

Stopping Israel's Attack on Civil Society, justice and human rights: A Call to Action

With the start of Israeli Knesset's summer session on May 4, the undersigning organisations observe with grave concern the [series of legislative initiatives and policy measures](#), currently making their way through the legislative process, that pose existential threats to the survival and mandate of Human Rights Organisations in Israel.

In an increasingly repressive environment, these proposals appear designed to obstruct justice, suppress dissent, and silence those advocating for accountability and human rights. These bills would drastically undermine the financial and operational sustainability of Human Rights Organizations (HROs) and impose harsh criminal penalties for individuals cooperating with international legal mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC). They also target international NGOs (INGOs) and individuals through restrictive registration and entry regulations. These measures further erode civic space and entrench a system of oppression, particularly in the context of the ongoing hostilities in Gaza.

Overview of Key Legislative Threats

1. NGO Taxation Bill: This amendment to the Associations Law introduces an 80% tax on foreign state funding for NGOs, disproportionately affecting organisations critical of the Israeli government. It bars court access for NGOs primarily funded by foreign states and grants the finance minister discretionary power to exempt favoured organisations — creating avenues for political manipulation and control over civil society. The Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee already held its first discussion on the draft amendment on 5 May, where the bill's illegitimate and anti-democratic objective became unequivocally clear. Additional hearings will follow in the coming weeks.

2. ICC Cooperation Bill: This bill criminalises any form of cooperation with the ICC, including documentation or testimony on alleged war crimes, with penalties of up to five years in prison. It imposes mandatory reporting on contacts with the ICC, thus deterring civil society from engaging with international justice mechanisms and extending the risk of financial repercussions to international actors.

3. INGO Registration Bill and Entry Denial for Support of International Accountability: New directive granting Israeli authorities the power to deny or revoke the registration in Israel of INGOs operating in the oPt and to deny work visa to international personnel based on vaguely defined political criteria. Those who support international accountability may be barred from entering or residing in Israel.

Together, these legislative measures constitute a coordinated effort to delegitimise human rights work, criminalise dissent, and shield Israel's conduct in the oPt from scrutiny and international accountability.

A Call for EU Action

The international community and in particular the European Union have previously played a role in slowing or halting similar legislation. We urge it to do so again. Silence at this critical

uncture would equal complicity and would undermine the EU's longstanding commitment to international law, protection of civic space, and human rights. In particular we urge:

- **Representatives of European Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the European External Action Service** to use their leverage with Israeli counterparts at both political and technical levels, urging them to withdraw the bills, while also issuing clear public condemnation of any legislation that curbs freedoms of expression and association, and reaffirm the legitimacy of international legal mechanisms such as the ICC.
- **Members of the European Parliament and National Parliaments** to raise these concerns through parliamentary mechanisms (resolutions, oral questions, hearings), and joint letters to the national and international authorities urging them to respond publicly and decisively.
- **The European Commission** to ensure flexible, long-term funding for human rights organisations and advocate for activating the EU Blocking Statute to protect European actors engaging with the ICC from foreign retaliation.

At this pivotal moment, the EU must reinforce its commitment to international justice and protect the actors who uphold it.

List of signatories:

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ACT Alliance EU

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Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

CIDSE – International family of Catholic social justice organisations

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Diakonia

Entraide et Fraternité

EuroMed Rights

FGTB-ABVV

Human Rights Watch

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center (JLAC)

KURVE Wustrow - Centre for Training and Networking in Nonviolent Action

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PAX

Pax Christi Flanders

Pax Christi International

Sadaka – The Ireland Palestine Alliance

The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI)

Viva Salud

Vredesactie

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