

Kia ora Minister Mahuta,

As you will be aware, the state of Israel recently issued a military order designating six prominent Palestinian human rights groups as "terrorist organisations".

The organisations so designated are:

- Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association
- Al-Haq Law in the Service of Man (Al-Haq)
- Bisan Center for Research and Development
- Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-P)
- Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), and
- Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC).

These organisations are well known for their work researching and highlighting evidence-based breaches of human rights and international law by the Israeli state.

The military order effectively outlaws the activities of the organisations subjecting their members to the clear and present danger of military raids and arrest.

As you may recall, in April of this year, our organisation (formerly known as Wellington Palestine) submitted to the Parliamentary Select Committee a petition (submitted in the name of our Secretary Kate Stone), signed by over 2,500 New Zealanders calling on our government to take action to end the detention and abuse of Palestinian Child prisoners.

Our petition included considerable evidence in support of its aims produced by Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-P), one of the human rights organisations now designated by Israel as a terrorist entity.

In your response you noted "New Zealand will continue to regularly raise specific human rights concerns directly with Israel" and that "New Zealand will also continue to take action to advocate for and uphold the human rights of Palestinians in multilateral forums, including through our voting at the United Nations".

Today we received a message from our colleagues at Defence for Children Palestine urging us to make contact with our elected officials to ask them to publicly condemn the Israeli government's actions and to refuse to recognise the criminalisation of human rights defenders.

Minister Mahuta, we are gravely concerned about the welfare of our colleagues and the capacity of their organisation to continue to defend the human rights of Palestinian children. Our concern extends to all six of the human rights organisations designated as terrorist entities. The Israeli government is likely to argue that this is a matter of internal security and of no concern to the international community.

We hope that you and our government can see through this facade, and will join the United Nations, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch in publicly condemning these actions by the Israeli state. We do hope you will raise this as a matter of concern "directly with Israel" and take action in "multilateral forums, including through... voting at the United Nations". There is, however, nothing like a public statement of concern to stay the hand of Israel. And when it comes to the immediate safety and liberty of our colleagues, that is what we need you and our government to do.

Ngā mihi maioha

Nāku iti nei, nā

Neil Ballantyne

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