

Joint statement by CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU

Call to protect Palestinian human rights defenders and civil society organizations

18/11/2021

On October 19, the Israeli Ministry of Defense designated six Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations as “terrorist organizations”, which was in turn followed by a military order on November 7 by the Israeli military commander in the occupied Palestinian West Bank rendering the activities of the six organizations illegal in the West Bank.

CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU strongly condemn this designation. The targeted organizations include CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU members’ partners Al Haq and Defense for Children International-Palestine as well as Addameer, the Union of Palestinian Women Committees, the Bisan Centre for Research and Development, and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees.

Our Palestinian partners have been relentlessly working at the forefront to keep Palestinians on their land and to protect their human rights by documenting violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Their vital work is now being criminalized, their staff is at risk of being arrested, their offices closed, funds frozen and property confiscated.

CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU are also deeply disturbed by the latest reports that the phones of several staff members of the organizations had been hacked by the Pegasus spyware of the [Israeli NSO Group](#), a surveillance company now blacklisted by the US government for maliciously targeting activists. The hacking is a violation of the staff's right to privacy, personal security, and undermines their right to freedom of expression.

For years these organizations have been attacked with smear campaigns and accusations of links to terror organizations to delegitimize their work without substantive evidence to back the claims. This latest, unprecedented move comes as a culmination of these preceding efforts to undermine, silence and erase Palestinian rights defenders and civil society at large. On several occasions, the EU has publicly refuted such accusations made against Palestinian human rights organizations: the [EU delegation to Israel](#), the [VP/HR Mogherini](#) and recently also the [European Commission](#). In a [joint statement](#) 16 UN special rapporteurs and experts remind us that *“these civil society organizations are the canaries in the human rights coalmine, alerting us to the patterns of violations, reminding the international community of its obligations to ensure accountability, and providing voices for those who have none.”*

CIDSE, ACT Alliance EU and its members will continue to support and defend their essential work. Recalling the [EU’s own commitment](#) to support and protect human rights defenders CIDSE and ACT Alliance EU urge the EU and Member States, in particular those with longstanding partnerships with these Palestinian organizations, to assume a principled stance and take urgent action beyond statements by:

1. Denouncing this designation and call on the Israeli government to immediately revoke the designation;
2. Expressing their solidarity and reaffirm partnerships with and confidence in the targeted Palestinian organizations as well as the broader human rights community in the occupied Palestinian territory;
3. Actively monitoring abuses and protect the organizations and their staff from implications that this decision may have for their work and security.