



Mission permanente d'Israël
auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies
et des Organisations Internationales à Genève

משלחת ישראל
ליד משרד האומות המאוחדות
והארגונים הבינלאומיים בג'נבה

June 15th, 2020

Government of Israel's Response to Joint Appeal

Ref: AL ISR 1/2020

1. Regarding the Joint Communication from Special Procedures AL ISR 1/2020 – Special Rapporteurs for human rights defenders, promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, rights to freedom of peaceful assembly dated April 17, 2020, the relevant Israeli authorities would like to indicate that:
2. The travel ban against Mr. Zeyad was issued for security reasons, as according to material evidence and classified intelligence, Mr. Zeyad, in addition to his work at Amnesty International, is involved with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), an illegal terrorist group, and as such, poses a security risk and a risk to public safety.
3. As noted in the communication, a lawyer submitted a petition to the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) on his behalf to appeal the travel ban decision, and this petition was denied. Subsequently, his case has been sent to the District Court, and is currently undergoing judicial review. The State's position regarding the security risk of Mr. Zeyad, as presented to the district court, is that:

"There is a real threat, that the departure from the region of the defendant would endanger regional security. This assessment is based on confidential intelligence information which is in the hands of the security authorities."
4. During the hearing (31.5.2020), the Court expressed its position that the State was justified to issue the security ban, and indicated (summary from the open protocol of the court discussion):

"After a thorough discussion with the representatives of the Israeli Security Agency (ISA) and review of the confidential material presented, the defendant is involved in PFLP activity. From current information, which is unrelated to the defendant's activities in Amnesty, it is clear that there is an imminent and present danger to the regional security if he were to leave the region. This updated information has been corroborated with various sources (not just witnesses). Detailed response by the ISA professionals to the question of the defendant's departure overseas and to Israel in 2019 has been provided to the court (in a closed door session) and this cannot be detailed in an open manner for security reasons. It should be emphasized that there is no connection between the defendant's activities in Amnesty and the travel ban issued, preventing him from leaving the region. Given the level of danger presented by the PFLP activities which the defendant has recently been involved in, we cannot consider a lesser option, other than that which prevents his leaving the region."

5. Regarding the claim that Mr. Zeyad was unable to visit his mother during her illness because of the travel ban, he was indeed prevented from entering Israel for the aforementioned security reasons, but three of his sisters, and his father, were granted permission to enter, such that his late mother was not left without family members to tend to her. To claim that no one was allowed to accompany Mr. Zeyad's mother during her cancer treatments is patently false.
6. Regarding the claim that Mr. Zeyad was prevented from performing human rights activities as "reprisal" for his cooperation with the UN, this claim is false and unfounded. As indicated above, after examining the confidential information regarding the defendant, the Court determined that there is no relation between the travel ban and his Amnesty activities – but rather, the ban is based on the imminent risk to the region due to his involvement with the PFLP terrorist organization.
7. Furthermore, between 2017-2019, Mr. Zeyad was issued three different permits to enter Israel as an international organization employee. The last permit was valid from 20.11.2018 until 12.05.2019. It was cancelled on 02.05.2019 for security reasons. Throughout the years, the claimant received several different permits to enter Israel. Thus, he was not subject to any "reprisal" for his work, but quite the opposite, afforded permits to enable his presence in Israel and his work to go forward.
8. Generally, Israel facilitates the work of NGOs, including Amnesty International, and they play an important role in Israeli society. However, this does not mean that these employees

are immune from criticism, nor does it mean they should be above scrutiny or participate in terror activities, which endanger public safety, while taking advantage of their status in legitimate NGOS.

9. Israel, as a democratic country governed by the rule of law, remains committed to protecting and ensuring human rights. The dialogue with civil society organizations and the significant presence and contribution of these bodies to the fabric of civil society are a hallmark of Israel's democracy. We cannot allow individuals who are involved in terror to take advantage of legitimate NGOs, such as Amnesty International, to protect themselves from scrutiny, such as in the case of Mr. Zeyad, in which his PFLP activities present a security risk, justifying a travel ban.
10. As a final comment, we note that the Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk was also signatory to this communication. Israel does not cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, and therefore does not respond to this communication or other letters from Lynk, but rather, is responding to other three Special Rapporteurs who sent this query.
11. Mr. Lynk, although deemed impartial and objective by the UNHRC's vetting committee before his nomination in 2016, is actually a well-known activist with an anti- Israel agenda spanning three decades. He has played a key role in groups that advocate against Israel and participates in political campaigns that use demonizing language against Israelis. Before his nomination as rapporteur, in his academic capacities, Mr. Lynk promoted "Annual Israeli Apartheid Week" events; signed anti-Israel petitions; called to prosecute Israel for alleged war crimes; and argued that "the solution" to "the problem" must go back to Israel's very creation in 1948, which he called "the start of ethnic cleansing." Given his obvious prejudice against Israel, any and all petitions initiated by Mr. Lynk in his role as Special Rapporteur should be considered tainted with anti-Israel prejudice and will be ignored as such by the Israeli authorities.
12. As a democratic country, committed to promotion of human rights and to act in accordance with international law, Israel will continue to cooperate with all interlocutors who seek to promote similar goals, and will continue not to cooperate with one-sided actors who use their mandate to promote political agendas.