

09 November 2021

## STATEMENT

### **Designation of Palestinian NGOs and civil society groups as ‘terrorist organisations’**

The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (“**BHRC**”) joins many international bodies and organisations in expressing its grave concern regarding the decision taken by the Israeli Defence Minister on 19 October to designate a number of prominent Palestinian NGOs as ‘terrorist organisations’ pursuant to the Israeli Counter-Terrorism Law of 2016. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, has noted that the designations are based on extremely vague or unsubstantiated reasons.<sup>1</sup>

A number of the organisations have, for decades, been “key partners of the UN”, recognised for their leading work on fundamental rights and rule of law issues.<sup>2</sup>

BHRC has worked with three of the NGOs so designated:

- Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
- Al Haq
- Defence for Children International - Palestine

Addameer and Defence for Children International provide crucial legal support, including free legal representation, to Palestinian children and adults charged in the Israeli military courts in the West Bank, as well as documenting cases and conducting wider human rights advocacy. Al-Haq is an affiliate organisation of the International Commission of Jurists, established in 1979 to protect and promote human rights and the rule of law, by documenting violations of individual and collective rights and conducting national and international advocacy. It is an internationally recognised recipient of numerous human rights awards.<sup>3</sup>

It has been reported by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that by military order of 7 November, Israel’s Commander-in-Chief of the Central Command sought to implement the Order, which has been designated across the West Bank.<sup>4</sup>

The consequences of this designation are likely to be far-reaching. If implemented as reported, it places the employees and members of the organisations at imminent risk of arrest, imprisonment, and their offices and equipment subject to confiscation and raids. The designation is also likely to

have the effect of cutting off international funding for the organisations, in turn closing down or severely restricting vital avenues of legal protections and representation for Palestinian civilians. It will also stifle the critical role played by civil society in monitoring, documenting and promoting accountability for human rights and international humanitarian law violations.

BHRC has repeatedly expressed profound concern over the shrinking space for lawyers, human rights defenders and civil society actors around the world. BHRC endorses the statements made by the UN High Commissioner and various UN Special Procedures regarding the designations.<sup>5</sup> We join urgent calls for the Israeli authorities to revoke these designations without further delay.

*Ends*

#### Notes for Editors:

1. Israel's "terrorism" designation an unjustified attack on Palestinian civil society – Bachelet, 26 October 2021  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27708&LangID=E>
2. See (1).
3. Among other international awards, Al-Haq was awarded the 2019 Human Rights and Business Award and the 2018 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.
4. UN experts condemn Israel's designation of Palestinian human rights defenders as terrorist organisations, 25 October 2021,  
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27702&LangID=E>; Two Weeks On, Israeli Army Extends Palestinian NGO Terror Designation to West Bank, 07 November 2021, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-two-weeks-on-israeli-army-extends-palestinian-ngo-terror-designation-to-west-bank-1.10361491?v=1636317580787>
5. The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) is the independent, international human rights arm of the Bar of England and Wales, working to protect the rights of advocates, judges and human rights defenders around the world. BHRC is concerned with defending the rule of law and internationally recognised legal standards relating to human rights and the right to a fair trial. It is autonomous of the Bar Council. For more information on BHRC, visit our website at <http://www.barhumanrights.org.uk>