

The Arab NGO Network for Development Statement
in solidarity with Palestinian Human Rights Defenders Facing Travel Ban

ISRAEL MUST CEASE RESTRICTING THE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT OF PALESTINIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

On October 1st 2017 Mr. Amjad Shawa, the Palestinian NGO Network Gaza representative was not permitted to travel to Amman, Jordan by Israeli authorities. His travel was planned in follow up to an invitation from the European Commission to participate in the EU Policy Forum on Development.

Unfortunately, the case of Mr. Shawa is not the first and will not be the last, given that Israeli occupational authorities continue to use travel ban as a tool to restrict Palestinian civil society representatives to participate on different events and opportunities to engage on advocacy and capacity building programmes. Particularly, like Mr. Shawa, those who work in Gaza continue to be challenged severely. The last Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 raised the worsening situation noting that these human rights defenders are face to face with “non-existent freedom of movement... rarely allowed to journey to Israel, the West Bank or abroad”. Such practices are imposed without any legal procedures. Simply keeping the human rights defenders at airports, preventing them from leaving occupied territories Israel continues to obstruct civil society work, and aim at silencing those who raise their voice regarding the gross and systematic human rights violations committed by Israel at international or regional levels.

Such discriminatory practices by Israel were raised several times by international community, for instance during the last Universal Periodic Review of Israel, within which the Israeli authorities were called to “lift the travel bans imposed on human rights defenders.”

With this statement, issued in solidarity with the Arab NGO Network for Development member in Palestine, PNGO, but as well with all individual Palestinian human rights defenders, ANND calls Israeli authorities to abide by the international human rights law, and honor its obligations with regard to the right to freedom of movement. Freedom of movement is a basic human right, and cannot be denied arbitrarily nor be granted as a privilege. Furthermore, ANND calls international community to ensure collective efforts in calling Israel to comply with international law, to give an immediate and complete end to its 50 years of occupation of the Palestinian territory and to end the use of arbitrary arrests, detentions, collective punishments and travel bans as tools to obstruct the legitimate work of human rights defenders.