

To Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union
Member States
To High Representative of the EU Foreign Policy and Security

26 September 2022

Ref: Human rights and civil society organisations demand to review the decision to renew the EU-Israel Association Council that will green light Israeli violations.

Your Excellencies,

European Ministers for Foreign Affairs,

Mr Josep Borrell, High Representative of the EU Foreign Policy and Security,

The undersigned Palestinian and European civil society organisations address this letter to you to express our deep concern regarding the decision to renew the EU - Israel Association Council (hereinafter “Association Council”), which seeks to resume formal dialogue and strengthen cooperation with Israel and mainstream the very problematic “Abraham Accords”.

The European Commission President Von Der Leyen in her latest visit to the region [stated](#) about Israel: “Our shared culture and values have created a deep connection between Europe and Israel...the strongest bond we share is our belief in democracy and in democratic values”. Double standards applied by European leaders towards people facing military occupation, annexation and war crimes is evident, and is unbearable for the Palestinian people. Today more than ever, the founding principles and values of freedom and justice that have shaped the international order and adopted by the European Union (EU) must be applied and maintained everywhere.

Instead, the Association Council will further normalise authoritarian and oppressive practices instead of democratic values and human rights, and will continue to omit the entrenching violations under international law that are being committed against the Palestinian people.

The Association Council is planned to reconvene at a time where Israel has intensified its attacks against the Palestinian people, including European citizens. Already more than 140 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military in Palestine since the beginning of the year, without anyone being held accountable. Over the past few months, the Israeli military has repeatedly invaded Palestinian refugee camps and cities including Jenin and Nablus in the occupied West Bank, [killing more than 27 Palestinians](#) in Jenin alone. Those illegal raids have led to the

targeted killing of the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh in May 2022, whose family continues to seek justice and accountability.

In June 2022 the Gaza Strip marked 15 years of being under suffocating air, sea and land blockade and closure. Between 5-7 August 2022, Israel waged an unprovoked military offensive against Gaza, conducting a series of heavy airstrikes on densely populated areas and deliberately targeting civilians and their homes. During the 3-day offensive, 49 Palestinians were killed, including four women and 17 children, while another 360 were wounded, including 151 children and 58 women.

On May 4th, the Israeli High Court greenlighted the mass expulsion orders of more than 1,300 Palestinians across eight communities in Masafer Yatta, in the south of the occupied West Bank, and demolitions have already started to take place, paving the way for further land theft and Israeli annexation. These orders amount to the single largest expulsion operation carried out by Israel since 1967. Since then, the EU and its members states have [regularly reiterated](#) the illegality of both the expulsion operations and of the Israeli settlement enterprise built on stolen Palestinian land¹, but in practice it fails to adhere to its own obligations under international law.

Israel has also significantly escalated its attack on Palestinian civil society organisations, when on 18 August its military invaded the city of Ramallah, raided, ransacked and forcibly shut down the offices of seven Palestinian civil society organisations² that it has criminalised and declared six of them to be unlawful in October 2021. This move follows [decades of concerted efforts to discredit, defund and silence their crucial work](#) in exposing Israeli crimes and pushing for accountability. While nine EU member states have rejected the criminalisation in a [joint statement](#) and committed to continue fund and work with Palestinian civil society, the EU has failed to meaningfully protect the organisations and their staff. Spanish citizen Juana Ruiz Rishmawi was arbitrarily detained for 10 months, simply for working for one of the Palestinian civil society organisations under Israeli attacks, and Salah Hammouri -a French-Palestinian lawyer- who is working with Addameer, is still arbitrarily detained.

The EU remains Israel's largest trade partner, and by allowing European companies, governments and financial institutions to continue trade with the Israeli illegal settlement enterprise, the EU not only maintains but emboldens the very existence of these war crimes, further financing the Israeli theft of Palestinian land and natural resources.

The EU has also signed a new gas deal with Israel and Egypt as part of the policies that aim to streamline the very problematic "Abraham Accords" into the EU approach with its Southern neighborhood and integrate Israel into the EU energy supply strategy. Israel has been systematically preventing Palestinians access to gas off the coast of Gaza while maintaining the blockade and promoting its own gas exports. The new gas deal is among the EU's new Southern

¹ Transfer of settlers and the construction of illegal settlements in an occupied territory are a violation of Article 43 of the Hague Regulations and Article 49 (6) of the 4th Geneva Convention. The ICJ has found Israel to be in violation of these provisions.

² The targeted Palestinian civil society organisations are: Al-Haq, Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, Bisan Research Centre, Defence for Children International - Palestine, Union of Agricultural Workers Committees (UAWC), the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), Health Works Committees (HWC).

Neighborhood policy projects that seek to mainstream the “Abraham Accords”, serving authoritarian interests and further undermining peoples' right to self-determination.

This is the reality from which the EU's decisions are disconnected. Deepening the EU-Israel dialogue, as frank as some EU Member States wishes for it to be, rather than holding the latter accountable through meaningful actions, continues to treat Israel as a good faith actor as opposed to a “bad faith occupier”, as accurately [described](#) by the former UN Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk.

Instead of allowing Israel to entrench its colonial enterprise and apartheid regime, rewarding it with further economic cooperation and trade of harmful military equipment and technologies, the EU and its Member States have an obligation and interest, to hold Israel accountable and put an end to impunity.

We thus urge the EU to review its decision to resume the Association Council Meeting, the recently signed gas deal and review its bilateral cooperation programmes with Israel, to hold Israel accountable for its persistent crimes and human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people.

Signatory Organisations:

Palestinian CSOs

Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights

Al-Haq

Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ)

Bisan Center for Research and Development

BNC - BDS National Committee

Boycott from Within

Burj alluqluq Social Center Society

Center for Defense of Liberties & Civil Rights "Hurriyat"

General Federation of Palestinian Workers

General Union of Palestinian Teachers (Gupt)

Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)

Palestinian Non Governmental Organizations Network (PNGO)

QADER for Community Development

Stop the Wall Campaign

The Freedom Theatre

The Jerusalem Human Rights Consortium

The Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy (The PIPD)

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy - MIFTAH

Treatment and Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture

Union of Agricultural Work committees UAWC

Union of Cooperative Associations for Saving and Credit "UCASC"

Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counseling

European CSOs:

Apart collective

Association Belgo-Palestinienne WB, Belgium

Association des Universitaires pour le Respect du Droit International en Palestine (AURDIP)

Association France Palestine Solidarité (AFPS), France

Associazione Amici della Mezzaluna Rossa Palestinese

BDS groups: Austria, Berlin, France, Greece, Italia, Marche, Norway, País valencià, Roma

Comité pour une Paix Juste au Proche-Orient, Luxembourg

Coordinamento Campagna BDS Bologna, Italy

European Coordination of Committees and Associations for Palestine - ECCP

European Legal Support Center (ELSC)

European Trade Union Network for Justice in Palestine

Flemish Socialist Movement (V-SB), Belgium

Gibanje za pravice Palestincev

Iniciatíva za spravodlivý mier na Blízkom východe, (Slovak Initiative for a Just Peace in the Middle East)

Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign

Irish Rule of Law International, Ireland

Jüdische Stimme für gerechten Frieden in Nahost, Germany

Kapitál, kultúrno-spoločenský mesačník

La Via Campesina - Arab and North Africa Region LVC ARNA

Law for Palestine

Mezinárodní hnutí solidarity ISM

Ne našim jménem! - Za spravedlivý mír na Blízkém Východě

Nederlands Palestina Komitee, Netherlands

NOVACT International Institute for Nonviolent Action, Spain

Palestina Solidariteit vzw

Paz con Dignidad, Spain

Platform of French NGOs for Palestine, France

Polish Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Poland

Red Solidaria contra la ocupación de Palestina - RESCOP

Rete Romana di Solidarietà con il popolo Palestinese

SADAKA, Ireland

The Norwegian Committee for Academic and Cultural Boycott of the State of Israel (Akulbi)

The Palestine Solidarity Association in Sweden (PGS), Sweden

The Rights Forum, Netherlands

Trócaire, Ireland

Union syndicale Solidaires, France

Viva Salud, Belgium