

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office
First Floor, Avoca Court
Temple Road, Blackrock
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750
fax +353 1 212 1001

BRUSSELS

Front Line Defenders – EU Office
Square Marie-Louise 72
1000 Brussels
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383
fax +32 2 230 0028

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OPT/Israel: Human rights group Lawyers for Justice is being forcibly terminated by authorities

On 26 March 2023, the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy informed the Palestinian human rights group **Lawyers for Justice** of their final decision to not renew the registration of their organisation as a civil company. According to the Ministry, the decision is based on a request from the Palestinian General Intelligence Service (GIS) to freeze the registration of the organisation.

[Lawyers for Justice](#) is an independent Palestinian group of lawyers based in Ramallah, West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The organisation works to support Palestinian human rights defenders and political prisoners held by the Palestinian Authorities through the provision of free legal aid. It also monitors and documents human rights violations committed by the Palestinian Authorities in the OPT. Additionally, Lawyers for Justice launches campaigns, represents many local human rights organisations and has partnered with multiple national and international organisations to publish reports on the situation of human rights in the OPT.

On 26 March 2023, the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy informed the Palestinian human rights group Lawyers for Justice of the final decision to not renew the registration. While the Ministry refused to provide an official letter informing of the decision, it told the organisation that the decision is based on a request from the Palestinian General Intelligence Service (GIS) to freeze the registration of the organisation.

In early February 2023, the head of Lawyers for Justice, human rights defender [Mohannad Karajah](#), started the necessary process to renew the organisation's registration. The human rights defender was informed of the presence of a restriction on renewing the registration of the organisation. After seeking more information from the Ministry, they were told that the decision was due to a GIS communication to the Ministry. The GIS alleges that Lawyers for Justice, being a law firm registered as a civil company, practices non-profit activities contrary to what is stipulated in its Memorandum of Association. The Ministry informed Mohannad Karajah that if the group wants to solve the problem, the only approach is to contact the GIS.

Lawyers for Justice group was registered in February 2020 as a specialised civil company with the Ministry of National Economy. The organisation maintains that the said type of company constitutes the proper legal framework, appropriate to the nature of the legal work carried out by the organisation. Particularly, the organisation being registered as a specialised civil company is a legal requirement for the cooperation of lawyers, which is what Lawyers for Justice is. In addition, it maintains that all of its work is in line with its Memorandum of Association, noting that the law does not prevent lawyers in their individual capacity or within a framework of a civil company from providing free legal services. It further asserts that the procedures against Lawyers for Justice are unlawful, due to them being taken by the GIS, which is a non-competent authority, instead of the competent authority, the Ministry of National Economy, and with general accusations that are not suitable to be a reason to freeze the organisation's legal framework.

Lawyers for Justice is facing severe consequences that will affect its existence as a human rights organisation due to the punitive measures and restrictions imposed on its registration. This will impede its work by blocking its ability to enter into contractual agreements with local or international organisations, or to have a bank account.

The efforts to hinder the human rights work of Lawyers for Justice have been ongoing for multiple years. The group has been subjected to different forms of targeted harassment by the authorities, including judicial harassment and defamation campaigns, with ongoing court cases against its members. Denying registration of civil society organisations that criticise authorities violates Palestine's commitments under international law, particularly the right to freedom of association. Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Palestine is a party, provides for the right to freedom of association to be enjoyed, and that no restrictions should be placed on those who exercise this right.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the decision to terminate the human rights organisation Lawyers for Justice by restricting its registration. Front Line Defenders believes that the group is solely being targeted with punitive measures and restrictions as a result of their peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders calls on the Palestinian Authorities to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally reverse the decision to shut down the human rights group Lawyers for Justice and remove all other restrictions on its registration as a civil company with the Ministry of National Economy;
2. Immediately cease all other forms of harassment, including judicial harassment, defamation, and incitement against the group and its members;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.