

To the attention of Mrs Federica Mogherini - High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice President of the European Commission

Madame High Representative,

Brussels, 19 July 2016

Over 350 human rights groups, trade unions and political parties from across the European Union have written urging the EU Commission to hold Israel accountable for its violations of international law and to defend the right of individuals and institutions to take part in the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement as a form of freedom of expression.

Israel has also imposed an effective travel ban on BDS movement co-founder Omar Barghouti, following threats against him by Israeli government ministers that prompted [Amnesty International to express concern](#) “for the safety and liberty of Palestinian human rights defender Omar Barghouti”.

The Dutch foreign minister has [said](#) that “endorsing BDS falls under freedom of expression.” The Irish foreign minister has [described](#) support for BDS as “a legitimate political viewpoint” and said it will follow the case of Omar Barghouti.

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) recently stated that it “formally recognises and reaffirms the right of individuals to peacefully participate in and call for boycott, divestment, and sanction (BDS) measures to protest against the Israeli government occupation and discrimination policies, and urges States to respect and uphold related rights of freedom of expression, opinion, association, and assembly.”

While our views on BDS differ, we are concerned at growing attempts to silence and repress advocates of BDS and we urge the EU to guarantee that it will not introduce measures aimed at limiting freedom of expression regarding the Middle East and BDS.

We urge the European Commission to recognise Omar Barghouti as a human rights defender and afford him and other Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights defenders appropriate protection and assistance. We also ask that you provide an update of your assessment of Mr Barghouti’s case.

We are deeply concerned to read comments by Israeli state representatives and Israeli media reports that Israel is using its military and intelligence services to spy on and disrupt the activities of overseas supporters of BDS, which presumably includes numerous European citizens. Is the European Commission aware of these reports and what steps has it taken to make clear to Israel that any use of its military or intelligence services to spy on European citizens would be completely unacceptable?

We urge you to provide your assessment and assurances regarding these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

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