

CONGRESS MUST MEET ESCALATING ISRAEL REPRESSION & SETTLEMENT EXPANSION WITH ACCOUNTABILITY (H. Res. 751 & H.R. 2590)

November 2021

The US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR), a national network of activists and organizations committed to freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people, **strongly urges members of Congress to take legislative action towards accountability for Israel** in order to stop U.S. funding and diplomatic support to ongoing abuses: **cosponsor H. Res. 751 to defend six criminalized Palestinian human rights organizations and cosponsor H.R. 2590, the Palestinian Children and Families Act, to end the flow of U.S. funding towards Israeli settlements, ethnic cleansing, and other Israeli apartheid abuses that these critical organizations challenge.**

I. Israel's escalation of repression facilitates settlement expansion & other abuses: Israel's authoritarian attack on these six leading Palestinian human rights organizations is designed to stop their work exposing Israel's government for what it is: a separate-and-unequal apartheid regime engaging in ongoing settler colonial violence against the Palestinian people.

On October 22nd, the Israeli Minister of Defense, Benny Gantz, declared six Palestinian human rights organizations "terrorist affiliated," under a 2016 Israeli law. On November 8th, in a further escalation of these repressive tactics, the Israeli army signed a military order that applies this law directly to five of the six organizations,¹ which are based in the occupied West Bank, making them vulnerable to direct military intervention, including arbitrary arrests, raids, and confiscations (*Haaretz*). **Israel's threats to shut down vital Palestinian civil society organizations were actualized already, earlier this year against the Palestinian Health Work Committee**, one of the main providers of health services in the West Bank. Israeli forces have raided their offices, confiscated their computers, and arrested and indefinitely detained their Executive Director, Shatha Odeh, and Project Coordinator, Juana Ruiz Sánchez (*Amnesty*)

¹ The Union of Agricultural Work Committees was [previously declared an unlawful group](#) by Israeli military order in 2020. [See this +972 article](#) on the long smear campaign against this vital Palestinian agricultural union.

The six impacted organizations do vital work to advocate for Palestinian children and political prisoners, support farmers facing land theft, advance grassroots feminist organizing, powerfully document Israeli human rights abuses, and advocate in the UN and other international arenas.

1. Defense for Children International-Palestine (statement): Advocates for Palestinian children subject to a military court system with a 99.7% conviction rate & documents extrajudicial killings.
2. AL Haq: Has been the leading human rights documentation and advocacy organization exposing Israel's occupation and apartheid policies since 1979.
3. Addameer: Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association: Supports political prisoners, under occupation where about 1 in 5 people have been incarcerated (Institute for Policy Studies)
4. Union of Agricultural Work Committees: Supports farmers resisting land grabs and other impacts of Israel's settler colonialism on agriculture & livelihoods.
5. Bisan Center for Research and Development: Advocates for civil rights, human rights, and socio-economic rights.
6. Union of Palestinian Women's Committees: A feminist, progressive grassroots Palestinian organization.

RESOURCE: Human Rights Watch & Amnesty International: Designation of Palestinian civil society groups as terrorists a brazen attack on human rights

II. Observers are exposing Israel's unfounded claims as repression: Israel's spurious claims have been overwhelmingly rejected by European officials & over 300 U.S. organizations.

A review of the classified intelligence dossier provided by Israeli intelligence services to EU officials and interrogation records found no proof against these six organizations. (+972 magazine) The bulk of the dossier relies on testimonies from two individuals who did not work for any of the six organizations, one of whom was repeatedly interrogated including using a stress position that can amount to torture. This review, carried out by the Israeli magazine +972 and the Intercept, found that the testimonies used in the dossier were not backed up "by any concrete evidence, including any documents or receipts proving the... allegations."

Indeed, **European diplomats and officials in at least five European countries have stated that the evidence was unconvincing and insufficient, and have continued to financially support these organizations, while two countries, Belgium and the Netherlands, have already carried out their own investigations and concluded that there is "no concrete evidence" against these organizations.**

A security source noted that the main purpose of this designation was repression, specifically targeting the funding these groups received, including from European governmental sources. ([Haaretz](#))

In the U.S. over 300 organizations, ranging from Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, Amnesty International, and Working Families Party, to Movement For Black Lives, Justice Democrats, Sunrise Movement, and MADRE, signed a letter in support of the six Palestinian organizations, and called on the Biden administration to publicly condemn this act of repression by Israel. ([Center for Constitutional Rights](#)).

RESOURCE: [Secret Israeli dossier provides no proof for declaring Palestinian NGOs 'terrorists'. +972](#)

III. [Israel's repression threatens everyone](#): Israeli NSO Group Pegasus Spyware attacks on leading human rights organizations endangers human rights defenders and criminalized and surveilled communities everywhere.

In the months before Israel's escalated attack on these organizations, spyware from the Israeli NSO group was placed on the phones of Palestinian human rights defenders ([AP News](#)). **Israel's designation came on the heels of Palestinian activists discovering that their phones had been breached.**

The infamous Israeli NSO group, [blacklisted by the Biden administration last week as part of the administration's "efforts to put human rights at the center of US foreign policy"](#), produces and sells **Pegasus Spyware**, which gives the hacker access to everything stored and done on the infected phone, including the capability to activate the microphone and to track location, and **has been used globally by authoritarian governments to repress human rights defenders, journalists, and other forces for accountability: from India to Morocco to the UAE** ([The Intercept](#) & [Guardian](#)).

One of the Palestinians affected by the hack, U.S. citizen Ubai Aboudi, who is the director of one of the impacted organizations, Bisan Center, **said he lost "any sense of safety" through the "dehumanizing" hack of a phone that is at his side day and night and holds photos of his three children.**

The six Palestinian organizations have released a powerful joint statement noting that the systematic surveillance of Palestinian human rights defenders comes in addition to an endless list of coordinated actions by Israeli governmental bodies to instigate and perform systematic and organized smear, intimidation, and persecution campaigns against Palestinian civil society ([Addameer](#)).

In addition to specific targeting of these six organizations, on November 8th vital information was exposed about ongoing Israeli surveillance projects against Palestinians across the West Bank ([Washington Post](#)), including East Jerusalem ([Zamleh](#)). Surveillance technologies, such as the mobile database Blue Wolf used by Israel, invade the privacy of Palestinians in the West Bank, with soldiers taking Palestinians' photos without consent to construct a massive facial recognition database.

Surveillance technology is a threat against all our communities. The Israeli regime exports its weapons and surveillance technologies to oppressive regimes around the world, threatening everyone's safety, and in particular threatening criminalized and surveilled indigenous, Black, and brown communities.

RESOURCE: [Frontline Human Rights Defenders Investigation: Six Palestinian human rights defenders hacked with NSO Group's Pegasus Software](#)

IV. With impunity, Israel is rapidly expanding settlements: Only conditioning Israeli military funding can end ongoing Israeli threats to Palestinians lives, land, and homes

Over the last couple of weeks, Israeli announced [multiple settlement projects in and around Jerusalem](#):

- ❖ Infrastructure projects in Giv'at Hamatos over Palestinian land of Khirbet Tabalya, southwest of Jerusalem, which would cut off the Palestinian town of Beit Safafa from the rest of Jerusalem;
- ❖ Atarot, being expanded and built over the Palestinian Qalandia village severing Jerusalem and Ramallah; and
- ❖ Pisgat Ze'ev, which would impact three different Palestinian neighborhoods.

Israel's land theft and impunity around settlement expansion emanates outwards from Jerusalem to sever Palestinian communities from one another:

- ❖ Palestinians in [Wadi Foquin](#) and [al-Walaja](#) are resisting land appropriation for the construction of roads which will build up transportation infrastructure for expanding settlements. The planning of apartheid transportation systems throughout the West Bank pave the way for recruitment of settlers and severing of Palestinian villages from one another.
- ❖ The [E1 plan to link settlement blocks, which would displace multiple Palestinian Bedouin communities and split the West Bank in half, is undergoing its final planning processes right now.](#)

RESOURCE: [IMEU Policy Memo: Israel's Colonization Solidifies One-State Apartheid Reality](#)

Conclusion: Rising repression and settlement expansion demands rapid action for accountability:

The U.S. sends \$3.8 billion in military funding to Israel every year, yet Congress has failed to call out Israel's rights violations, including land theft and ethnic cleansing (a process taking place through "settlement expansion" and "annexation of land"), a 14-year blockade on the Gaza Strip, repeated bombing campaigns, and the abuse of Palestinian children in military detention.

This ongoing lack of accountability has emboldened Israel to criminalize Palestinian human rights organizations, placing them at even greater risk in doing their vital work challenging Israeli occupation and apartheid abuses. Simply for exposing these abuses, Israel is threatening these organizations with the possibility that their offices could be shut down, assets frozen, and staff members jailed and arrested under false pretenses.

Israel's repression of Palestinian human rights organizations and continuing land expropriation projects will continue unless there is real accountability from Congress. We urge Members to:

1. **Cosponsor H. Res. 751** in support of the six criminalized Palestinian organizations.
2. **Cosponsor H.R. 2590**, the Palestinian Children and Families Act, which creates transparency and tracking on where U.S. military funding to Israel is spent, and sets up end use restrictions to stop U.S. taxpayer dollars from funding child detention, annexation, and home demolition and land expropriation projects.
3. **Introduce additional legislative vehicles to end the flow of U.S. tax dollars to military funding that enables Israel's abuses against the Palestinian people.**