



Our ref : GEV-PA 11/2022  
Your ref: Letter 01/2022

The Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and, with reference to the joint communication of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, the Special Rapporteur on the right to peaceful assembly and association, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences of 26 January 2022 (Letter 01/2022), has the honour to convey the following.

The Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands ('the Government'), first of all, wishes to reiterate its full support for the respective mandates of the Special Rapporteurs and considers the UN human rights mandate holders to be a unique and fundamental mechanism for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide, including supporting a free and open civil society. Statements and guidance by mandate holders on a broad range of human rights implications play a pivotal role in alerting the international community to human rights issues and serve as useful tools for member states in ensuring human rights based approaches.

The Special Rapporteurs brought to the attention of the Government concerns with regards to the Palestinian civil society, specifically the decision of the Government to end funding by the Netherlands for the UAWC. The Government thanks the Special Rapporteurs for reaching out and fully shares the view that Palestinian civil society organizations fulfil an important and vital role, and deserve our continued support.

The Government wishes to underline that the decision to end the cooperation with the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) was a very carefully considered one. In the Government's view the external review has sufficiently established that there were ties at the individual level between UAWC staff and board members and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) for a considerable time. The great number of UAWC board members with roles in both organisations gives particular cause for concern.

The Government finds the conclusions important that there are no financial ties between the PFLP and UAWC, nor that evidence has been found of organisational unity between them or of the PFLP providing direction to the UAWC. The conclusions of the external review also state that there are no indications that UAWC staff or board members have used their position at the UAWC to organise or support terrorist activities. It is important to underline that the Government does not define UAWC as a terrorist organization based on this external review.

However, for the Netherlands as member of the European Union, the PFLP is considered a terrorist organization and not an regular political movement nor party. The strong findings about individual-level ties between the UAWC and the PFLP, and the UAWC's lack of candour about the situation before or during the review, constitute serious concern and sufficient reason in the Government's view to terminate its funding to the UAWC's activities.

The Government's choice to end cooperation with UAWC is unrelated to Israel's recent decision to place UAWC on its national terrorism list. The Government is currently assessing the information provided by Israel. The Government's position remains that the Israeli information must be sufficiently convincing to justify such a decision before accepting the listing, or to act accordingly to it.

The Government attaches as much importance as ever to supporting the legitimate work of civil society organizations in the Palestinian Territories, so as to contribute to socioeconomic development and preserve prospects for a two-state solution. To this end, the Government will continue its strong support to civil society in the Palestinian Territories. As explained in the letter to Parliament of 5 January 2022, the Government reached a settlement with various contractors and farmers who had had financial difficulties as a result of the Netherlands' decision to suspend payments to the UAWC.

The Government is open for dialogue with its international partners on the protection of human rights. It is in this spirit that the Government has extended a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedures and that it appreciates the opportunity provided by the Special Rapporteurs to respond to their letter.

The Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself the opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights and the Special Rapporteurs the assurances of the highest consideration.

Genève, 31 January 2022



United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures  
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