



Lemkin Institute Statement on the Closure of Palestinian NGOs by Israeli Armed Forces on August 18, 2022

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On August 18, Israeli military forces shut down a total of seven Palestinian NGOs whose work involved defending civil society and fighting for human rights in the cities of Ramallah and Al-Bireh (West Bank). The Lemkin Institute firmly condemns these military raids, during which Israeli soldiers plundered offices and impounded equipment. These raids represent yet another attack on Palestinian civil society and yet another violation of Palestinian human rights. They are indicative of the shrinking political space for Palestinian survival as a coherent and cohesive identity group, especially in the context of intractable conflict characterized by disproportionate use of force by the powerful Israeli state and its occupation forces.

Back in October 2021, six of these seven Palestinian NGOs were designated by the Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz as “terrorist groups”. The Israeli government justified this determination with reference to their alleged ties to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which is a group also characterized by the U.S. and other countries and organizations as a terrorist group. In the recent raid, the NGOs targeted were Addameer, Al-Haq, Bisan Center, Defense for Children International - Palestine, the Union of Palestinian Women Committees, the Union of Health Work Committees, and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees. All of these organizations have been continuously fighting for the rights of Palestinians; their work is vital to the welfare of the population.

More than 150 global human rights organizations have united their voices in a joint statement, published on the webpage of Human Rights Watch, which urges the international community to take action against these closures and to stand with Palestinian civil society. The authors wrote that the raids represent “the latest escalation in Israel’s widespread campaign aiming to silence and discredit any Palestinian individual or organization that dares to seek accountability for Israel’s grave human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity”. We join our voice with these organizations and request the re-establishment of the activity of all Palestinian NGOs, whose work is essential and invaluable to the people of Palestine.

The Lemkin Institute further urges the international community to act against Israel’s policy of apartheid and persecution (both of which are categorized as crimes against humanity

prosecutable under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court). Over time, apartheid and persecution can have genocidal outcomes. Furthermore, history has shown that states that engage in crimes against humanity with impunity are much more likely to resort to the mass killing form of genocide when the situation permits.

Israeli society has been steadily trained in genocidal ideology and practice for decades. During its 73-year existence, Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians during the 1948 war (an event known as the Nakba), overseen the massacre of Palestinians at Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon, and forcibly maintained control over the Occupied Palestinians Territories (OPT). Methods of control include, among other things, the restriction of movement of Palestinians, attacks on freedom of expression, and land expropriation and land seizures (including seizures of over a third of the territory of the occupied West Bank).

This protracted conflict involves deep grievances and resentments between the two populations (Jewish and Palestinian), with an ever-increasing risk of genocide, especially from the tremendously powerful state of Israel, which enjoys extensive military support from the USA and a resulting impunity on the world stage. Impunity does not serve the security interests of either party. Only a peaceful and restorative dialogue between the people of Palestine and Israel, coupled with efforts at social justice that address historical wrongs, can bring a lasting solution and an enduring peace to the region.