



Canadians for Justice and Peace
in the Middle East
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December 13, 2021

Hon. Mélanie Joly
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

Dear Hon. Mélanie Joly,

I am writing to you as President of the Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME, www.cjpme.org), a national non-profit organization concerned with issues of justice, development and peace in the Middle East. I was concerned to hear your [recent remarks in Parliament](#) regarding the six Palestinian civil society organizations which have been falsely designated by Israel as “terrorist organisations.” In a reply to a question from the opposition, you suggested that Canada has not yet made a determination about the credibility of these allegations, stating that you were still waiting for “clarity” from the Israeli government. On behalf of Canadians across the country, I am urging you to end Canada’s hesitation on this matter and act immediately to protect human rights defenders in Palestine.

As you are aware, it has been nearly two months since Israel’s Minister of Defense Benny Gantz [designated](#) six respected and credible civil society Palestinian organizations to be “terrorist organisations,” in a clear attempt to shut down their activities. Since then, Israel has imposed a [military order](#) in the West Bank confirming the terrorism designation of the NGOs, which means that it is a criminal offense (in both Israel and the occupied territories) to express support for these groups’ activities. The organizations targeted in this manner include Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P), which promotes and protects the rights of Palestinian children under occupation, and Al-Haq, a human rights and international law organization that participates actively at the United Nations.

As CJPME and other human rights groups have warned, this designation is certain to have catastrophic consequences for the ability of these organizations to conduct their human rights work and their ability to secure funding, and it poses a grave threat to the safety and well-being of their employees and volunteers.

Significantly, Israel has failed to provide any “evidence” that would justify a designation of such severe implications, and there is no reason to expect that any forthcoming information would be more convincing. Confidential allegations provided by Israel to European lawmakers and leaked to the press have been [widely discredited](#). Moreover, officials and human rights groups around the world have not waited for further allegations in order to speak out in support of the Palestinian NGOs. Here are some examples:

- [Joint statement by UN Agencies and the Association of International Development Agencies \(AIDA\)](#), together representing UN development and humanitarian entities, agencies, funds and programs, as well as 83 international NGOs working in the OPT: “The decision is a further erosion of civic and humanitarian space and stands to significantly constrain the work of the six organisations which have worked with the international community, including the UN, for decades, providing essential services to countless Palestinians. Past allegations of misuse of our funds by Palestinian civil society organization partners have not been substantiated.”



- [Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch](#): “This decision is an alarming escalation that threatens to shut down the work of Palestine’s most prominent civil society organizations. The decades-long failure of the international community to challenge grave Israeli human rights abuses and impose meaningful consequences for them has emboldened Israeli authorities to act in this brazen manner.”
- [Joint statement by more than twenty Israeli human rights groups](#), including B’Tselem, Breaking the Silence, Peace Now, Physicians for Human Rights Israel, Yish Din, and more: Israel’s move is “a draconian measure that criminalizes critical human rights work [...] criminalizing such work is an act of cowardice, characteristic of repressive authoritarian regimes.”
- [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet](#): “Israel’s decision to designate six Palestinian civil society organizations as ‘terrorist organizations’ is an attack on human rights defenders, on freedoms of association, opinion and expression and on the right to public participation, and should be immediately revoked.”
- [Letter from nine United Nations Special Rapporteurs for Human Rights](#): “Since the October designation, there has been a striking lack of evidence and transparency offered by Israel to justify its allegations. The best available public information indicates that Israel has not substantiated these charges, neither publicly nor to Western governments, which support, either directly or indirectly, the work of many of these organizations [...] Should Israel’s allegations against these Palestinians organizations remain unsubstantiated, they will still likely cause serious harm.”

Canada cannot continue to delay action in the face of this major threat to Palestinian civil society. CJPME urges Canada to play a leading role in defending human rights defenders on the international stage, by means of the following:

- Condemn Israel’s criminalization of Palestinian NGOs, and firmly reject the fraudulent “terrorist” designation;
- Hold Israeli officials accountable for its attacks on civil society by imposing sanctions; and
- Do everything in your power to support and protect the work of human rights defenders in Palestine, including by making diplomatic resources in Tel Aviv and Ramallah available to the targeted NGOs, should they request it.

I would be happy to meet to discuss this matter further, and can be reached at 438-380-5410. CJPME is also willing to assist in arranging a meeting with one or more of the Palestinian civil society groups targeted by this latest move, in order to hear more about their experiences and how the international community can help.

Sincerely,

Thomas Woodley, President, CJPME

cc:

Michael Chong, Conservative Foreign Affairs critic
Heather McPherson, NDP Foreign Affairs critic
Stéphane Bergeron, Bloc Québécois Foreign Affairs critic
Elizabeth May, Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party
Lisa Stadelbauer, Canada’s Ambassador to Israel
Robin Wettlaufer, Canada’s Representative to the Palestinian Authority