

Press Release - For immediate release

NGOs in Israel condemn an Israeli government decision designed to deny registration and work visas to international humanitarian organizations

Wednesday, January 8, 2025: On December 9, 2024, the Israeli government approved [a proposal](#) designed to deny registration and work visas to international non-governmental organizations whose “main activity” is to “provide assistance for the social welfare of Palestinian residents.” Based on the proposal, the registration of such organizations will be overseen by an interministerial committee headed by the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combatting Antisemitism.

Among other things, registration or renewal of registration can be denied arbitrarily if:

- “The organization, including a staff member, partner, board member or founder of the organization, publishes or has published in the seven years prior to the date of submission of the application for registration, knowingly, a public call to impose a boycott on the State of Israel... or has pledged participation in the aforementioned boycott.”
- “The organization actively promotes delegitimization activities against the State of Israel” or “denies the existence of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.”

Similar politically motivated provisions apply to issuance of work visas for staff members. A catch-all clause cites that the criteria as listed do not represent a “closed list,” thus giving the interministerial committee wide and arbitrary grounds to deny organizations’ ability to operate in the region.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel has already been systematically denying visas for foreign employees of international organizations, forcing dozens of humanitarians to leave their places of work and denying others entry, which directly harms operations and the provision of essential services to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. The proposal for the interministerial team was announced after a petition was filed by the Association of International Development Agencies ([AIDA](#)), calling on the state to set a policy for registration of organizations and approval of visas.

For decades, the Israeli government has been failing to fulfill its legal obligations as the occupying power to provide for the welfare of the protected Palestinian population under its control. However, with this recent decision, the Israeli government also seeks to further restrict and disrupt the activities of humanitarian organizations, which have been shouldering those responsibilities in its place.

More specifically, the decision to adopt the proposal provides a framework to the Israeli government for intimidating and punishing organizations that document and report on the human suffering and physical destruction of Israel’s devastating military campaign in Gaza and its escalating oppression of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

As civil society organizations operating in Israel striving to promote and protect the rights of all people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, we condemn this irresponsible and harmful decision by the Israeli government. The decision follows on recent Knesset legislation blocking the operations of UNRWA, the main humanitarian service provider in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Gaza, and a more than year-long ban on access of the International Committee of the Red Cross to detainees and prisoners in Israeli-controlled facilities, though Israel is mandated by law and international agreements to allow these and other international organizations to operate in the areas under its control.

We call on the Israeli government to retract the decision and to grant unrestricted access to international NGOs providing services to the Palestinian population. In parallel, we urge the international community, in particular countries maintaining close relations with Israel, to pressure the Israeli government to act in line with its obligations under international law. In view of the severity of the humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, this must be addressed without delay.

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