



UNJPPI

United Network for Justice and Peace
in Palestine and Israel

Nov. 12, 2021

The Hon. Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
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Dear Minister Joly,

Re: Israel Terrorist Designation of Six Palestinian Human Rights Organizations

Congratulations on your re-election to Parliament and on your recent appointment as Canada's Foreign Affairs Minister.

The United Network of Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel ('UNJPPI') is a grassroots network of United Church of Canada members and friends working for a just peace in Palestine/Israel. We firmly believe that justice for all who live within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory ('oPt') is an essential prerequisite for a lasting peace there. Our membership includes individuals who have served as Ecumenical Accompaniers in the region and many others who have visited there on one or more occasions. We have seen the facts on the ground and witnessed the important work done by human rights defenders.

It is heartening for UNJPPI and our supporters to see, from the Canadian Government website explanation of Canada's approach to advancing human rights, that our government similarly recognizes the key role played by human rights defenders. As noted on your website, an important part of their work is the documenting and calling attention to violations and abuses by any actor, including governments. It is perhaps not surprising when governments whose violations are so documented go to great lengths to silence the human rights defenders. UNJPPI very much appreciates the Canadian government's clear statement of the need to protect these human rights defenders.

From Canadian representatives in Israel and the oPt and other sources, you will know of Israeli Defense Minister Benny Ganz's October 19th designation, under Israel's anti-terrorism legislation, of six organizations that work for human rights in the oPt. The six organizations are Addameer, Al Haq, Defense for Children International -Palestine, Union of

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Agricultural Work Committees, Bisan Center for Research and Development and Union of Palestinian Women Committees. On November 7th, the designation was extended to the West Bank by the chief of the Israeli army's central command.

The response from international human rights organizations and others working for justice, human rights and peace in the region has been swift and unanimous. In a joint statement Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called the Israeli action "an alarming escalation that threatens to shut down the work of Palestine's most prominent civil society organizations." See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/israel-opt-designation-of-palestinian-civil-society-groups-as-terrorists-a-brazen-attack-on-human-rights/>

In an October 25th joint statement, 24 Israeli human rights organizations labelled the "terrorist" designation "a draconian measure that criminalizes critical human rights work" and called "on members of the Israeli government and the international community to oppose this decision unequivocally." See: https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20211025_draconian_measure_against_human_rights

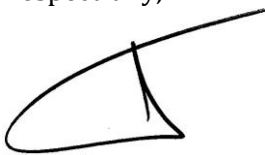
The Israeli Minister of Defense action was also condemned by United Nations human rights experts. They point out "that anti-terrorism legislation is designed for a specific and restricted purpose and must not be used to unjustifiably undermine civil liberties or to curtail the legitimate work of human rights organizations." See: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27702&LangID=E>

And on November 9th the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated: "To date, none of the UN agencies nor Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) organizations have received written documentation which could serve as a basis for the allegations" made by Israeli officials.

We expect that little of this information is new to your ministry. Your officials will hopefully have briefed you on it. The important question for Canadians is: What will be the response of our Canadian government? What action is the Canadian government taking to ensure that these human rights defenders can continue to do their essential work without interruption?

We have not seen any report of a Canadian government response to the actions taken by the Israeli government and military with the apparent intent of stopping the important work of these human rights defenders. We would appreciate receiving a reply to this letter so we can share the information with our members and supporters. Thank you.

Respectfully,



George Bartlett
Chair, UNJPPI



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c.c.

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