



PNGO & PHROC condemn Israeli attacks on Palestinian Civil Society & Human Rights Defenders and call for continuous international support for our work

Date: March 2018

Dear partners and supporters,

We would like to bring to your attention the escalating attack by the Israeli government and Israeli NGO's on Palestinian civil society organizations using non-violent means to expose and challenge Israel's violations of the fundamental rights of the Palestinians and to promote accountability and protection of human rights.

We urge you not to respond to calls and pressure by these actors to de-fund our organizations and other defenders of human rights and international law. Instead, please maintain your support and defend our rights, allowing us to continue our work to advance sustainable peace and justice.

In the past 50 years of Israel's military occupation, the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has severely deteriorated. The human rights and international humanitarian law violations associated with the occupation negative impact on every aspect of the Palestinians' daily life. Palestinian civil society has had a key role in professionally documenting the impacts of occupation and assisting its victims, in cooperation with the UN and global civil society.

In recent years, The Israeli occupation has increasingly targeted Palestinian human rights defenders exposing and challenging these violations. Peaceful protests in the West Bank are routinely met with violence by the Israeli army. Human Rights defenders seeking to monitor and document violations, including lawyers seeking to represent their clients, have their freedom of movement and access obstructed and is at risk of arrest and detention because of their work. Palestinian human rights organizations providing submissions to the International Criminal Court (ICC) during its preliminary examination have faced even more extreme targeting. Al-Haq and Al-Mezan have had staff members receive death threats and have also been the targets of a wider campaign that attempts to discredit and destabilize the organizations.¹

¹ For more information, consult the PHROC statement at <http://mezan.org/en/post/21477> and the statement by Human Rights Watch at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/14/israel/palestine-palestinian-rights-defenders-threatened>.

Human rights defenders advocating on issues related to Palestine in the United States and Europe are also facing intensifying pressure for bringing attention to Israeli human rights violations. Israel has treated the Palestinian call to engage in nonviolent boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaigns, given the absence of accountability for Israel's violations of international law, as a "strategic threat" and has countered it with increasingly coercive and punitive measures, both in Palestine and globally. On 7 January 2018, Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs announced a travel ban against 20 international groups, which Israel accuses of supporting BDS.

The harassment and obstruction by the Israeli authorities is aided and complemented by organizations such as NGO Monitor, IMPACT-se, UN Watch and the Reut Institute. UN Watch systematically undermines the credibility and legitimacy of United Nations bodies, resolutions and reports criticizing Israel, while NGO Monitor discredits all Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights organizations and lobbies their donors to end funding them. The Reut Institute conducts research about and strategizes against international grassroots activism in support of Palestinian rights. IMPACT-se targets education curricula of Middle East countries and frames these curriculums promoting hatred, anti-Semitism and terror. The research conducted by these actors is well-known for being disingenuous, politically charged and supporting the Israeli government's agenda.

The campaign against Palestinian human rights defenders also targets duty bearers, especially in Europe, in an effort to end their funding of Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations.

It is now of great importance and high urgency that the international community, and in particular Europe, forcefully responds to the escalating attack on Palestinian and international rights defenders.

In this context, we offer the following recommendations to Europe and invite our partners and supporters to reinforce this call:

1. **Condemn and reject the Israeli campaign** against Palestinian human rights defenders, consisting of delegitimization, intimidation, de-funding efforts and anti-democratic legislation, in line with the EU guidelines on freedom of expression.²
2. **Protect and provide political support to human rights defenders** working on Palestine, in line with the EU guidelines on human rights defenders.³
3. **Preserve and provide sufficient funding** to Palestinian human rights organisations and ensure equal, impartial and transparent access to funding.

²https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_human_rights_guidelines_on_freedom_of_expression_online_and_offline_en.pdf

³https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_guidelines_hrd_en.pdf

4. **Respect and defend our right to freedom of expression**, which is one of the basic freedoms any free society should safeguard and guarantee and one of Europe's core values.
5. **Affirm and support the right of Palestinians and conscientious citizens worldwide to "participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms"**, as confirmed by UN General Assembly resolution 53/144.
6. **Refrain from conditioning any funding on the relinquishment by Palestinians of their right to resist** foreign domination, exploitation, oppression and occupation by the means permitted under international law.

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