

JOSEP BORRELL FONTELLES

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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To the 36 MEPs signatories of the letter concerning the situation of Palestinian civil society and human rights organisations

Dear Honourable Members of the European Parliament,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 16 December 2021.

Civil society is an essential contributor to good governance and sustainable development in Israel, Palestine and elsewhere in the world. A thriving civil society and respect for fundamental freedoms are cornerstones of open democracies.

The EU is proud of its support to Palestinian civil society organisations that have always been an important element of our support for the two state solution. The EU will continue to support civil society organisations and human rights defenders that have a role to play in promoting international law, human rights, and democratic values.

The EU took note of the designation by Israel's Ministry of Defence of six Palestinian organisations, some of which are implementing activities financed by the EU or by its Member States. We take the allegations seriously and are in touch with Israeli authorities to seek clarifications. Past allegations of the misuse of EU funds have not been substantiated.


Representatives of a number of the referenced NGOs met with EU officials in Brussels in the past weeks to present their position on the conditions for civil society in the occupied Palestinian territory.

On the allegations of misuse of surveillance technology, the EU is closely following the findings regarding the use of the Pegasus software for surveillance purposes. While surveillance technologies, where used ethically and in accordance with law, can be effective law enforcement tools, the EU is deeply concerned about the misuse of spyware against human rights defenders, journalists and politicians. The EU calls on all states to implement legislation and safeguards to protect people from unlawful or unnecessary surveillance, including any arbitrary or mass surveillance. Any such policies have to be fully in line with international human rights law.

Yours faithfully,



Josep Borrell Fontelles

 Electronically signed on 20/01/2022 15:24 (UTC+01) in accordance with article 11 of Commission Decision C(2020) 4482