

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
King Charles St, Whitehall
London SW1A 2AH

August 19, 2022

Dear Foreign Secretary,

I write to you on behalf of the British Palestinian Council (BPC), as further correspondence to a letter from British Palestinian human rights defenders, lawyers, academics and others, dated October 30th 2021, which expressed concern at the State of Israel's decision to criminalise six leading Palestinian human rights organisations and requested that the UK government take immediate action.

We note the reply from your Correspondence and Parliamentary Questions Unit dated December 6th 2021, in which it is stated that the UK government "respect[s] the role that NGOs and civil society organisations play in upholding human rights and democracy".

As you will be aware, there have been further deeply worrying developments within the past 48 hours. On August 18th, Israeli military forces broke into the offices of Al-Haq, Addameer, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense for Children International - Palestine, the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, and Health Work Committees, in some cases ransacking their premises and seizing computers and files, and in other cases sealing premises and leaving notice of their forcible closure until further notice.

Such actions not only compromise the safety and wellbeing of the human rights defenders; they prevent these organisations from carrying out critical work for the benefit millions of Palestinians forced to live under Israeli military rule, a regime which a number of detailed analyses from respected human rights organisations have concluded meets the legal definition of apartheid. In fact, the Israeli government's decision to prevent the work of these organisations cannot be divorced from calls for accountability from such organisations. Whatever position the UK government takes, these actions certainly do not reflect the 'long-standing commitment to democratic values' ascribed to the State of Israel in your letter dated December 6th 2021.

The move to criminalise these organisations in October was met with widespread condemnation from the human rights community, the United Nations, and others. Since that time, nine European governments have [publicly confirmed](#) that “no substantial information was received from Israel that would justify reviewing our policy towards the six Palestinian NGOs on the basis of the Israeli decision to designate these NGOs as 'terrorist organizations'”, and pledged their continued cooperation and strong support for these organisations.

As we noted in our previous letter, “the UK has a commitment and duty to ensure that Palestinian human rights defenders - and human rights defenders around the world - are able to operate without fear of intimidation or reprisal. Every such move that the Israeli government makes, and on which the British government remains silent, not only places Palestinians at further risk but also damages the credibility of the UK.”

We once again request that this matter is accorded the urgent attention and swift action it merits, and that the UK government take the following steps:

- Urge the State of Israel, through all diplomatic and political means, to immediately rescind this designation
- Issue a strong public statement of support for the aforementioned organisations, including the affirmation that the UK government does not recognise Israel’s designation and condemns its actions in targeting these organisations, in line with the UK’s commitment to supporting human rights and human rights defenders in Palestine and around the world
- Take proactive steps to ensure the UK and its citizens are not complicit in human rights abuses, whether through arms trade, settlement trade, or any other financial links to Israel’s settlement enterprise.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



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Cc: The Rt Hon Amanda Milling
Minister for Asia and the Middle East