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August 18, 2022

The Honourable Minister Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
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RE: Canada must condemn the escalating repression against six Palestinian human rights organizations and call on the Israeli Government to immediately rescind the designation against them

Dear Minister Joly:

I write to appeal for you to take urgent action to protect Palestinian human rights defenders once again under attack by the Government of Israel. In the early hours of 18 August 2022, the Israeli Government escalated its attacks on six Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations by raiding their offices and confiscating their property. The United Church of Canada reiterates its many appeals to your offices to take immediate action to protect Palestinian human rights defenders by:

- unequivocally condemning the Israeli government's repeated efforts to silence and criminalize Palestinian human rights defenders and human rights organizations;
- calling on the Government of Israel to immediately rescind its designations against the six Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations; and
- working with like-minded countries in the international community to use all available means to hold Israeli authorities accountable for targeted attacks and repression of Palestinian civil society organizations.

The United Church of Canada requests an urgent meeting with you to discuss this issue. Canada's continued silence on this matter is emboldening the Government of Israel's blatant and ongoing violations of international law and condoning impunity. Several members of the [European Union](#), several [US Members of Congress](#), and [Israeli human rights groups](#) have all stated that no evidence has been produced to support the Israeli Government's designation against the six Palestinian organizations. Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCIP), a partner of the United Church of Canada, and 5 other Palestinian human rights groups are under attack by Israeli forces for publicizing Israeli government violations of international law and human rights, including the rights of Palestinian children. Canada must call on the Government of Israel to immediately rescind this decision, and to comply with its obligations under international law.

DCIP is an independent, local Palestinian child rights organization dedicated to defending and promoting the rights of children living in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. For 30 years,

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DCIP has investigated, documented, and exposed grave human rights violations against Palestinian children; held both Israeli and Palestinian authorities accountable to universal human rights principles; and advocated at the international and national levels to advance access to justice and protection for children. DCIP carries out its work in a situation of armed conflict where perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity enjoy systemic impunity. As the Government of Israel becomes increasingly emboldened and pushes forward efforts to criminalize legitimate human rights and humanitarian work carried out by Palestinian human rights and civil society organizations, we are deeply concerned that politically-motivated prosecutions in Israel's military court system will become the norm. This latest escalation is evidence of the sense of Israel's impunity that Canada's silence encourages.

The United Church has written multiple letters, urging Canada to appoint a Special Envoy to investigate and report on the treatment of Palestinian children to determine the situation for itself and take appropriate action to protect Palestinian children's rights. How Canada responds will be a true test of its commitment to protect human rights defenders, consistent with Canada's [Voices at Risk guidelines](#) on supporting human rights defenders.

We urge Canada to act now in support of human rights, and look forward to hearing from you regarding a meeting. Grace and peace to you in the important leadership you give.

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. Japhet Ndhlovu
Executive Minister, Church in Mission Unit
The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

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