

JDI Statement on Designation of Palestinian Civil Society Organisations as Terrorist Organisations

24 August 2022

In October 2021, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz designated six Palestinian Civil Society organisations, working in the West Bank, as terrorist organisations. The apparent intent was to suppress their human rights advocacy and deprive these well-known organisations of international funding. Despite repeated calls for the Israeli government to offer evidence to substantiate its claim, none has been provided.

Investigations by several European countries found no support for Gantz's claims. Instead, the assumption was that Israel's actions were motivated by a desire to block an appeal to the International Criminal Court to hold Israel accountable for human rights violations in the West Bank.

In addition, the European Union found that allegations of misuse of EU funds by these Palestinian CSOs were unsubstantiated. Accordingly, it stated that "The EU will continue to stand by international law and support CSOs that have a role to play in promoting international law, human rights, and democratic values". Even Israel's staunchest ally, the USA, could not find evidence implicating the CSO's in terrorism and has declined to take steps to support Israel's terrorist designation.

On August 18th, 2022, the Israeli army escalated its actions with a violent surprise raid on each of these Civil Society organisations, blowing down doors, upturning files, confiscating documents, interrogating leadership and leaving a military order outlawing these organisations – all in the absence of evidence to justify this violent intrusion.

This intrusion mirrors other escalations, such as expulsion from the village of Masafer Yatta, home demolitions, and violence directed at Palestinians by settlers with impunity, all testing Israel's commitment to human rights and justice for Palestinians in the West Bank. They sadly call into question the moral authority and current governance of Israel's army.

We call on all organisations that stand for the protection of human rights, due process, and the integrity of Israel's government and its armed forces, to demand that Minister Gantz either produce substantiating evidence immediately or reverse the military order outlawing these civil society organisations.

Attacks on human rights organisations prevents peace, justice and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

As South Africans, we know how the Apartheid regime used similar tactics to silence civil society by labelling CSO's and their leaders as terrorist (organisations). We condemn these Israeli strategies designed to cover up human rights abuses.

JDI stands in solidarity with those CSO's defending human rights across Israel-Palestine.