

**Independent International Commission of Inquiry
on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel**

**Public hearings on the closure orders and terrorism designation
of a number of Palestinian human rights organizations**

Geneva – 7-11 November 2022

Closing remarks

The testimony given by Dr. Eatwell concludes this set of public hearings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. These public hearings this week have been the first undertaken by this Commission of Inquiry, but I do not think they will be the last. They have focused on the designation of terrorism or unlawfulness and closure orders issued against a number of Palestinian non-governmental organizations, and on the incident surrounding the killing of the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, and the wounding of her colleague, and attempted shooting of another.

The Commission expresses its appreciation and thanks to representatives of civil society organizations, witnesses, and particularly victims who agreed to participate in these hearings and share their experiences with us and through the UN TV service with the world, sometimes reliving highly traumatic events.

We have heard their testimonies on a number of issues, and we will be investigating those issues further.

We have heard statements from representatives of all seven of the civil society organizations that were the subject of orders relating to terrorism or illegality or orders to close. We have heard that these orders were motivated by an intent to silence their work documenting human rights violations and advocating for accountability, rather than based on any credible evidence of unlawful activities. We have heard accounts of threats received by individual staff members.

We have heard testimony that a number of separate organisations have engaged in concerted efforts to slander and silence prominent Palestinian and Israeli human rights organisations.

We have heard allegations on restrictions of freedoms of expression and association by the Palestinian Authority and the de facto authorities in Gaza, including at least one case resulting in death in detention.

We have heard allegations about women human rights defenders being intentionally targeted by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, receiving threats to discourage them individually and collectively from pursuing their work.

We have heard testimony on the targeting of journalists - both Palestinian and international, and allegations that this was intentional and systematic.

We have heard testimony from eyewitnesses and survivors that Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was intentionally killed by elements of the Israeli Security Forces, and from the

family and now one of their legal representatives that to date no credible accountability efforts have been undertaken. These are things that we have heard but on which, at this stage, we have formed no conclusion of our own. These hearings are the first step in our investigation into violations and abuses of the rights to freedoms of expression and association. We stress that we will not, at this stage, make any findings or recommendations based on what we have heard during these hearings.

The testimonies provided will be reviewed. They will be analyzed in line with the Commission's mandate, evidentiary standards, and methods of work.

We acknowledge that we were only able to hear from a limited number of persons. We will therefore investigate more widely and more fully the allegations that have been made and seek to obtain more information and evidence on them.

We may also decide to undertake further hearings at a later stage as our investigation progresses. We take this opportunity to note that we have called for submissions regarding specific alleged violations and abuses in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. This invitation was published on our website and we invite individuals, groups, and organizations to submit relevant information or evidence both on matters covered in these hearings and more broadly on restriction of civil society space in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

We also call on states to provide any information or evidence they have on topics covered in these hearings- that is the designation of a non-governmental organisation, and the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh.

In closing these hearings, we thank again all those who have appeared and cooperated with the processes of this Commission. We call on those that have not cooperated to date to do so, particularly States that have information at their disposal. We will continue our investigations, forming our conclusions, undertaking our analyses, and developing recommendations.

Our next report will be provided to the Human Rights Council at its June session in 2023. We have a lot to do between now and then.

Thank you very much. These hearings are closed.