



Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen
Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken
Postbus 20061
2500 EB Den Haag
The Netherlands

Amsterdam, 27 October 2021

RE: Concerns regarding Israel's repressive decision affecting Palestinian NGOs

Dear Ms Van Ruijven, Mr Van Baar, Mr Docter,

With this letter SOMO would like to express its concern regarding a decision taken on 19th of October by the Israeli Defense Ministry designating six Palestinian civil society organisations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) as “terrorist organizations”. As one of the organisations affected, Al-Haq, a project partner within the project ‘Mind the Gap’, which is funded through the Dutch ministry of Foreign Affairs’ human rights fund since 2018, can face severe consequence from this decision.

SOMO and Al-Haq have an established partnership since 2015 and jointly address corporate human rights abuses in the OPT through field investigations combined with legal research, advocacy, and case support to victims. Research published by SOMO and Al-Haq in 2020 as part of the Mind the Gap project shows how German multinational HeidelbergCement is complicit in the pillaging of natural resources from the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), violating the human rights of Palestinians.¹ We are currently working towards addressing the corporate abuses and realising remedy for affected Palestinian communities suffering from HeidelbergCement’s activities, as well as four other multinational corporations involved in human rights violations in the OPT.

SOMO is outraged by this latest unfounded and repressive act against Palestinian civil society organizations by Israel. The move to delegitimise and criminalise Al-Haq and the five other Palestinian NGOs is in our view part of a wider and systematic attack by the Israeli authorities on civil society and a pattern of shrinking civic space in OPT and Israel. Although the effects of the decision are not yet clear, its potential implications are alarming; it authorises Israeli authorities to close the offices of the targeted organisations, seize their assets and prohibit funding, and moreover allows authorities to arrest and jail their staff members.

SOMO takes this situation seriously and continues its close contact with Al-Haq to monitor the security situation and identify ways to mitigate risks for the organisation and its staff members.

We call upon the Dutch government, as well as the European Union, and the larger international community to take a clear and public stand condemning Israel’s repressive decision, and to exercise their diplomatic influence for the protection of human rights defenders in the OPT and Israel.

¹ <https://www.somo.nl/somo-and-al-haq-submit-report-to-un-on-german-multinational-heidelbergcement/>



Stichting Onderzoek Multinationale Ondernemingen

Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations

In particular, we call on the Dutch government and other third States to:

- Publicly condemn this decision by Israel and to recognize it as an unjust and repressive action aimed at repressing critics;
- Call on Israel to revoke the decision with immediate effect;
- Continue to support Palestinian NGOs and to engage robustly with Israeli authorities to ensure funding can continue;
- Openly express support for the human rights work carried out by the six affected NGOs;
- Prioritise the protection of civic space in Dutch government policy towards OPT.

We are keen to keep the Ministry and Dutch missions in Ramallah and Tel Aviv up to date about important developments and would like to remain in close contact to ensure the work of and support to AI-Haq under the Mind the Gap project can continue.

Kind regards,

On behalf of SOMO,

Virginia Sandjojo
Project coordinator