

Where's Canada as Israel escalates attacks on Palestinian NGOs?

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Members of the Israeli military raid the offices of Al-Haq, a human rights organization based in Ramallah, Palestine, August 18, 2022. Photo courtesy Al-Haq.

In a series of alarming events over the past week, Israel has escalated its attacks on human rights defenders. After outlawing six leading Palestinian NGOs in October last year, on Thursday, August 18, Israeli occupation forces led militarized raids against their offices in Ramallah, damaging property, confiscating files, and attempting to seal their doors shut permanently. Over the subsequent weekend, Israel detained NGO staff and threatened others with arrests. These attacks pose an existential threat to Palestinian civil society.

If any other state was shutting down premier human rights organizations, we would expect a strong response. Instead, Canada has only expressed its “concern,” saying they are seeking information from Israel. Canada’s ongoing inaction has emboldened Israel to escalate its attacks. Israel *must* face meaningful consequences for its actions.

is following with concern the situation regarding Palestinian NGOs whose offices were raided by Israel, and are in touch with Israel to seek information. The protection of human rights is a priority and civil society plays a critical role in this regard.

— Canada in Ramallah (@CanadaRepPA) August 19, 2022

Ten months ago, on October 19, 2021, Israel's Minister of Defense Benny Gantz announced that he was designating six respected and credible civil society Palestinian NGOs as “terrorist organizations,” effectively criminalizing them.

The NGOs targeted by Israel include:

- **Defense for Children International – Palestine (DCI-P)**, which promotes and protects the rights of Palestinian children under occupation, and is currently investigating the deaths of 17 children during Israel's recent attacks on Gaza.
- **Al-Haq**, a human rights and international law organization that participates actively at the United Nations, and which is currently compiling evidence for the war crimes investigation by the International Criminal Court.
- **Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association**, which provides legal aid to Palestinian political prisoners and collects data on abuses in Israeli prisons.
- **Bisan Centre for Research and Development**, which provides programming for community development, youth, and ending violence against women.
- **The Union of Agricultural Work Committees**, which promotes food security and the rights of Palestinian farmers.
- **The Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UAWC)**, which provides programs to empower women and fight against gender discrimination.

This campaign of persecution seriously escalated late last week. Over the weekend, the general director of Al-Haq received a phone call from Israeli intelligence threatening him with arrest, while the general director of the Palestine office of Defense for Children International was summoned for interrogation and detained for two hours. The six organizations had made an urgent appeal to the international community to intervene.

CJPME has been raising this matter since October, and on Thursday sent a letter to Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly reiterating our demands for concrete action to support the NGOs. To date, Canada has not expressed an opinion on Israel's moves toward criminalization. A tweet issued late on Friday only expressed “concern” over the raids, and said they were “in touch with Israel to seek information.”

As CJPME pointed out on social media, it has been ten months since Israel first criminalized these NGOs as “terrorist” groups, despite a lack of any evidence. Since then, United Nations agencies, 10 European states, and even the United States have all said that Israel has failed to provide them with any credible evidence. What information does Canada expect to receive that would justify this campaign of persecution?

Finally, has expressed "concern" about Israel's militarized raids on 6 leading Palestinian NGOs. However, instead of condemning these alarming and escalating attacks on human rights defenders, Canada says they are "in touch with Israel to seek information" ... [#StandWithThe6 pic.twitter.com/XuAYm4V6AI](#)

— Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (@CJPME) [August 19, 2022](#)

Canada must stop hesitating and take a clear position against Israel's attempts to eliminate Palestinian civil society. CJPME [urges](#) Canada to play a leading role on the international stage by:

- Condemning Israel's criminalization of Palestinian NGOs, and firmly rejecting the fraudulent "terrorist" designation.
- Holding Israeli officials accountable for its attacks on civil society by imposing sanctions.
- Doing everything in its power to support and protect the work of human rights defenders in Palestine, including by making its diplomatic resources in Tel Aviv and Ramallah available to the targeted NGOs.

Click [here](#) to send an email to Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, your local MP, and key political leaders and diplomats.

[Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#) (CJPME) is a pan-Canadian grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to empowering Canadians of all backgrounds to promote justice, development and peace in the Middle East, and at home in Canada.

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