

Simon Coveney T.D.,
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence,
Iveagh House,
St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2

18th August 2022

Dear Minister Coveney,

All 6 Palestinian civil society organizations who were wrongfully criminalized by Israel in October 2021 (Al Haq, Addameer, Union of Palestinian Women Committees, Union of Agricultural Work Committees, the Bisan Center, and Defence for Children International) had their offices in Ramallah raided, ransacked, and forcibly closed by the Israeli army early this morning. A seventh organisation, the Union of Health Work Committees was also raided with equipment confiscated, and there are reports that St. Andrews Anglican Episcopal Church in Ramallah was also broken into and damaged by Israeli forces overnight. This egregious attack on human rights must be swiftly condemned and sanctioned.

As you are aware this comes a month after 9 EU states, including Ireland, rejected the Israeli designation with a joint statement in July 2022 confirming 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 reiterating the commitment that these states would continue cooperation and strong support for civil society in the occupied Palestinian territory.

These human rights organisations, and the people they serve, are protected people under international law. We welcome Ireland's strong support for the important work of Palestinian civil society in this alarming context of suppression and would encourage a further robust reaffirmation of support from the Irish Government in response to this most egregious attack on the rights of Palestinian civil society. Urgent action is vital given the heightened risks all staff of the 6 organisations are facing, and the indispensable work that they do.

The international community has failed to hold Israel accountable for repeated and grave breaches of international law and human rights abuses. It is in this context of impunity that the systematic and intensifying crackdown on Palestinian civil society takes place. As we have previously stated this trajectory is unjust and unsustainable. Ireland and the European Union must now take meaningful action to challenge Israeli violations of international humanitarian law, and human rights law and deliver accountability.

As organisations working in support of human rights in Israel and occupied Palestinian territory, we stand in full solidarity with the 6 Palestinian civil society organisations and write to urge the Irish Government to:

- Strongly and urgently condemn Israeli attacks on Palestinian civil society, continue to challenge the designation of six Palestinian human rights organisations as “terrorist” and ensure Israel is made aware that the safety, welfare and freedom of the staff of these organisations, both Palestinian and international, must be guaranteed. In Ireland’s case this must extend to the protection of any Irish nationals in the region who may be endangered by this designation;
- Continue to offer strong and public support for the essential work of the Palestinian human rights community, and work to prevent the attempted smearing, delegitimization, and undermining of their vital work;
- Ensure that this matter receives immediate attention at EU level, that EU support continues for these organisations, and that the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs make a statement in support of Palestinian civil society; and
- Raise the matter at the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council as an urgent priority.

We have appreciated your engagement with us on this issue to date and are immediately available to discuss further with you and your departmental officials.

Yours sincerely,

Karol Balfe CEO, Action Aid Ireland		
Fiona Crowley Interim Director of Human Rights, Amnesty International Ireland		
Rosamond Bennett CEO, Christian Aid Ireland		
Dr Gearóid Ó Cuinn Director, Global Legal Action Network (GLAN)		
Liam Herrick Executive Director, Irish Council for Civil Liberties		
Owen Reidy Assistant General Secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions		
Marie Crawley Chair, Sadaka - The Ireland Palestine Alliance		
Caoimhe De Barra CEO, Trócaire		