



The UK must support Palestinian civil society under attack

As a group of UK humanitarian, development, human rights and faith charities working to support the rights and wellbeing of the Palestinian people, we urge the UK government to take immediate action to protect Palestinian human rights defenders facing escalating repression and attacks because of the vital work they do.

In the early morning of Thursday 18 August 2022, Israeli armed forces raided the Ramallah offices of seven Palestinian civil society organisations: Addameer, Al-Haq, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-P), Health Work Committees (HWC), Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), and Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC). Israeli soldiers forced entry, ransacked their offices, destroyed property, and confiscated crucial equipment and files. Some organisations also found their office doors welded shut with iron plates. All the Palestinian civil society organisations were served with military orders, declaring their organisations illegal and ordering them closed.

We are alarmed at these grave acts of repression against Palestinian civil society, which breach fundamental human rights, and are deeply concerned about what further measures may follow. In light of this escalating attack, Al-Haq has submitted an urgent appeal to the UN Special Procedures demanding immediate effective action to protect the directors of the targeted organisations. We are also seriously concerned for their welfare.

These Palestinian civil society organisations provide vital services to Palestinians living under occupation, including the provision of health care in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt); organising legal support for people, including children, who have been detained; and conducting essential research and local programmes to promote human rights. Crucially, the work of these organisations also includes monitoring, collecting evidence of, and reporting the human rights violations experienced by a people facing a military occupation now in its sixth decade.

For example, so far this year [according to the UN](#), at least 37 Palestinian children have been killed in the oPt and approximately 175 are [imprisoned](#) in Israeli military detention. Defence for Children International-Palestine documents each case; vitally bringing to the international community's attention both individual cases and patterns of gross human rights violations against Palestinian children, and calling for legal accountability and the end of systemic impunity.

Last October, following the Israeli Minister of Defence's classification of six of these organisations as 'terrorist' organisations, we publicly [stated](#) that this action was an attack on human rights and would leave Palestinians unable to access essential services. In the months since, [ten European states concluded](#) that the Israeli government has not produced sufficient, credible evidence to substantiate such accusations, and have pledged to continue working with the six organisations designated. The UN has also called on the international community to actively support and fund these organisations, in order to safeguard the vital work that they do.

- We call on the UK government to uphold its legal and moral duties to the Palestinian people and support Palestinian civil society as its institutions are targeted by Israel's repressive measures.
- The UK government must join leading European states and civil society organisations around the world, including 45 Israeli NGOs, in condemning Israel's latest attacks and growing arbitrary criminalisation of Palestinian civil society.
- The UK government must demand that Israel revoke the designation of the six organisations and support the urgent work of Palestinian human rights defenders seeking accountability for violations of international law.

Signatories:

ABCD Bethlehem

Amos Trust

CAABU (Council on Arab-British Understanding)

Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

Christian Aid

Embrace the Middle East

Friends of Nablus and Surrounding Areas (FONSA)

FOBZU

Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)

Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP)

Quakers in Britain

Oxfam

War on Want

Welfare Association