
- DocP
- WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform