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OPT/Israel: General Directors of Palestinian human rights organisations facing threats and intimidation

On 21 August 2022, several general directors of the 7 Palestinian human rights organisations which were recently raided and closed by the Israeli authorities received calls and threats. **Shawan Jabarin** and **Khaled Quzmar**, human rights defenders and directors of Al-Haq and Defence for Children International were among them. The two directors were summoned for questioning and threatened with arrest and imprisonment if the human rights work of their organisations continue. This follows the Israeli government's move in October 2022 to designate 6 human rights organisations as "terrorist" organisations under Israeli law, and as "unlawful associations" under military law.

[Shawan Jabarin](#) is a Palestinian human rights defender and the General Director of the Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq. He is also a member of Human Rights Watch Middle East Advisory Board. He was Amnesty International's first Palestinian Prisoner of Conscience, and he has worked for years promoting human rights in the face of Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories. [Khaled Quzmar](#) is a Palestinian human rights defender and the General Director of the human rights organisation Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP). Khaled Quzmar has worked for years promoting human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a lawyer representing Palestinian children in Israeli military courts. He specializes in issues of juvenile justice and grave violations against children during armed conflict.

On the morning of 21 August 2022, Shawan Jabarin received a call from a person claiming to be from the Israeli Security Agency (ISA) or *Shin Bet/Shabak*. The caller summoned Shawan Jabarin for interrogation at the Israeli Ofer military base and made threats of imprisonment and other measures, including a "personal price" from Shawan Jabarin that will be paid if Al-Haq continues its work.

Later the same day, Khaled Quzmar was also summoned by a *Shin Bet/Shabak* agent for interrogation at the Israeli Ofer military base. Khaled Quzmar was seen escorted into the *Shin Bet* premises and was not allowed legal counsel. After two hours of interrogation, Khaled Quzmar was released from the *Shin Bet/Shabak* custody.

On 18 August 2022, Israeli security forces raided the offices and confiscated the property of the six Palestinian human rights organisations designated as "terrorist groups" under its Counter Terrorism Law, 2016. Documents, printers and computers were seized and closure orders were issued against the organisations. The organisations are [Al-Haq](#), [Addameer Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association](#), [Bisan Center for Research and Development](#), [Defense for Children International- Palestine](#), [the Union of Agricultural Work Committees \(UAWC\)](#) and [the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees \(UPWC\)](#). The offices of the [Health Work Committees \(HWC\)](#) were also raided and closed.

The General Directors and the staff of the designated human rights organisations remain under the immediate risk of further harassment, which could lead to arbitrary arrest, judicial harassment, appropriation of their financial and banking assets, inter alia.

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Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the targeting of the designated human rights organisations with threats and intimidation in response to the peaceful human rights work which they lead.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Israel to:

1. Immediately cease all further harassment and practices intended to intimidate and silence the General Directors and staff of the six human rights organisations, in addition to the Health Work Committee;
2. Immediately reverse the designation of the six Palestinian human rights organisations as “terrorist groups”;
3. Immediately reverse the military order commanding the closure of the organisations’ premises and criminalising the work of the six organisations and their staff;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders urges third state parties to:

1. Keep close communication with the six human rights organisations and follow up with them regarding updates and needs.
2. Designate emergency funds to finance damage control and the implementation of security measures to ensure protection of staff including legal representation in case of continued detention and/or harassment.
3. Visit the premises of the six organisations publicly to show solidarity and seriousness in refusing the Israeli designation.
4. Call on the UN or the EU enforcement personnel to provide observers of any further attacks and violations against civil society organisations.
5. Ensure an immediate consular action plan in case of further escalations.