

Anniken Huitfeldt
Minister for Foreign Affairs
Box 8114 Dep
N-0032
Oslo, Norway

Re: The Importance of Norway Holding Israel to Account for False Terror Designations of the Six Palestinian Civil Society Organisations

Ramallah, 23 June 2022

Your Excellency, Ms. Anniken Huitfeldt,

Al-Haq is writing to you as an important partner to voice our grave concern over Israel's continued baseless designation of six of the leading Palestinian civil society organisations.¹ Since October 2021, the six Palestinian organisations have been falsely designated as "terrorist organisations" under Israel's 2016 Counter Terrorism law, and outlawed as "unlawful associations" under military order, with Israel employing so called "secret evidence" to justify such designations.² The designations are a blatant attempt to suppress Palestinian civil society organisations, in line with Israel's ongoing apartheid policies against the Palestinian people as a whole, on both sides of the Green Line.

Al-Haq first called on Third States to challenge and condemn the designation as an immediate response to the designation made in October 2021.³ Al-Haq is incredibly grateful that you lead the international community at this time, taking a strong principled stance stating,

We take the allegations seriously, and have been in contact with the Israeli authorities both locally and in Oslo. It is up to the Israeli authorities to document the accusations. If there is insufficient documentation to support the allegations, we will request that the decision be reversed.⁴

¹ The organisations are, Addameer, Al-Haq, Bisan Center for Research and Development, Defence for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P), the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), and the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC). Al-Haq, 'Al-Haq Calls on Third States to Publicly Condemn and Call for the rescinding of Israel's Designation of Palestinian Human Rights NGOs as 'Terrorist Organisations' (24 October 2021), available at: <<https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/19050.html>>

² Adalah, 'Adalah's Expert Opinion: Israel's 2016 Counter-Terrorism Law and 1945 Emergency Regulations Regarding the Outlawing of Six Palestinian Human Rights Organisations and Civil Society Groups' (23 November 2021) available at:

<https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Adalah_Expert_Opinion_Palestinian6_Nov2021.pdf>

³ Al-Haq, 'Al-Haq Calls on Third States to Publicly Condemn and Call for the rescinding of Israel's Designation of Palestinian Human Rights NGOs as 'Terrorist Organisations' (24 October 2021), available at:

<<https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/19050.html>>

⁴ Written question from Bjørnar Moxnes (R) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (4 November 2021), available at: <<https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Skriftlige-sporsmal-og-svar/Skriftlig-sporsmal/?qid=86343>>

At the time of writing, eight months since the designations, Israel has consistently failed to provide any evidence. In May, seven months after the designation, when asked about the designation of the six, you responded by stating:

Norway is in contact with the Israeli authorities, civil society actors, the UN and other donors about the case. This dialogue is still going on. This takes time, but it is necessary for the donor community to be as united as possible along a common line.⁵

While Al-Haq does recall and is grateful for the continuous support you have offered at this difficult time, as well as for the many actions you have taken to address this attack on Palestinian civil society, Al-Haq is disappointed with this response, which defers more time to Israel to fabricate “secret evidence” which will damage Palestinian civil society. Seven months has provided more than sufficient time for the Israeli authorities to provide evidence of criminality, Israel’s failure to do so is due to a lack of any evidence. Norway must move to condemn the designation now.

We further note that the European Commission in May 2021, before the designation, decided to suspend funding to Al-Haq based on similar Israeli accusations.⁶ Notably, and laudably, on 9 June, the Directorate General of the European Commission lifted the funding suspension against Al-Haq stating in a communication to lawyers acting for Al-Haq:

[T]he Commission has decided to lift the suspension based on Article 11.6 of the General Conditions. As announced during the meeting, OLAF did not find sufficient grounds to open an investigation. Specifically, OLAF, in the exercise of its competences, concluded that there are no suspicions of irregularities and/or fraud affecting EU funds in the implementation of the EU funded projects.⁷

International pressure from Norway must be targeted and maintained on Israel to end the false designation of Palestinian Civil Society. While the designation remains, so too does the negative, suppressive and destabilising effects for all six civil society organisations, including Al-Haq. Limiting and oppressing Palestinian civil society will only further destabilise the already precarious situation on both sides of the Green Line. As noted in a joint statement by UN human rights experts in April,

Israel has had six months to substantiate its accusations and it has failed to deliver. We call on the funding governments and international organisations to swiftly conclude that Israel has not established its allegations and to announce that they will continue to financially and politically support these organisations and the communities and groups they serve.⁸

⁵ “Written question from Ingrid Fiskaa (SV) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs” (19 May 2022), available at: <<https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporsmal/Skriftlig-sporsmal-og-svar/Skriftlig-sporsmal/?qid=89442>>

⁶ Al Haq, ‘Statement Al-Haq about funding suspension imposed by the European Commission’ (21 January 2022) available at: <[Statement Al-Haq about funding suspension imposed by the European Commission](https://www.alhaq.org/en/statement-al-haq-about-funding-suspension-imposed-by-the-european-commission) ([alhaq.org](https://www.alhaq.org))>; Soraya Rodriguez’s Twitter Thread, 5 May 2022 <<https://twitter.com/sorayarr/status/1522236804312842240?t=COrijmsm71lVKGgAWxYTZdg&s=08>>

⁷ EUROPEAN COMMISSION, Grant contract ENI/2018/395-142 with Al-Haq (9 June 2022)

⁸ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Israel/Palestine: UN Experts call on Governments to resume funding for six Palestinian CSOs designated by Israel as ‘terrorist organisations’” (25 April 2022)

Once again, Al-Haq would like to extend its gratitude for your support, but also, we ask again for more action to be taken against this blatant suppression of civil society by an apartheid state. We ask that you call time on Israel's failure to produce any evidence against the six Palestinian civil society organisations and publicly condemn in an official statement Israel's designation as an internationally wrongful act which must be rescinded with immediate effect.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shawan Jabarin

Al-Haq



Copy to:

The Norwegian Parliament/The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence

available at <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/04/israelpalestine-un-experts-call-governments-resume-funding-six-palestinian>>