



Brussels, 8 May 2020

Dear HRVP Borrell,

We are alarmed that a senior EU diplomat stated that Palestinian NGOs that are affiliated with EU-designated terrorist groups will remain eligible to receive EU funding.

Annex II of the “General conditions applicable to European Union-financed grant contracts for external actions” states in Art. 1.5 bis. that *“grant beneficiaries and contractors must ensure that there is no detection of subcontractors, natural persons, including participants to workshops and/or trainings and recipients of financial support to third parties, in the lists of EU restrictive measures.”*¹

However, the Head of the EU Office to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Sven Kühn von Burgsdorff, wrote in a letter on 30 April 2020 to an umbrella organization of Palestinian NGOs that *“it is understood that a natural person affiliated to, sympathizing with, or supporting any of the groups or entities mentioned in the EU restrictive list is not excluded from benefitting from EU-funded activities unless his/her exact name and surname (confirming his/her identity) corresponds to any of the natural persons on the EU restrictive lists.”*²

This statement contravenes the spirit of the above-referenced general conditions as well as basic EU values and raises serious questions about this EU official’s compliance with those critical values and regulations guiding our representatives’ conduct abroad. It cannot be the task of the EU’s representative in Ramallah to reassure Palestinian NGOs that they can continue to be linked to EU-listed terror organizations and hire their members and supporters as long as those individuals themselves don’t appear on the EU list.

In addition, the letter openly defies the European Commission’s policy regarding EU funds for the Palestinian Authority, recently articulated by Neighborhood Commissioner Várhelyi in a 25 March 2020 response to a parliamentary question: *“The Palestinian Authority provides a list of eligible beneficiaries which is checked by EU-contracted independent auditors against a list of eligibility criteria as well as a second check of individuals considered to be associated with any terrorist organisations or activities. No payments are made to any beneficiaries falling within these categories.”*³

The EU is funding Palestinian NGOs to help the Palestinians build a democratic and pluralistic society which is critical to facilitate a negotiated two-state solution. Ensuring that these NGOs are in no way connected to terrorists ought to be the very minimum our diplomats and officials must help ensure. Just last month, the EU announced a €71 million assistance package to the Palestinian Authority in response to Corona pandemic of which € 6.9 million will go to NGOs.⁴

¹ https://www.archipelago-eutf.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Calls/796-APL-1-2019/Info/EN/Annex_II_gencond_en.pdf

² Full letter: <http://www.pngo.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/EU-Clarification-letter-regarding-the-EU-funded-contracts1.pdf>

³ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-004157-ASW_EN.html

⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/palestine-occupied-palestinian-territory-west-bank-and-gaza-strip/77422/european-union-supports-palestinians-assistance-package-around-%E2%82%AC71-million-response_en



We owe it to our taxpayers, particularly in the midst of a deep economic crisis, that their money is spent to advance - not violate - our values. We recall in this context the European Parliament's May 2017 resolution stressing "the responsibility of relevant EU authorities in continuing to ensure that no EU funding can be directly or indirectly diverted to terrorist organisations or activities that incite these acts."⁵

Therefore:

1. We ask you to initiate an investigation to shed light on this matter and to ensure that EU taxpayer money is spent in line with EU values to advance EU policies.
2. It is of the utmost importance that Parliament receives immediate clarification and reassurance from you that EU funds are never knowingly spent to benefit NGOs linked to terrorists. We also need clarification and reassurance that the EU's representatives to the West Bank and Gaza as well as to the rest of the world faithfully implement EU laws and policies, both in letter and in spirit.
3. We urge you to initiate a review of the standards and criteria for NGO funding in general and specifically to Palestinian groups, some of whom are employing terrorists and terror group sympathizers, propagate antisemitism, and promote the BDS movement against the Jewish state. In this context, the Palestinian Authority's pay-for-slay scheme ought to also be raised.⁶

Respectfully,

MEP Lukas Mandl, Austria, EPP

Chair, Transatlantic Friends of Israel

MEP Anna-Michelle Asimakopoulou, Greece, EPP

Vice Chair, Transatlantic Friends of Israel

MEP Petras Auštrevičius, Lithuania, Renew Europe

Vice Chair, Transatlantic Friends of Israel

MEP Carmen Avram, Romania, S&D Group

Vice Chair, Transatlantic Friends of Israel

MEP Dietmar Köster, Germany, S&D Group

Vice Chair, Transatlantic Friends of Israel

MEP Alexandr Vondra, Czechia, ECR

Vice Chair, Transatlantic Friends of Israel

⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0226_EN.html

⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-004157_EN.html