



EuroMed Rights
EuroMed Droits
الأورو-متوسطية للحقوق

To:

Ms Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 17 January 2018

Re: Forthcoming meeting of Palestinian President Abbas and EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 22 January 2018 in Brussels

Dear High Representative Federica Mogherini,
Dear Ministers of Foreign Affairs,

I am writing to share with you EuroMed Rights' concerns ahead **of your meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on 22 January 2018**. The meeting takes place in the wake of President Trump's announcement recognising Jerusalem as the Israeli capital in early December, and **Israel's decisive steps to annex the West Bank and further expand settlement construction**. Furthermore, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the Palestinian Authority's increasing legislative reforms seem to get closer to authoritarian rule, and are seriously **threatening Palestinians' basic rights and free space for civil society**.

Palestinian human rights NGOsⁱ have documented growing deterioration of the human rights situation and the rule of law, including the separation of powers and the independence of the Palestinian judiciary. President Abbas has imposed a repressive **clampdown on popular criticism**, which includes undue restrictions against the press, social media and websitesⁱⁱ along with the arbitrary arrests of political and human rights activists.ⁱⁱⁱ In this context, the alarming **2017 Cyber Crime Law**^{iv} demonstrates a serious blow to freedom of expression, with the recently amended version of the law still falling short of international standards. These measures come in addition to the unwarranted control the Palestinian Authority has recently seized over the activities and funding of NGOs. The EU should raise the broader authoritarian tendencies of the Palestinian Authority with President Abbas, and **urge him to ensure that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can freely operate** to preserve the rule of law and respect for human rights in the OPT under the rights of freedom of association and freedom of assembly.

Palestinian CSOs have also warned^v of the risks of such repressive developments in the absence of intra-Palestinian reconciliation, and lack of judiciary unification and democratic elections. The EU should take concrete action to facilitate sustained progress towards reunification. Nevertheless, President Abbas should **immediately rescind all the punitive measures imposed against the Gazan population**.

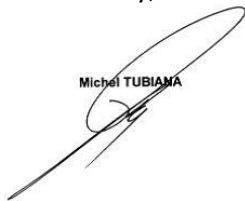
These developments occur against the pervasive background of **Israel's prolonged occupation of the Palestinian territory**. Systematic human rights violations, steps towards the annexation of growing parts of the West Bank and sweeping control over Palestinians' lives will not be reversed in the absence of a clear EU political response that goes beyond a rhetorical pushback.

These are serious violations against core international rules and human rights standards. Along the lines of the EuroMed Rights' recommendations^{vi} submitted ahead of the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to Brussels, on 11 December 2017, the EU and its Member States should **actively challenge Israel's violations of international law**, including its relentless efforts to normalise permanent occupation of the Palestinian territory. The EU should urge Israel to unconditionally bring about an end of the 10-year illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip.

In a rapidly deteriorating context, EuroMed Rights calls on the EU to **develop an independent policy that actively promotes respect for international law, equality and human rights, including Palestinians' right to self-determination**.

We look forward to receiving your response to our concerns and calls.

Yours sincerely,



Michel TUBIANA

Michel Tubiana
EuroMed Rights President

ⁱ <http://alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/palestinian-violations/1091-transparency-in-action-the-unlawful-path-to-lifting-parliamentary-immunity-and-undermining-the-independence-of-the-judiciary>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/palestinian-violations/1152-al-haq-demands-the-withdrawal-of-the-ministry-of-informations-letter-for-replacing-journalist-reem-al-umari-and-calls-for-the-respect-for-the-freedom-of-the-press>, and <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/palestinian-violations/1126-blocking-of-websites-critical-of-palestinian-authority-violates-international-and-domestic-laws>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://pchgaza.org/en/?p=10275>

^{iv} <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/palestinian-violations/1131-letters-sent-to-un-special-rapporteur-on-palestines-cyber-crimes-law>

^v <http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/topics/palestinian-violations/1091-transparency-in-action-the-unlawful-path-to-lifting-parliamentary-immunity-and-undermining-the-independence-of-the-judiciary>

^{vi} <https://euomedrights.org/publication/ahead-eu-leaders-meeting-netanyahu-euomed-rights-asks-denounce-israeli-government-violations-human-rights/>