

November 18, 2021

Some Members of the Jewish
Community of Portland, Oregon

Oregon Delegation
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators and Representatives,

On October 19 Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz summarily declared⁽¹⁾ six West Bank Palestinian non-governmental organizations to be terrorist organizations, claiming that they operate as a network of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The organizations include Defense for Children International - Palestine and Al-Haq, the West Bank affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists - Geneva and the winner of many international human rights awards. This massive attack on Palestinian human rights defenders and the communities they represent opens the door to much harsher sanctions against them and undermines the public's right to information about the realities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israel acted with no due process and no public presentation of evidence, while there is considerable evidence⁽²⁾ to refute the charges of terrorist affiliations.

Progressive members of Congress, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, J Street, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, Reconstructing Judaism, and the Israeli daily Haaretz all condemned Israel's action.⁽³⁾ A joint statement by many Israeli human rights and political organizations (Adalah, Akevot, Association for Civil Rights in Israel, B'Tselem, Bimkom, Breaking the Silence, Combatants for Peace, Emek Shaveh, Gisha, Hamoked, Haqel, Ir Amim, Kav La'Oved, Kerem Navot, Machsom Watch, Mothers Against Violence, Peace Now, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, Public Committee Against Torture, Rabbis for Human Rights, Yesh Din, Zazim) denounced this “draconian measure” as “characteristic of repressive authoritarian regimes.”⁽⁴⁾ We recognize and affirm the courageous work of these and other peace and justice organizations who refuse to accept the narrative that Palestinians and Israelis cannot trust each other.

The Biden administration has publicly done no more than request “more information”(5) from Israel. So, we are calling on you, our congressional representatives, to speak out more boldly. Rep. Betty McCollum and co-sponsors Reps. Rashida Tlaib, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Raúl Grijalva, Andre Carson, Ilhan Omar, Marie Newman, Ayanna Pressley, Jesús "Chuy" García and Cori Bush have introduced a resolution(6) calling on President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken to publicly condemn Israel's “authoritarian and antidemocratic act of repression” and demanding that Israel “immediately end efforts aimed at persecuting, delegitimizing and criminalizing Palestinian human rights defenders and civil society organizations.” We urge you to become a co-sponsor of this House Resolution or to introduce a similar Senate Resolution.

As your Jewish constituents, we urge you not to stand idly by.

Rabbi Ariel Stone	David Newman
Rabbi Benjamin Barnett	Lee Gordon
Rabbi Joey Wolf	Ellen Metz
Oregon State Senator Michael Dembrow, SD23	Emma Lugo
Randolph Splitter	Gabrielle Buvinger-Wild
Carol Landsman	George Elie Makad
Joel Beinin	Gerson Robboy
William Singer	Gloria Halper
Melisa Crosby	Harriet Cooke
John Blank	Hent M. Werch
Alice Shapiro	Jackie Brookman
Barbara Gundle	James Ofsink
Betsy L. Zucker	Jamie Meyers
Bill Resnick	Jan DeWeese
Bob Brown	Jeff Zucker
Carol Mazer	Johanna Brenner
Cynthia Gilliam	John Linder
David Eisen	Judith Wild
David Lewis	Judy Arielle Fiestal
	Julia Ford

Julia Lager Mesulam
Kate Farrell
Kathryn Gordon
Katie Schneider
Kenneth Lerner
Laura Orgel
Laurie King
Marian Rhys
Maro R Sevastopoulos
Martin Hart-Landsberg
Martin Lahr
Miriam Beinin
Neil Goldstein
Nikki Mandell

Paul Silverstein
Phil Houston Goldsmith
Ron Bloom
Sally Markowitz
Sandra Bloom
Sara Jaffe
Sharon Adelman Reyes
Sherry Archer
Stephen Auerbach
Steven Goldberg
Tara Anderson
Yehudah Alan Winter
Adam Segal

1. <https://nbctf.mod.gov.il/en/Pages/211021EN.aspx>
2. <https://www.972mag.com/palestinian-ngos-human-rights-attacks/>
3. <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-progressives-push-resolution-against-israel-s-ngo-terror-designations-1.10334380>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/22/israel/palestine-designation-palestinian-rights-groups-terrorists>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/10/israel-opt-designation-of-palestinian-civil-society-groups-as-terrorists-a-brazen-attack-on-human-rights/>

<https://jstreet.org/press-releases/israeli-designation-of-palestinian-human-rights-and-civil-society-groups-as-terrorists-is-repressive-and-wrong/#.YX9iDtbMKql>

<https://truah.org/press/rabbis-condemn-decision-to-label-palestinian-human-rights-groups-as-terrorists/>

3. (continued)

<https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/news/calling-gantz-reconsider-designation-palestinian-human-rights-and-civil-society-groups>

<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/editorial/.premium-a-stain-upon-israel-1.10318621>

4. <https://twitter.com/btselem/status/1452558466598510604>

5. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/22/israel-palestinian-human-rights-groups-terrorism>

6. <https://mccollum.house.gov/media/press-releases/mccollum-resolution-calls-us-house-condemn-israel-s-repressive-decision>